

Professional in Environment – Support Systems

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Throughout my journey in life so far, I have been fortunate enough to have many supporters in my corner. Considering that, I know that many people do not have any type of support system. Thus, I am internally grateful for all the support I have received over the years. It is hard to pinpoint just three supporters because I know many supporters have contributed to my successes over the years. However, these three people have made huge impacts on my life as they have been the biggest critical supporters on my journey to becoming a social worker so far. They have each taught and touched me in ways. It is even hard to describe.

First Supporter

To start it off, my Mom has been the biggest supporter in my life so far. I owe everything to her. She raised three strong children on her own, with little to no help from others. She is the definition of an all-star she is: compassionate, generous, intelligent, dependable, thoughtful, and so much more. I could go on and on about my moms' qualities that have impacted me and others considerably. I can honestly say that she is one in a million. She has never given up on me, even at the darkest moments in my life. I am thankful my Mom critically supports me by looking out for my best interest, even when I may disagree with her. I am truly blessed to have a person in life that always lets me know how proud she is of me and all my accomplishments.

Throughout my journey in life, my mom has supported me in all aspects, from childbirth to the current day. She has supported me by providing for me. With my basic needs, emotional support, financial support, sports, travel, activities, etc. I honestly cannot comprehend how she managed to raise three children by herself and was still able to provide for us. She has always been the biggest supporter in my life. I know I can undoubtedly count on her through my ups and downs. She is so selfless consistently thinks of other people before herself. This astounding

quality of hers putting others before herself has entirely rubbed off on me. It has influenced me to work in the social work profession to help others. Her perpetual urge to help others when they are in need has considerably influenced me into who I am today. She has shown me what it takes to be a compassionate, empathic, and trusting individual in our society. I am indebted to her for all the life lessons she has taught me without her probably realizing it.

Regrettably, she does not always get the credit that she deserves. I acknowledge that I need to thank her more often. For all that she provided me. Without her support, I would not be where and who I am today. She has shown me the importance of truly knowing yourself as an individual. I strive to be like my mom. She has set great examples for me and others. She has been an independent woman for over 23 years. My mom knows what she wants in life, who she is as an individual, and what qualities she brings to the table. I've learned that the importance of knowing who you are as an individual is tremendously valuable. In order to prosper in life and to best serve others.

My mom is remarkable in so many ways. I hope I can follow in her footsteps one day. I hope to be half the mom she has been to be me for my children. I am fortunate enough to have been raised by a strong woman like my mom. Seeing her get up each time after hitting rock bottoms in life has given me strength and inspiration. She has taught me to believe in myself. And to help others who are in need. All of these valuable lessons from my mom have helped me in more ways I can describe. In life and will help me be successful in the social work field.

Second Supporter

This following individual has supported me in ways that are even hard to put into words without getting emotional. Without the support of this person, I do not think I would have made

it through the program. Professor Dr. Quinn-Lee has been there for me in many more ways than one. Both professionally and personally. She is a person I admire and look up to at great length. The way that she holds herself in a room is quite incredible. She gives off this immense compassionate and empathetic energy, making it easy to trust and confide in her. I hope to be the exceptional social worker someday that she is.

Professionally, Professor Dr. Quinn-Lee has supported me in developing my skills as a social worker. She was my professor for SW 320 – Generalist Social Work Practice with Individuals course. As well as many gerontology courses I took with her. In this course specifically, she supported me when I was unclear on what to do and when I was not feeling confident. She helped me foster my skills and helped me become more confident in being a social worker to working with clients. I was perplexed when asked to be one of her instructional assistants for this course, social work 320. I remembered thinking, why did she ask me out of all the other students she could have asked. She then validated why she wanted us to be her instructional assistants and provided me with confidence that I did not have. Professor Dr. Quinn-Lee got me out of my comfort zone, and I am hugely thankful for that, as it has helped me grow. Being a student of hers and an instructional assistant, I learned so much from her. She has provided me with skills that will help in everyday aspects of life.

Personally, Professor Dr. Quinn-Lee has been an enormous support in my journey to becoming a social worker. During the time I was taking courses with her. Along with being her instructional assistant for the course SW 320, a lot was going on. I had a great deal on my plate dealing with my personal life regarding family situations and myself. For which I was unsure how to handle all that I was dealing with in my life. As a result, I felt comfortable confiding in Professor Dr. Quinn-Lee with what was happening in my life. Because of how she presents

herself as caring, trustworthy, and authentic. I was able to feel comfortable enough to explain to her what was going on. I was so scared and nervous, as I tend not to open up to people about my personal life out of fear. If I do open up, I have to completely trust that person where-by I felt I could do with Professor Dr. Quinn-Lee. She is so understanding and empathetic and made me feel safe. During the times I have needed her support. She thoroughly listened to me and helped me figure out some next steps.

I am so utterly grateful to have such a passionate professor that cares so much about her students. That wants to see them succeed. Professor Dr. Quinn-Lee is another individual that will put others before herself. When someone is in a time of need. I asked her once, "How do you do it? How do you be there for others all the time and fully feel what they are feeling? Doesn't it get draining?" Keep in mind, I asked this as I was having falling tears drop down my face and her tears followed mine. This interaction showed that she can fully feel what others are feeling yet still be effective and help the situation. I asked her those questions because I was curious how she manages her emotions yet still can mirror other people's emotions and connect with them. That shows how powerful a social worker she is by having the capability to empathize with people like that. Yet still be focused on them and their issues, not hers. I strive to be a social worker like Professor Dr. Quinn-Lee one day.

I look up to her because I see how much she cares about every person she interacts with daily. She cares about teaching her students the accurate skills to work in the field. Her teaching has provided me with a lot of knowledge over the years in the program and has supported me in becoming an effective social worker. She cares about being there for others and is one of the most understanding individuals that I have been fortunate enough to have in my life during undergrad.

Third Supporter

This next supporter is someone new that has supported me professionally recently in becoming a social worker. I am highly fortunate to have the opportunity to be an intern with Libby Richter, the social worker at the L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library. She has been a great supporter helping me foster my social work skills. Libby has taught me how to not forget about seeing the big picture of an individual to take all things into consideration. I now understand the huge importance of clients having self-determination. Not practicing self-determination with clients can be detrimental to their success. Allowing someone to make their own choices about their lives gives them their power and allows them some dignity. Within my internship so far, I have learned so much. That has just enhanced everything I have learned in my courses.

Libby has supported me by giving me opportunities to practice at all three levels in social work micro, mezzo, and macro. With being able to practice in all three levels at this internship. It has given me a lot of insight into what type of work you do in social work at each of the different levels. Moreover, she takes the time throughout the day to do self-reflection with me. She will answer any of my questions and has helped me build up confidence when working with clients.

My supervisor Libby has many key qualities that make her an amazing social worker. For-which has allowed me to be able to trust her. Day-to-day I see how much she cares about the work she is doing. I can see how much she supports her clients and wants the best for them. Libby has a lot of the same reoccurring clients that come to see her. Cause she has built strong, trusting relationships with them. Numerous of the clients we serve deal with mental health disorders in which many of them have a hard time trusting the government and or organizations. Libby's role in the library has provided a safe place for those clients. They feel more comfortable

in the setting of her office at the library. She has a special way of connecting to clients and making them feel heard. At this internship site, I have learned about the importance of human connection. Many of our clients come in to talk seeking any type of human interaction and connection. Human connection is important in the field of social work because we all need it to survive. Being connected to others is important for our mental and physical well-being and it can be a protective factor against anxiety and depression.

Libby has many different qualities that have made her a successful social worker; and someone who; I can look to for support. She is empathetic and constantly has the ability to fully understand and be aware of someone's feelings and thoughts. This quality has created openness between her and her clients and has helped her build relationships with them. She is also extremely patient with her clients; she does not push them to do anything. This empowers her to understand the client's situation and avoid hasty decision-making and frustration that can lead to costly errors and poor outcomes for the client. Additionally, Libby has a good saying that I will take with me that sometimes all we can do for clients at the moment is to start planting little seeds. So hopefully, one day something will just click, and they will remember all that you have told them before. When planting seeds in someone's mind it may take days, weeks, or even years for those seeds to take root and make sense to the clients. Further, Libby has many other qualities such as being compassionate, a great communicator, supportive, positive attitude, and so much more.

I could not have asked for a better supervisor as she has been so supportive of me. I have built a strong connection with my supervisor and feel comfortable trusting her with personal information. I have shared some personal information with her to get some advice from her. I got advice on how she may have dealt with a similar situation. Fore was extremely helpful and

provided me with steps to take for some self-care. Libby has grandly supported me professionally as well as personally. I am so thankful for my internship and my supervisor, who has taught me so much within a semester. Having this supportive relationship at my internship site has been beneficial in my journey to becoming a professional social worker, which I will take with me for the rest of my career.

Creating Supports

In an effort to continue creating support as I take steps into my professional role as a social worker. I know it is important to build well-round relationships. Professionally and personally with others such as colleagues, supervisors, family, friends, and community members. I have learned how important it is to construct strong; relationships to create support networks. As well as, I have learned how important it is to not; burn any bridges. Because we all know how small the world can be and how small it can be within the social work field itself. I will continue to create support by firstly being a person other people can come to for support if they are in a time of need. This will help create trust within the relationship and build rapport. Allowing me to seek support from them as well if need to be. I will use active and attentive listening as a way of creating support. By showing others that I truly understand and care about what they are saying. As well as, making the time for others because I know this can be hard to do with everyone's busy lives. However, when building relationships and creating support, making time for one another is immensely important in order to support that person.

Moving into a professional role, I will need to create professional-type support. I will need to have colleagues in the social work field as support. As they are the people who know what we go through on a day-to-day basis in our field of work. It is valuable to build these supports to help me when I am dealing with an ethical dilemma and to have others to go to if it

was just a rough day, seeking their advice. In moving towards my professional role, I value support from a person who will provide me with the opportunities that teach me new skills, pushes me to grow through my discomfort, and practice open mindfulness by having a greater perspective.

Looking into my professional career; as a social worker, there are many things that I will be looking for from a peer, supervisor, or professional mentoring relationship. One of the most important things I look for in relationships is people having empathy. By having the ability to perceive and to understand the emotional state and thoughts of another person. Open communication both verbal and non-verbal is also an important quality. Without open communication, we know that many issues can arise. Which could negatively impact clients. I also value critical thinking in my professional relationships as it allows people to make informed decisions to identify the best resources and formulate the best plan to help others. Having trust, respect, and reliability are also important qualities to have in any supportive relationship. There are many more qualities that I value in my relationships that I will look for when developing relationships.

As I move forward into my field of social work, I will recognize my professional and personal support networks as an ongoing critical aspect of maintaining an ethical practice, healthy boundaries, and personal self-care. I understand the importance of having supportive relationships in this field is critical to provide support to your clients and for me as a social worker to avoid burnout. Therefore, I will continue to foster valuable supportive relationships to help me to best; serve my clients in the future.