

Attitudes and Beliefs Reflection Paper: An Account of my Personal Values

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Abstract

In this paper I will be filling out an Attitudes and Beliefs Inventory and then reflecting on which three potential client scenarios make me the most uncomfortable or conflicted. After I have done that, I will be incorporating them into this paper and discussing how and why I felt this way towards each scenario and examining my values and beliefs behind those feeling and emotions. In this paper I will attempt to examine my own biases and how these beliefs can potentially impact both my client and me as the counselor. I will attempt to remedy this in how I can objectively examine my own thoughts and beliefs and work towards being aware of those factors in the future.

After filling out the Attitudes and Beliefs Inventory, I chose three potential client scenarios that made me feel the most uncomfortable and unsettled. I have personal values that directly oppose each of these said scenarios and that is what caused the discomfort. I will cover each one and go in depth about my values surrounding each scenario, examining them diligently by covering my reaction, response, and then follow up actions. Studies show that self-reflection can yield positive results. (Zelege, Karayığit, & Myers-Brooks, 2018).

To begin, the first client scenario that made me feel uncomfortable is that of counseling a gay or lesbian partnership that is seeking marital advice.

Reaction: My reaction to this client scenario was that I would feel unequipped to handle it because I am Christian, and so fundamentally, I believe that God intended marriage to be between a man and a woman. If I were to counsel a gay or lesbian couple seeking marriage advice, I feel like I would find it hard to not allow my personal beliefs on marriage partnerships interfere with my practical advice. I believe that a lot of my thoughts on why there are even marital issues to begin with, would stem from me thinking that it's because a man and woman should be married. I believe that God meant for marriage to look that way and He did so intentionally because He knew that it's what is best for us and our flourishing. So, in counseling a gay or lesbian couple it would be hard for me to remain objective because I believe a lot of marriage looks like reflecting how God loved the church, and how God clearly lays out in scripture how marriage should be modeled after it. I would find it quite difficult to give practical advice for this type of partnership because in marriage I strongly believe that both the man and woman bring different functional roles and aspects to the marriage, that a same sex partnership lacks. I believe that counseling this type of partnership would go directly against my personal Christian views of marriage and any attempted marital advice would come across as disingenuous.

Response: I believe this response comes from my strong held personal beliefs from being a devoted Christian. We learn as Christians, very clearly that the Bible commands marriage to be between a man and a woman. I truly believe in my heart that God speaks to us through scripture and that He does not contradict Himself, therefore when He gave this clear picture of marriage, He did not make any mistakes. I learned these values from a young age, as I grew up Catholic and this was also very much a part of the Catholic beliefs regarding marriage. This has carried over into my now Christian faith because I believe God knows ultimately what is best for us and He is not influenced by culture and that his word stands the test of time. I realize that these very specific ramifications on marriage do create a sense of discrimination and even diminishment of same sex partnerships. I recognize that this can potentially be harmful to this people group, and I wish to address these personal issues within myself.

Action: For my action plan, I think the professional work I still need to do to remedy this strong opinion towards this client scenario, would be just to become more educated in how to remain objective. I think learning how to not allow my personal held beliefs to influence my clients negatively, but also learn how to not allow my client's beliefs to impact mine is essential. Studies show that stigmatization and discrimination of same sex marriage couplings leads to a decrease in healthy family dynamics. (Prendergast, & MacPhee, 2017). So, I believe that becoming more educated on this group of people and finding out ways in which I personally can prevent myself from contributing to this discrimination, would be beneficial. I think that working towards a place of respect for a recognition of this particular people group would play a part in reducing harm of these people, and it would work to increase my abilities as a future counselor. I believe in equal treatment of all people, including members of groups I do not fully understand and so these strong opinions directly contradict that value of mine.

The second client scenario that caused me discomfort was that of a man convicted of pedophilia and court ordered for counseling.

Reaction: I had a strong reaction of disgust to this scenario because it is such an injustice to children when they are sexually victimized. I have a strong belief in justice for vulnerable groups, especially children. Often children that are victims of pedophilia are forced into these types of horrific perversions and that just disgusts me to my core. I feel a sense of outrage when I hear that pedophilia even exists in our world and I believe I feel this way because of how Christ within me is outraged by these kinds of atrocities and injustices.

Response: I think that my response to this type of scenario is one that makes it hard for me to believe that an individual like this can really change. I think that a scenario like this just really angers me because of the level of disgust that I feel and knowing people in my personal life who have been victims of molestation and other forms of pedophilic behavior. I just don't know that I would be able to dive into the mind of someone who has these types of perversions without becoming angered and feeling an overwhelming sense of dread. I do not think that I would be able to separate my feelings of discomfort enough to effectively counsel someone like this. I think that issues that plague someone like this are ones that deep down will never fully go away, and that just doesn't sit well with me. I would feel as though any advice I would attempt to give would never fix this kind of client and that would eat away at me.

Action: I think that in terms of professional actions and work I need to do include learning more about this population, although it causes me extreme discomfort, I believe being more educated on the aspects that contribute to this sort of disorder in someone is something to consider. Being aware of my own stigma towards this group of people is the first step. Studies show that social isolation due to stigmatization of this group can increase their risk of committing sexual offenses.

(Jahnke, 2018). So, if I were to learn more about how to reduce stigma surrounding this group of people maybe I could make a positive impact in reducing sexual crimes.

The third and final client scenario that I would say made me the most uncomfortable is that of the man who is released from jail after serving a sentence for rape.

Reaction: My initial reaction to this one was quite emotional. Being that I am a victim of sexual assault, I think I immediately felt scared and angry regarding this client scenario. Knowing that this person who stole a piece of innocence and safety from another human being, is out of jail walking around a free man just really angers me and doesn't sit well with me. Now, I know that this individual served their required sentence for this crime but whenever people like this are released from jail it just makes me feel uneasy because I think a part of me just is anticipating them to commit the same crime and cause permanent emotional damage to another human being.

Response: My response to and feelings surrounding this scenario are visceral. This feeling of wanting to punish someone like this I believe stems from the lack of justice served on my assailant. I believe I am someone who innately wants to protect the vulnerable and so that is why I have such a distinct and intense reaction to a client like this. I don't feel like I would be able to separate my own feelings of discomfort and trauma, to effectively counsel this individual. Studies show that discrimination towards sexual offenders increases their risk of potentially committing future sexual crimes due to social isolation and negative public attitudes. (Crilly, 2018).

Action: I would say that an action step for me would be to be seen by a counselor myself and work through my personal trauma. I think working to view these groups of people as having the ability to be rehabilitated is an important step forward. If I can help to reduce the likelihood of individuals committing future sexual crimes by reducing stigmatization, that is something I want.

In conclusion, I believe that this attitudes and beliefs inventory served as a source of self-recognition for where my stigma and bias resides. Studies show that consideration of personal bias dramatically enhances counseling outcomes. (Day-Vines, Booker Ammah, Steen, & Arnold, 2018). Because of this, I think I must consider that if I wish to have the best possible outcomes for all of my clients, I must consider how I can address my own bias to create a safe and inviting environment for all people. I think that because I am a Christian, it is important for me to reflect on the aspect of forgiveness. Jesus calls us to be a people who forgive others as He has forgiven us our sins. (Ephesians 4:32). If I am a true Christian, I must follow this command God has set before me and apply it to my professional career in counseling. But I believe this a balance. God also commands us to not be conformed to the ways of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and by testing we may discern what is the will of God. (Romans 12:2-5). So, as I look to the future and I think about my action plan on how to navigate my personal beliefs and how they impact my practice, I will both educate myself on the people groups that make me feel uncomfortable to better understand and have compassion towards them. And I will seek God and trust that he guides me towards treating others the way He intends, and doing so with love.

References

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