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Effecting Change

19 January 2015

Paper #1  Personal Narrative:  Sparks that ignite the spirit (motivation to serve)

What brought me to my work was my childhood experiences and growing up in a family which valued helping others with developmental disabilities, the elderly at the end of their lives in hospice care, and those with mental illnesses. Growing up, I spent most of my time at homes that my nana worked at while she took care of individuals with developmental disabilities and the homes of where my mom worked in with the elderly and in hospice settings.

In “Walk Out, Walk On”, Margaret Wheatley explains “skilled hospice workers offer comfort and support to those at the end of their lives far beyond attending to physical needs. They help the dying focus on the transition ahead, and encourage them to see what their life has taught them—what wisdom and values shine clearly now that the distractions are gone”. This quote establishes the philosophy of serving the community and the value of watching my mother take care of the elderly at the end of their life. It was an incredible experience to grow up in such a caring and loving setting.

It was obviously very sad but to know that they had loving people there with them is so valuable to them, especially at the end of their lives. Many people didn't have family members and thought of my mom and I as family. It was really touching and inspired me to volunteer throughout my teen years in high school at senior centers and homes for disabled individuals in the community. I played music with them and they absolutely loved it. Volunteering influenced me to go into music therapy as my initial major in college so I could incorporate my passion for music with passion for helping others. When I realized this major was too much to handle with my health, I realized my true passion was psychology and to help others with mental health issues.

I came to this realization at a time in my life after being diagnosed with an eating disorder and my uncle was diagnosed with schizophrenia not too long after that. Experiencing that deep depression when in that illness made me want to help others that have and are going through that too. I also still see my uncle struggle with everyday activities. My fiancé has bipolar disorder and I see how medical and mental health care really don't do much to help him live the life he could potentially live. The lack of resources for mental health is astonishing and this led me to my dream and ultimate goal of becoming a Doctor of Clinical Psychology and wanting to volunteer in the mental health field along the way. The contribution I hope to make is to educate others about mental illness and to help people learn how to cope with mental illness within their families. I look forward to learning more about mental illness to help my family members and community while they can also learn from my experiences as well.