Approaches to self-care in a third level social care programme to establish and maintain well-being

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Session Overview

– Set context and explain aspects of the programme and why students choose social care
– Outline key information related to self-care in CORU’s proficiencies
– Outline the group work component of programme
– Highlight some key theories
– List successes, difficulties and advice
Speaker Profiles

– Aoife is a fulltime lecturer in the Department of Applied Social Studies in Cork Institute of Technology. She holds a PhD and Ordinary & Honours degree in Social Care and now lectures on a range of subjects in CIT and is part of the placement team.

– Deborah is a fulltime lecturer in the Department of Applied Social Studies in Cork Institute of Technology and she holds an Honours degree in Counselling. Her work focuses on the personal and professional development of students on the social care and community development programmes through the medium of group facilitation. Deborah is also a member of the social care placement team.
Context

- Social Care courses are broad and provide focus on a range of skills, knowledge and competencies for the social care student to become a social care professional.

- This presentation will put the focus on social care pathway from social care student to qualified social care worker with a focus on self-care in years one and two.

- An holistic and humanistic approach is adopted- the circle of supports in third level range from student support services, academic support and practice support.

- At present the social care course in CIT caters for 75 students per year.

- Social care courses must apply for approval with CORU with applications due to be processed beginning end of year.
What Our Programme Delivers
Why Students Choose Social Care Work

– For general access to a course which is broad and provides a range of options
– Based on adverse personal experience, they now want an opportunity to reach out to persons in need in a professional capacity
– Students unaware of how to help themselves, seek ways to help others
– Some students hope to progress to social work or other therapies
– Some students have no particular preference at second level and may end up with social care as their second or third choice
– Some mature students actively seek a social care programme to gain qualifications having worked in the sector
– Some people have a strong desire to make a difference in the world and improve quality of life for service users
Relevant CORU Documentation for the SCW

- Standards of Proficiency for Social Care Workers 2017
- Criteria for Education and Training Programmes 2017
- Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics 2019

- Further updates available at
  https://www.coru.ie/en/about_us/update_on_the_registration_of_social_care_workers
What CORU Requires

Standards of Proficiency For Social Care Workers

The standards of proficiency detail the skills and abilities that individuals must possess in order to enter the register. They are the threshold standards deemed necessary by the registration board at the level of entry to practice. They are not standards for practice after entry to the register.

This document sets out the standards of proficiency for Social Care Workers under five domains:

1. Professional Autonomy and Accountability
2. Communication, Collaborative Practice and Teamworking
3. Safety and Quality
4. Professional Development
5. Professional Knowledge and Skills (SCWRB 2017a)
Criteria for Education and Training Programmes

– The criteria for education and training programmes are used to ensure that a programme has a system in place to consistently and effectively produce graduates who meet the standards of proficiency for entry to the register. These criteria form the Registration Board’s requirements for the way education and training programmes are designed, organised and managed. (SCWRB 2017b)

– All programmes will be required to seek approval or cease operating
Responsibility to meet standards
CORU Standards of Proficiency Relevant to Self-Care

1. Professional Autonomy and Accountability

- 2. Be able to identify the limits of their practice and know when to seek advice and additional expertise or refer to another professional
- 18. Be able to take responsibility for managing one’s own workload as appropriate
- 20. Be aware of and be able to take responsibility for managing one’s own health and wellbeing
- 22. Be able to evaluate the effect of their own characteristics, values and practice on interactions with service users and be able to critically reflect on this to improve practice
2. Communication, Collaborative Practice and Teamworking
   - 16. Understand the principles and dynamics of group work in a range of settings and be aware of the role of different facilitation techniques to improve outcomes and enhance the participation of service users in care

4. Professional Development
   - 4. Understand and recognise the impact of personal values and life experience on professional practice and be able to manage this impact appropriately

5. Professional Knowledge and Skills
   - 13. Be able to integrate self-awareness, communication, working in partnership and professional judgement into professional practice to meet the need of the service user and empower them to meet their full potential
   - 19. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of one’s own personal growth and development in order to engage in effective professional practice whilst developing the personal skills of self care and self-awareness in the role (SCWRB 2017a)
We need to help students progress across the learning cycle

Aspects of Self

Professional Practice

Needs of Service Users

Social Care Graduate Capable of Registration
Promoting Self-Care

– ‘Graduates will…’ Students must achieve all standards of proficiency
– The responsibility of meeting self-care standards is on social care programmes and on the professional
– Fitness to practice is another consideration
– Code of Ethics also puts onus on the professional
– *This all stresses the importance of equipping social care students with the right tools for self-care*
Self-Care - What is it?

‘Mind yourself’
‘Look after yourself’
‘Take care of yourself’
Aspects of the ‘Self’

- Physical
- Cognitive/Rational
- Emotional
- Social
- Sexual
- Creative
- Spiritual
What we do at Cork Institute of Technology

CIT Social Care Programme

The **Personal and Professional Development modules** are designed to support the student in their experience of college & in preparing for PWP placement; they consist of self-awareness skills development.

Students are randomly allocated groups (max. 15)

Continue through years 1 and 2 of the Programme
Personal Development Groups

Introductions and motivations for choosing the Social Care course.
Transitioning to 3rd level

– Hopes
– Fears
– Expectations

Group guidelines – creating safety

Corey, G. & Schneider Corey, M. ‘Becoming a Helper’ Guidelines on
‘Getting the most from the group experience’
How group works – Becomes a Support system

- Format: circle
- Initially students find this quite ‘challenging’ ‘different’ ‘intimidating’ ‘scary’
- Introduce ice breakers and fun activities
- After 3 to 4 weeks ‘Enjoy the circle’ ‘settle in’ ‘Prefer it to looking at the back of someone’s head’ ‘makes for open conversation and dialogue’
Students see it as a safe interactive space providing

- Time to consider self, reflect on questions posed, formulate responses and learn from others
- Opens them up to hearing and seeing different perspectives
- Use the opportunity to articulate and communicate difficulties and challenges they are experiencing
- Appropriate self-disclosure
- Such a relief to discover others are facing similar issues and they are not alone...together they will prevail!
- Mindfulness/ Meditation/grounding exercise to begin to help students focus.
- Opening and Closing round
Student’s Perspective

– “PD class for me, was helpful for identifying why we, react / do certain things. Essentially getting us thinking introspectively, and starting to learn to be self aware which is essential In this field of study and profession. I found the lectures about Corey and Corey and the motivations of helpers, particularly enlightening and caused me to examine my own helper motivations.

– “Personal development is something I along with a lot of people would of shyed away from as doing this course you worry about a clients wellbeing, not your own. The transition to college from school was a massive step. It was so benificial to take time out to reflect on our busy day to day lives, to be able to share with a group knowing there would be no judgement, and to learn skills that would help us as workers and in life itslef, after all how could we help others if we couldn’t help ourselves.”

(Social Care yr.1 Students)
- **Maslow, A.**
  - Hierarchy of Needs

- **Glasser, W.**
  - 5 Basic Needs
  - Reality Therapy/Choice Theory
Coping skills questionnaire...

**Personal Development (1st year)**

“Coping Skills”

**Accommodation**

Where are you living?
- a. At home?
- b. Renting an apartment?
- c. In other accommodation?

Who are you living with? Family, friends, strangers, relations?

How is this working out for you?

What is your accommodation like?

If you are living away from home, do you miss home?

What (if anything) do you miss/t hat miss about home?

On a scale of 1-10, how independent do you think you are?

What kinds of new skills are you learning?

**Food and hygiene**

If you are living independently, what kind of meals do you cook for yourself?

Can you shop for yourself? Who does the shopping?

Are you managing a budget? If so, how is this going for you?

Do you think that you are eating properly?

What are the facilities like where you live?
- Number of rooms:
  - For self?
  - Shared?
- Toilet and shower shared?
- Ensuite?
- Laundry facilities?

Who does the cleaning? Washing up?

What are you aware of in terms of your own personal hygiene and that of those around you?

**Health and safety issues**

What does safe behavior mean to you?

Is your personal safety something you are aware of?

How would you know if you felt unsafe?

What steps would you take if you felt ‘at risk’?

Who would you talk to if you felt unsafe?

What steps would you take to ensure your safety?

Identify three ways you look after your health and wellbeing?

What issues are you aware of around sexual health?

How do you mind yourself/not yourself ‘at risk’?
based on both theories

What does support mean or look like to you?

What support systems do you have? Identify 3, if possible.

If you cannot, what might that say about you?

What supports are working for you?

Can you think of any other support systems which may help you to adapt?

Part-time work
Do you work part-time? If so, or at what do you work?

How do you feel about the work you do?

Your co-workers?
The boss?

How does your work life fit in or interfere with your college timetable, studies, family and social life?

Are there any issues of exploitation about part-time work for you? e.g. minimum wage, excessive hours, bullying/harassment? Specify.

Fun?

What do you do for fun in your life?

Is there much room in your life for fun at the moment?

What do you most enjoy doing?

Are you a member of any clubs/societies within or outside college?

Take the time to describe your experience of transitioning to third level and all that this entails for you. Include your thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
Communication verbal and non-verbal methods

- Active listening – how it feels to be heard/not heard
- What can interfere with one’s capacity to really see/hear another
- Develop congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, C)
- Focus on developing **practical skills** including open communication, honesty and integrity, a healthy self confidence and encouraging individual personal qualities and attributes for the social care worker
- Self V Shadow
- What to do to have your needs met – knowing the difference between needs and wants
- Asking for help
Exploring E-motions

- Using a variety of lists of ‘feeling words’ & creative tools to connect with, acknowledge, identify, name, explore and process feelings
- Storytelling
- Art/drawing
- Fun
- Worksheets – sentence completion
- Journalling (using Gibbs’ Reflective cycle & Kolbs Learning Cycle)
- Emotional Intelligence (Daniel Goleman)
Self Esteem What is it?

Theorists
- Satir, Virginia
- Lindenfield, G
- Branden, N. Six Pillars: The Practice of Living Consciously; Self-Acceptance; Self-Responsibility; Self-assertiveness; Living Purposefully; Personal Integrity
- Marianne Williamson ‘Our Greatest Fear’
- Affirmations
- My Declaration of Self-Esteem
Group Theories

Assessments include small group presentations on topics:

- *Stages of Development* in groups (Tuckman, B. ann Jensen, A.)
- *Communication Styles; Blocks to contact* (Gestalt therapy); *Group Roles* and roles in family system – functional and dysfunctional
- Required to link information to self, group and Social Care work in line with Standards of Proficiency
Other helpful theories and tools

These theories and tools help in developing self awareness, compassion, understanding, self acceptance and empathy

– Theory of change (Prochaska and DiClemente)
– Grief and loss (Kubler-Ross, E., Worden Wm., Bowlby, J.)
– Dual Process (Stroebe & Schut)
– *Defence mechanisms*
Student Testimonials

– “I believe Personal Development has made me more aware that looking after myself is what I should put first, whether it’s my biological health or my mental health, Pd makes us aware that we matter too, and many of us are in this course because we care a lot and may have a tendency to put others first so PD is essential to our professional development.” (SC2, student)

– “I was very apprehensive about joining the PD class...and thought that I had reached a point where I had dealt with a lot of stuff but through the class I realized that caring for the self is an ongoing process and without self care you are unable to care or help anybody else. The class brings you out of your comfort zone but that is exactly what is needed to realize your own potential. This class has encouraged me to look within myself and identify my needs and what I need to do to meet them” (SC1, Mature)

– “By learning new stuff about me it helped me engage with my service users!” (SC1)
“I for one was very hesitant about the PD class and if I’m completely honest I don’t think I initially took it very seriously. But then I realized that **we as students were being given an incredible learning opportunity and that it is up to each of us as individuals what we get out of the class.** It certainly was, for me, one of the tougher modules, but my initial hesitation didn’t last long. I learned a lot in the class, mainly how to look at things slightly differently, like being self aware for example, it is so important to understand and be aware of how our thoughts, moods, behaviors, attitudes etc impact on those around us, in every aspect of life..” (SC1, Mature)

“PD group has encouraged to take a moment to check in with myself and see how I’m feeling. The simple question of how has your week been makes you take a moment to reflect on what’s been going on. The group has lead to me reaching out for the supports I needed with regards to my anxiety and I have grown so much from this. I am well able to handle my anxiety now and I think if it wasn't for the group I would not have even realised that I had anxiety. **The group has thought me the importance of looking after yourself first before anyone else. Thank you.**” (SC2)
Successes

– Evident in student testimonials
– Promoting, encouraging, facilitating students wellbeing
– Theory and practice is improved
– Student retention is high in our social care programme
– Students become aware of their role in their practice with others
– On placement supervisors recognise the strengths of CIT students
– In practice students no longer have the support of group, but it is hoped their learning will allow them to seek help if needed
Difficulties experienced in having students engage in the process

- Onus is on the individual student to attend, engage and develop
- Attendance has minimum requirements however they are not always adhered to
- Numbers and resourcing-Groups need to be small
- Students do not always recognise why they are the focus
- Life experiences can lead to career difficulties if the student is not open to self-care
- Mental health issues can negatively impact ability to attend and engage or students may find it difficult to seek help
- Relies heavily on people opening up to the experience of group work
- Research is required into the efficacy of group work in social care to validate success
- CORU will require evidence of students meeting criteria and standards
Advice Going Forward

- Recruitment and selection processes of social care students need to specifically target people who choose social care as a career path and are aware of upcoming requirements
- Numbers of student cohorts need to be reduced
- Group work needs to be an integral part of the social care programmes
- Self care life skills should be encouraged from year one of a social care programme
- Students also need access to external services such as counselling
- Consider social care mentor or ‘buddy’/PALS system for first year students
- The importance of self-care cannot be underestimated, having it enshrined in CORU’s standards reminds us that a workers wellbeing is paramount
Summary of Session

- The key message from today’s presentation is that students need to be supported through the learning cycle to understand the importance of self-care in caring for others
- Third level institutions need to prioritise group work as a pathway to achieving the Standards of Proficiency for Social Care Workers
- Student wellbeing needs to be encouraged and maintained
Any Questions

- Or alternatively contact us on
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- Thank you for your time and cooperation
References


– Graph one- http://www.edimprovement.org/2016/12/maslows-hierarchy-food-fall/

– Graph two-https://rebeccagrayblog.wordpress.com/our-basic-needs/


