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Influencing Change

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Introduction

The Feminist Era was a time of widespread political and social movements which boosted awareness of the oppression of women in the United States. Prior to the Feminist Era, women of all races, creeds, and colours were rendered voiceless. During the 1960's and 1970's there was upheaval and Women's Movements helped to construct a rebellion against the racist male dominated society which tended to harm the lives of many women [1].

This period in history yielded the Women's Liberation Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and even the Black Liberation Movement, to improve political and social awareness, as well as gender and race disparities. In this climate, Feminist Therapy emerged. Feminist Therapy shared common ideologies, which sought to bring to light the inequality of women in the field of psychology, permeated with primarily males tackling women's issues. The uprising of the Feminist Therapy movement sparked a need to construct feminist-informed practices in order to cope with the societal changes for men and women that were occurring in the 1960's [2]. During this time, E. Kitch Childs rose as one of the founding members of the movement. She represented the essence of many "isms" that were being fought for. Dr. Childs was an African American lesbian woman, who stood in the gap for social justice with her intellect, tenacity, and bravery, and took the lead as a radical visionary [3] to influence change for the disenfranchised.

Kitch was a pioneer in leading the change, a soldier on the front lines of crusades to change the rights of women, blacks, and gays. She was a tireless advocate for those suffering psychologically and most others who had barriers to fighting for themselves. She suffered alone, and was able to mask her own pain, like many in her position. It is reported that Kitch self-medicated, on a continuous basis, to ease her pain and make life more tolerable. According to those close to her, she suffered tremendously from both physical and emotional pain [3]. Dr. Childs's life is one of many that suggest the necessity to recognize the need for ongoing self-care.

According to Zerubavel and O'Dougherty Wright, [4] there is a dilemma in the helping profession field, which suggests the wounded healer is an archetype holding the space where healing power emerges from the healer's own woundedness. As such wounded healer embodies essential transformative qualities relevant to understanding recovery processes. Yet, the

dilemma surfaces from the dichotomous perception that is entrenched in the therapy relationship. Therapists can have difficulty accessing their own experiences of suffering and vulnerability, and are thus unable to empathize with the client. Such splitting can also result in a lack of acknowledgment and encouragement of the client's own healing powers, fostering dependency [5]. Both perspectives resonate and are valid indicators in showing the need for professionals to take care of self.

Many helping professionals are lead to the field with wounds that may or may not be resolved. This is when an intentional way of existing becomes an essential part of the therapist own a healthy life, and further the accompaniment of others in the walk towards their own healthy lives. Self-care and maintaining a healthy fit existence requires one to feed the mind, body, and spirit, which is not a custom that is required in the workplace, nor is it one that is always practiced. When taking care of others there tends to be a consumption of energies. Healthy barriers towards the prevention of the infiltration of toxic energies, while maintaining empathy and compassion for clients must be deliberate and constantly present.

Helping professionals and the environments in which they work are occupied with a high percentage of dysfunction. The dysfunction is spread on every level from the heads of organizations and throughout, thereby perpetuating toxicities that hinder the effectiveness of helping and healing. Moreover, such unhealthy work environments can be attributed to the lack of self-care, and the capacity for the care of others. One must be healthy and fit to work with brokenness and maladaptive behaviours of others. The pathway to achieving this state of being requires an intentionality fitness for this level of work. Safeguarding your physical, mental, and spiritual fitness first requires intentionality, followed by the recognition that the importance of work with others, is superseded only by internal self-work.

The catalyst to intentional self-care requires a spiritual connection and a feeding spirit. Breathing, stretching, meditating, receive oxygen, and releasing unwanted toxins, and being grateful, allows a place of quiet and thankfulness. Self-care for professionals in the field of substance abuse, as well as other helping professions, is crucial. Dr. Childs was an example of finding bold and unconventional pathways to self-care. Therapist in trying environments can benefit from exploring self-care

methods that will be useful for their work with clients, and those in need.

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