Necessary Tension

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Abstract: A slack violin string cannot produce a single note of music. A life without some degree of tension may be equally soundless, even unsound. Reflecting on the sometimes straight, more often crooked paths that have led me to inhabit the roles and responsibilities I carry today allows for course correction. It may even grant some measure of satisfaction. Balancing multiple roles, working within restrictive and inequitable institutional structures while simultaneously working to change them, answering the moral and ethical demand to advocate for social justice while holding space for personal spiritual development—these are the tensions at play in my life while navigating dual careers as a counselor educator and a clinical professional counselor.

Keywords: counselor educator, professional counselor, social justice, spiritual growth

Reflecting on the past brings a clarity sometimes obscured by the distraction of living in real time. It allows broader patterns to emerge that can be blurred when focusing on immediate details. The delusion that life could achieve the balance of an Alexander Calder mobile, with each of its elements connected to the others yet appearing to float gracefully independent (https://www.sfmoma.org/artist/Alexander_Calder/), has long dissolved. Age and living took care of that. Playing multiple roles simultaneously, flexing with social identities whose salience changes by context—this is hardly unusual, but with each role-change, through the tension among all other roles, a transition period of imbalance is created until a new balance can be established. From a distance it becomes clearer how circumstances nudged me toward a change. I needed something to replace the meaning that almost-full-time parenting had afforded, so I came late, though eagerly, to the academic life, after practicing for years as a licensed mental health counselor.

Back to School—Again

The question of why a person chooses to become a psychotherapist is one that eventually puzzles most of us who do this work, and there has been some research, most of it decades old, that has attempted to provide answers. Norcross and Farber (2005) deemed psychotherapists a "special sort" (p. 939) because most people try to avoid deliberately entering into the suffering of others. In surveying the literature available at the time, Farber et al. (2005) discovered influences ranging from cultural background, difficult early life experiences, intellectual curiosity, narcissistic need fulfillment, and a way to manage one's own anxiety. Many of these factors have some form of the "wounded healer" theme. Hamman (2001) concluded that we "receive the calling to become a therapist to experience being real" (p. 343). Both Comas-Díaz (2005) and Hoyt (2005) claim that they were "born" to be therapists—that the inclinations were there in germinal form from or before birth, echoing Hillman's (1996) use of the term "acorn theory" to describe these potentials that the soul possesses, "a sense of fate" (p. 3) which for some lead us to become healers. Hoyt (2005) goes even further and describes the work clinicians do as a "spiritual practice" that must be fueled by the therapist's "love" (p. 985).

After undergraduate school I took two brief runs at graduate school, followed by a decade-long hiatus. But then, the "call" became so deafening that enrolling in a program was the only way to manage the volume. From the start I have possessed the deep belief that the work of therapy is sacred, involving the joining of intentions by two people for the expressed benefit of one. However, as Jung et al. (1970) aptly noted, when two personalities meet, both are transformed in the process. Sussman (1995) also has rightly described the practice of psychotherapy as a "perilous calling"—via the very title of one of his books—because not only does it involve the client's vulnerability, but the therapist's as well.

After earning a master's degree and licensure, while also raising my children, life was full. But as the children got older and were more independent I started to question what would be next for me, and an answer was not long in coming. The story described by my precocious and frighteningly persuasive 15-year-old son, then a student at the local community college, was worrisome. Based upon some of her behaviors, my son and some of his classmates thought that their general psychology instructor was coming to class on drugs, intoxicated, or having a mental health crisis. As a parent I was concerned about what the instructor might be modeling to my child, and my clinical antennae were alerted to the possibility that the instructor, a fellow psychologist, did indeed need help. This was my obvious reason for standing in the associate dean's doorway one morning after dropping my son off for his classes, but altruism was not my sole motive. Academic environments have always felt like home, so while bringing my concern to the dean I decided to inquire about adjunct teaching possibilities.

I found the dean frowning at her monitor and it took more than a few gentle taps on her office door jamb to distract her. The extra moments allowed me a quick visual sweep of the room. Besides the usual stacks of papers askew on her desk, sharing the space with file folders on their way to the edge of it, there were the standard bulging bookcases of a college administrator. Less typical was the collection of artifacts presumably collected from her travels—African masks, an Asian tapestry, Greek goddess statues, Indigenous carvings, and pottery from Mexico or Central America. Maybe I was more attuned to this display of cultural diversity from having spent my childhood growing up in urban Chicago and benefiting from the variety of my peers' and neighbors' racial and ethnic backgrounds. I apologized to the dean for the interruption and then delivered a condensed version of my son's complaint, explaining why I, rather than he, was bringing this news. She showed concern and expressed her appreciation for the information. She was a warm, easily engaged woman and waved away my apology for interrupting her, saying she was grateful for the break of trying to schedule staff to teach the college's fall psychology classes, no small task at a school with an enrollment of 25,000 students. This gave me the opening to explain that I had a master's degree in psychology, and an interest in teaching. During that brief "interview" I became a quick convert to happenstance learning theory (Krumboltz et al., 2013), that sometimes events we couldn't have planned create unexpected career opportunities. After the submission of the necessary documentation (actual paper at the time), within a few weeks of meeting the dean I had a contract to teach my first course the coming fall, which just happened to be in September 2001, in the wake of the World Trade Center disaster.

At the time I was hired I was not expecting teaching to replace my time or income as a clinician. I was also ignorant of the precarity faced by adjunct faculty members who sometimes depend upon teaching as their primary income, income which can fluctuate widely from term-to-term, with never a guarantee of a next assignment. While contingent faculty are essential to keeping college operating costs in check, their positions are temporary and, sadly, adjunct faculty are often treated as dispensable, despite being the resource that helps institutions manage the payroll drain created by tenured faculty, or those on sabbatical, or those who prefer to teach "more important" upper-level classes with lower enrollment. In the results of a 2018 survey, The Chronicle of Higher Education (2020) reported that 66.1 percent of faculty teaching in higher ed, across all institutional types, were neither tenure-track nor tenured. This usually means that they have very few of the benefits of full-time employment—an office or a place to meet with students privately, access to professional development funds, assurance of employment, or health insurance (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020). Even adjunct faculty who have been teaching at the same institution for years rarely have a voice in curricular or institutional decision-making. A report by the American Federation of Teachers (2020) surveying over 3,000 adjunct faculty found that about a third earn less than $25,000 annually and about a fourth rely on public assistance. Although job security rarely goes past the end of an academic term, 40 percent of those surveyed said that they had been teaching for more than 15 years, although were often juggling a schedule of teaching at several different schools each term (American Federation of Teachers, 2020). Thus, a reasonable conclusion about why they continue to work under these conditions might be that they do it for the love of teaching. These are typically highly skilled and educated professionals who are often used and then discarded by their institutions.

But I was ignorant of these realities when I began teaching, still living a fantasy of what I thought awaited me. Just as the barely perceptible scent of old, dry wood can evoke a cascade of memories and emotions associated with the childhood attic bedroom of my uncle's 80-year-old lake house in mid-summer, all of the contextual cues were present and potent when I returned to the classroom. Cracking the spines of new textbooks; arming myself with highlighters and post-it notes; preparing Power Point presentations; looking into the sometimes eager, sometimes disoriented faces of emerging adults and some non-traditional returning students as well; even grading assignments; all of it felt as natural as slipping my hands into my favorite old leather gloves. It was an immediate fit. The academic and clinical threads of my life, no longer loose ends, were being woven together, creating a seamless new garment for me to don at midlife.

By this time, I had also started a doctoral program, going at it part-time, balancing family life, teaching, and seeing patients. The more interaction I had with college students the more evident it became that the prevalence of mental illness in the general population also applied to the population of students in my classrooms. As both a faculty member and a clinician I was probably more attuned to this reality than those in some other disciplines and it led me to question the degree of awareness the average college faculty member has about student mental health—how to recognize students in need of referral for services and how to respond if a student presents with a mental health crisis on campus. This interest was also spurred by the

heightened anxiety following 9/11. The college was open to my proposal of a pilot survey to gather information from faculty and to develop some preliminary recommendations.

After teaching at the community college for several years, a friend who was also a clinician, and who had been an adjunct professor at a nearby private institution, was leaving there for a full-time position at another school. Before leaving he opened the door for me to meet the chair of his old department. I was hired on my friend's recommendation—however, the chair very pointedly assured me that being an adjunct was in no way a stepping stone to a full-time position. By then I was aware of how tight the job market was, and still is, for academics, and knew once again that this opening had been fortuitous. I became my friend's replacement to teach undergraduate psychology courses the following term.

Both/And

What followed were several years of campus-hopping and arranging my clinical hours around my teaching schedule. Not surprisingly I had discovered that my teaching informed and enriched my clinical work and my clinical background brought the classroom material alive for students. I was living the scholar-practitioner model, the philosophy upon which my doctoral training was built. My two great interests, therapy and teaching, seemed to be blissfully wed, but like all "marriages," there were also tensions.

There are discernable parallels between the art and practice of psychotherapy and that of teaching. Ursano et al. (2007) have written that, "At its core, psychotherapy itself is a teaching activity" (p. 187). Both teaching and therapy are built upon relationships, between the teacher and student or the clinician and client, alliances in which trust is a cornerstone. In good teaching as in good therapy there is a determined effort not to impose or encourage the use of power over the student or client. In both teaching and therapy there must be a commitment to extend the limits of the practitioner's own knowledge along with that of the student or client. Both teachers and therapists engage in diagnosis to determine where to begin the work and the best tools to use to accomplish the educational or therapeutic goals. Both professions require approaching the student/client with unconditional regard, empathy, and understanding; whether in the classroom or the consulting room, real change requires safety to explore and to do so without the pressure to be perfect. Both therapy and teaching involve respect for the pace of change. The more complex the learning task or deeper the psychic wound, the longer it will take to achieve mastery or to heal. Just as impatience with a student can shut down his enthusiasm for learning, annoyance with a client whose improvement may seem slow can derail the course of therapy.

The "use-of-self" as a critical feature in the outcome of therapy has been well established and demonstrated across the range of theoretical perspectives (Aponte, 2022). A similar observation might be made about teachers. Their attitude toward students, the quality of their character, and their ability to demonstrate a sincere concern for the welfare of their students will largely determine student academic progress. A final likeness between the two roles is the concept of *attunement* or *appropriate responsiveness*; often discussed as the synchronous interaction between an infant and caregiver, it is also associated with the quality of the therapist's way of

"being with" the client to evoke the client's sense of feeling heard, seen, understood, and unconditionally accepted (Aafjes et al. 2022; Hatcher, 2015). Attunement is communicated by both the therapist's verbal and non-verbal responsiveness. But excellent teachers communicate the same sense of "being with" their students through eye contact, proximity, physical orientation toward the students, interest, and tone of voice. Attunement requires attentiveness to subtle cues in the other person that can be overlooked by a distracted clinician or harried teacher. But when the therapist or teacher is conscientious and consistent in their attunement efforts it fosters a sense of safety and connection. This allows the client/student to direct internal resources toward creativity, curiosity, and relationship, instead of those resources being deflected toward self-protection.

While teaching is inherent in good therapy, therapy is not inherent to the process of teaching. There are lines that must be respected. I cannot be my student's therapist, and my concern for the student's mental health cannot tempt me to loosen the academic standards, although it might lead me to refer the student to the campus counseling center. Part of my responsibility is to evaluate. I have to assign grades, and grades must be earned, not inflated for fear of the student becoming depressed. Anxious students may certainly benefit from learning distress tolerance skills, and while I know how to teach them, they are not part of my curriculum or the contract I have as a faculty member. So, while the slope may be slippery when students come to me with unsolicited disclosures of how their medication change is affecting their ability to stay focused in class, or the reason they were unable to prepare for an exam is because they were experiencing a manic episode, my empathy might be stirred, but I must also refrain from ushering them into my office for a session before their next class. That tension between wanting to help, knowing how to help, and shifting from teacher into therapist must be held taut if the teaching alliance is to be preserved. I cannot be all things to my students, just as I cannot be all things to my clients. Recognizing the limitations that each role imposes upon me also gives me the freedom to act my best when functioning within each.

I eventually left the community college and transitioned to solely teaching at the university—a needed and welcomed simplification. After several years teaching undergraduates, I was given the opportunity to teach a course in the MS program in clinical psychology. As is sometimes the case, the door opened for me because of the unexpected departure of a faculty member who did not pursue tenure. The graduate program was in a pinch, and I was available to ease it. The university's graduate program has a long history and is highly regarded in the counseling community, demonstrated in part by the ease with which our students are welcomed into internship sites and often hired after graduation. Rather than being research-oriented the program focuses on clinical practice and is designed to prepare students for licensure as professional counselors. For the majority of them it is a terminal degree.

While teaching a class of 30 undergraduates was certainly rewarding, teaching classes of 12 or fewer graduate students was incomparably more so. Rather than merely filling a general education requirement, graduate students have committed to a career and bring a seriousness and maturity to their scholarship. Many of my students view their decision to enter this helping profession not just as a career choice, and certainly not for its financial promise, but as a calling,

a vocation. They may trace the origins of their decision to a time when they had been helped by counseling themselves and they want to give back. Others are members of marginalized groups and realize that culturally competent help is not readily available to their communities, and they want to fill that void. Some of my students have experienced a life-altering, sometimes traumatic event, or have seen the effect of mental illness on someone close to them. Many cite reasons for their career choice similar to those identified in the professional research. Empathy is a characteristic that most of them possess, and they are drawn to a profession where it is a core helping skill. Some have also sought a profession that aligns with their personal values and are attracted to one whose ethical code includes the mandate to operate from a social justice perspective.

After I spent several years in limbo as a contingency faculty member, and because the program had seen a few disappointing hires and unexpected departures, a tenure-track position opened up. By then I had a proven teaching record and, combined with my broad clinical background, I was a good candidate. I had also gained a reputation for being willing to take on more than non-permanent faculty members typically do. I brought an award-winning documentarian to campus to screen a controversial film, one that had been banned in India, about a highly publicized sexual assault and murder in that country, highlighting the government's lack of response to violence against women. The program was well-received by our university community, and it drew people from the surrounding area to our campus, which is always a desirable recruitment tool. So, when the tenure-track position opened up I interviewed with confidence and was hired. But with this new responsibility I was prompted again to examine, at a more granular level, what motivated my desire to teach. I found part of the answer in bell hooks' (1994) widely read and influential book *Teaching to Transgress*: The first chapter opens by describing teaching as a "vocation that is sacred" in that it involves more than teaching theory or even practice—rather, we must "share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students" (p. 13) and take an interest in caring for their souls in order for true learning to take place. It is this same willingness to commit to my student's academic success, as well as caring for their souls, that I bring into the therapy session in the alliances I form with clients.

In this era of "empirical validation" when modern psychology may wish to excise the non-quantifiable, non-scientific aspects of human experience, such as the "spirit" or "soul" or even "evil," the meaning of "psychology" still does homage to its Greek roots meaning the "study of the soul" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Did you know? section). Religion/spirituality has a tenacious hold, and there is a resurgence of research interest in this area, not only because religion and a belief in God or something ineffable is so widely held, but one's religion or spirituality is recognized as a key cultural identity marker. In *Atheism and Agnosticism: Exploring the Issues*, Huff (2021) describes religion as a "pervasive and powerful force in modern society" (p. xi). The Pew Research Center's (2015) religious landscape study found that 77 percent of people surveyed (in a sample size of 35,071) described religion as being "very important" or "somewhat important" in their lives. Although, it should also be noted the numbers of people identifying their religious affiliation as "none" are increasing markedly to nearly 30 percent, up from 16 percent in 2007, a trend that seems to be continuing (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Need for Institutional Change

There was certainly a rush of pride (or maybe hubris is closer to the mark) at achieving the status of assistant professor, but my enthusiasm was slightly tarnished by what appeared to be inconsistencies between the university's stated mission and its practices and policies. As an adjunct and later as a term faculty member I became familiar with the politics of the department and the larger institution. I knew there were roadblocks to proposing initiatives or trying to implement changes that would seem to bring praxis into alignment with the university's vision and mission, but being newly hired gave me little standing to criticize problems that I, and others, believed needed to be addressed. There were colleagues who had been in this fight much longer than I and were exhausted and disheartened by the lack of response to reasonable requests for change. Some eventually became so disillusioned that they chose to resign, even from tenured positions. I also knew my institution was not unique. Others of similar size and demographics face similar problems, problems that are longstanding and so woven into the campus culture as to be invisible, but not to all, and certainly not to our students, staff and faculty who are most affected. The litany is long and familiar: a lack of faculty diversity, inattention to how racism is structured into institutional practices, a marked gender and racial bias in upper-level administration, a less than hospitable environment for members of the LGBTQ+ community, and lack of awareness and resources to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff with the entire range of disabilities. And, of course, these issues have only been exacerbated during the last several years when so many smaller institutions, both private and public, including mine, have experienced lower enrollment numbers and corresponding budget tightening.

When hired I was confident of my abilities as an educator and able to acknowledge the assets that I brought to the program as a clinician, but I also recognized that I was just as White as the majority of the other faculty, staff, and administrators. Many of our current and prospective students would not be looking in a mirror when viewing our photos on the school's webpages. Rather than being representative of the racial make-up of our student body, not to mention the world our graduates were inheriting, we were recreating the same structure of racial inequality and lack of representation evident in many other institutions and in society at large. Despite phrases such as "inclusive," "truth and justice," and "the common good" woven into our mission and vision statements I soon questioned whether we were living and acting upon what we claimed to be our bedrock beliefs and values. While I was pleased to have been "chosen" when I was hired, I was fully aware that there were certainly many other equally qualified minority candidates who were never considered. In fact, hiring with diversity in mind seems not to have even been part of the goal when advertising the position or conducting the search. So, I took up this new role with a degree of guilt and a weight of responsibility to create change. In particular I wondered about my credibility as a White woman teaching multicultural counseling skills to graduate students preparing to work with clients who would represent the entire spectrum of racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability status, and socioeconomic diversity.

My ethical obligation as a licensed clinical professional counselor, strengthened by my role as a counselor-educator, requires me to take an active part in creating a more socially just and equitable world for students and for the clients we will all serve, clients whose mental health issues are often directly linked to living in a culture where their life chances are restricted by their intersecting and overlapping social identities. There are certainly many opportunities for fulfilling that obligation, and the opportunities bring matching obstacles. After a lengthy and administratively cumbersome process, complete with political complications, we were eventually able to secure safe, non-binary bathrooms on campus. We are still seeking approval for a designated space on campus for our Black and Brown students to gather.

Some of my colleagues have voiced frustration at what feels like exploitation when institutions fail to make broader changes to respond to students' legitimate needs. Not infrequently this results in the few faculty and staff of color carrying the responsibility of supporting students who have nowhere else to turn to find people like themselves who can understand them, mentor them, and advocate on their behalf. The offices of these faculty and staff members become the safe spaces for students who need the kind of emotional support that few others on campus can provide. This is certainly true "service to the university," but will it be considered such by the rank and tenure committee? And at what cost to the faculty member's own teaching and scholarship? No amount of dedication has succeeded in adding to the 168 hours granted to each of us weekly.

Taking Action

It is clear to me that our students and staff have been affected by the events of recent months and years—the daily violence enacted against Black and Brown people; the rampant anti-Asian violence that escalated during the pandemic; the searing and indisputable statistical evidence of racial disparities in COVID-19 infection and death rates; the insurrection of January 6, 2021; the epidemic of mass shootings—and the list is long and continues to grow. Students' ability to trust in the very systems designed to serve them has been eroded, and it has demanded a response from us as faculty who have an ethical and moral responsibility to create space and time in our classrooms and in larger university settings for difficult, honest dialogues to challenge administration, and ourselves, to examine whether we are actually living out our mission. I take bell hooks' (1994) advice seriously that I need to give up my attachment to myself as a member of some elite academic group and to be "willing to be critical of my own pedagogy and accept criticism from my students and other people" (p. 134) without feeling as though my validity as a human being is under attack.

Perhaps the observation attributed to Margaret Mead, and paraphrased by many others, about a "small group of thoughtful, committed citizens" being the only thing that can change the world, is as true or even more so today than when the words were first recorded over four decades ago. About seven years ago a much-respected adjunct faculty member was bold enough to initiate a conversation with a small group of us about social justice concerns on campus. It's not that such conversations had never taken place before, but perhaps a tipping point had been reached that resulted in gathering the right "small group" of people. The original group expanded to include

faculty and staff across colleges and departments who organized the institution's first all-day, all-campus Teach-In on Social Justice which is now an annual event drawing about 1,000 registrants for each of the past eight years. The initial proposal for the Teach-In was unanimously approved by the full faculty assembly, and when we approached the same peers a year later to make the Teach-In an annual event, we were again met with overwhelming approval. Fortunately, administration was similarly supportive. The Teach-In themes have included race and racism, immigration, public health inequities, environmental injustice, coalition building, and polarization. The Teach-In has also given birth to other recurring programs on topics of contemporary concern (Taking the Knee, Islamophobia, Being Transgender in Higher Ed, White Nationalism, Gun Control, Immigration, The Insurrection of January 6, The War in Gaza). Helping to organize these initiatives is not covered under the job descriptions of most faculty and staff who have been instrumental in creating them. It is a commitment to education as a transformative process—one in which students, faculty and staff are truly changed for the better. The desire to answer the sacred calling to become "more fully human," to borrow from Freire (1993/2014, p. 44), is what drives people to add another item to their already over-scheduled agendas. If the goal of teaching includes equipping students with the tools to transgress (hooks, 1994) the very limitations imposed upon them by institutions that claim their mission is to serve them, then we as educators have a responsibility to create classrooms that are liberated from the structures that have systematically marginalized the needs and interests of certain groups while giving preference to others (Freire, 1993/2014). And here again is the tension of competing forces.

Faculty are considered "provisional" until they earn tenure. While there are annual evaluations, "going up for tenure" is a one-time event; there is no option of "if at first you don't succeed, try, try, again." Failing to get tenure means that you are history. The tenure portfolio, a collection of narratives and artifacts submitted to the rank and tenure committee, is designed to prove your value to the institution. But how to balance the time required to teach a course load; attend the requisite and numerous committee meetings; advise and mentor students; do the slow work of research, writing and publishing with the concurrent urgency to address the ongoing injustices faced by people within and outside of our campus community whose identities target them as "other than" and who are seen as "less than"? Time is an asset, always in limited supply.

With increased campus diversity the need for a senior-level diversity position has become increasingly apparent (Parker, 2020). But, in smaller institutions, increasingly under financial pressure due to dwindling enrollments and increasing costs, a budget line item for such a position may not be feasible. This can mean that the diversity and inclusion work which might rightly fall under the purview of a senior-level diversity officer is taken up by faculty and staff who have the passion to make the commitments of time and energy in addition to meeting their contractual obligations. The work of equity and inclusion on college campuses takes many forms but typically includes raising awareness through workshops, speakers, forums for campus-wide "difficult dialogues," and opportunities for community action and involvement. These efforts are incomplete and likely to be short-lived if only aimed at students. Programs for faculty might include diversity training, implicit bias awareness, workshops on why hiring with diversity in mind is essential for a healthy campus community, opportunities to explore and

share ways to incorporate social justice themes into curricula, a faculty-staff workshop on structural racism, and creating a faculty reading/discussion group on inclusive teaching. Institutional change also requires working from the top down, convincing administrators of the benefit of social justice practices in creating a campus climate that is welcoming to new and returning students, thereby boosting enrollment and increasing retention. But instigators of social change can also be deemed agitators if their efforts disturb a resistant status quo. Yet another tension to be negotiated.

Doing and Being

I regularly reflect upon the strain I experience between the urgent and the essential, the work of social justice advocacy versus the time needed to cultivate a deep interior life which I believe forms the surest foundation for all my work—advocacy, teaching, and therapy. It is not that social activism is incompatible with attention to spiritual development, as the lives of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Theresa, Dorothy Day, Nelson Mandela, and many others attest. And on days when my schedule is less fractured, I am able to discern the sacredness within even the most mundane tasks. But my personal balance is often elusive, too often tilting toward the pressure to attend to the immediate and urgent, rather than longer term good that might come from a more measured, stable life. Often, I am torn between losing sleep to plan an event addressing an issue like "Asian American healing and belonging," versus getting sufficient rest to rise early enough to maintain my personal practice of self-reflection and meditation, at least without falling asleep while doing it! Even Thoreau (1980) needed two years at Walden Pond before penning *Civil Disobedience*, recognizing that personal, individual reformation was a prerequisite for larger civil regeneration.

When my good-deed list is longer than the hours of the day, I resort to stories to help restore some equilibrium to my own world. Stories and metaphors are often what I turn to in my therapy practice for their ability to bypass the mind's analytic arguments and reach into the deeper, less conscious places where sometimes a slight recalibration can set things right, or at least better. There is an anecdote about the rebuilding of London's St. Paul's Cathedral following the great fire. The story has undoubtedly undergone multiple revisions in the intervening centuries, but the message is solid still. The building's architect, Sir Christopher Wren, saw three men laying bricks and when he asked them what they were doing, one man replied that he was a bricklayer doing his job to provide for his family. A second replied that he was a builder and was building a wall. But the third replied that he was a cathedral builder and saw his work as service to the Divine. It helps me to remember that I'm not just explaining research methodology but I'm teaching students to critically evaluate research so they can select interventions most appropriate to the suffering person who has come to them for help. When teaching counseling skills during roleplaying I often caution students against slipping into the safety of therapy scripts, reminding them that they are sitting with another human being and need to be fully and humanly present with them. More vital perhaps than specific skills, as important as they can be, is authentic presence. The research consistently brings in the same verdict that the quality of the therapeutic relationship is key to the patient's outcome. More encouraging even than seeing the growth in my students' skills is hearing the same words I've

said to them being echoed by the advanced students in the program when giving feedback to the newer ones. They have listened, more importantly have *heard*, and are able to put understanding into practice.

In therapy there is a sensitive balance between support and confrontation. Too little or too much of either can stall or derail the course of treatment and/or create a breach in the therapeutic relationship. In the academic life I have found a similar tension. Remaining employed within institutional structures that systematically disadvantage some while privileging others, all the while working to disrupt those structures and replace them with ones that are more equitable, puts one in jeopardy of being unpopular among one's peers, and perhaps even risking tenure or promotion. Too much complacency and the system will stagnate; too much disruption and the system will become unstable. For every teeter there is a corresponding totter.

Legacy

Perhaps all traditional helping professions, teaching and therapy included, contain the hope that we can extend the effects of what we do *now* into a future that we won't be alive to see. Assisting in the formation of the next generation of mental health practitioners is legacy-building for me, going beyond the work that I do as a therapist in which I am sorely limited by time. I am only able to see a relatively few individuals, couples, or families per week, as deeply meaningful as that work is. But in my role as a counselor-educator I can multiply my efforts and hopefully bring benefit to many more lives through what my students will be doing long after I have stopped teaching, doing therapy, or even breathing. Teaching has become a way that I cheat death. Sussman (1995) has similarly described the practice of psychotherapy as a way of evading mortality, perhaps by seeding something of ourselves into the lives of the patients with whom we have the honor to work. Maybe much of what we all do in our lives and in our work contains some element of wanting to be remembered, to live on, either in the DNA that our biological children inherit from us, the books we write, the music that we create, the bricks we lay, or the paintings we leave on cave walls. We look for some assurance that we will continue to exist at least in the minds, perhaps in the hearts, of others.

There are days when working for the "common good" has been more urgent, more pressing than prioritizing the time I wanted to spend in Rumi's field: "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about" (Rumi, 1995, Lines 22–25). I yearn for more time there, to put aside the struggle, even for a while. In these days when there seems no end to news of yet another tragedy, whether the violent ending of a single life or the destruction of an entire city in a war that is not a war, I sometimes question what difference my small contribution can ultimately make—either as a clinician or as a teacher. It helps when students are appreciative, even years later when alums express their gratitude for the work we did together. After all, I am always learning something right along with them. It is heartening when clients improve, are less depressed, less anxious, are sleeping better, are able to return to their lives. But at the end of the day, all I have to contribute is my small part, one piece of a much larger puzzle. And maybe that's enough.

Future Research

Finding answers to what we don't know begins by asking the right questions. In 2005 the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* devoted an entire issue to the question of why some of us choose psychotherapy as a career. The editors of that issue noted the "professional silence" (Norcross & Farber, 2005, p. 940) on the topic, decrying the fact that the most credible attempts to uncover these answers were at least three decades old at the time of writing. Much of the existing research is qualitative or first-person accounts by clinicians who have been practicing for decades, confirming what Norcross and Farber (2005) noted about our lack of understanding of what drew us to this profession. It is often not until late in our careers that the answer becomes clear. Perhaps because our own capacity for self-discovery is improved by our work with clients, or perhaps because the reasons change across our lifetimes. It is also worth noting that many involved in training new clinicians are also therapists. But how could it be otherwise? It would be hard to learn to drive from a teacher who had never been behind the wheel. So there remain gaps in our understanding of why we choose to do this work and further what leads us to hybridize our careers as both clinicians and educators.

Does spirituality have a role in workplace productivity? Ahmed et al. (2016) argue that the "spiritual quotient" as an ingredient in human resource development has been ignored and that "the promotion of spiritual values in the organization certainly enhance [*sic*] employee's organizational commitment, performance, morality and job satisfaction" (p. 100). In a study conducted by Elsevier Health entitled "Clinician of the Future Report 2022" they found that 47 percent of US healthcare workers plan to leave their current roles; lack of training and support, feeling undervalued, and burnout are among the reasons. Research on effective ways to support front line workers, which include clinicians and teachers, is needed. DeMauro et al. (2019) reviewed qualitative studies of mindfulness for practitioners from the fields of teaching, psychotherapy, nursing, and social work. Those who practiced mindfulness reported a greater ability to be present with others, listen non-judgmentally, be emotionally aware, be compassionate, remain emotionally regulated, and practice self-care, though the authors also noted that there was little empirical evidence indicating *why* mindfulness had such benefits (DeMauro et al., 2019).

The tension on a violin string must be tuned precisely for the instrument to produce music capable of transporting the hearer. But violin strings need frequent re-tuning to remain in perfect pitch. Balancing the tension between two careers means regular re-evaluation, re-tuning lest I too go "flat." For me that means having a regular spiritual practice that anchors me, holds me steady in the midst of rough seas. But it comes with a cost. Time. Balancing the demands that compete for my measly 168 hours each week sometimes feels like the game of "robbing Peter to pay Paul." Shall I take the time to meditate/pray/contemplate/journal/walk among the trees, or instead write and send out that time-sensitive email urging people to contact their legislators? Do my colleagues face the same disquieting tension when faced with the choice of which of many possible "good deeds" will have to be left undone? I wonder if we can look at ways to be more effective at the work we do, teaching, therapy, being good neighbors, by carving out time

for spiritual re-tuning. Is this a research question keeping any of my colleagues awake at night? Perhaps not, but I hope it's on someone's to-do list in the morning.

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