From Yoda, “Do/Do Not. There Is No Try”: Teaching Practice Online

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Why Teach Practice Online?

- Remedies two social and economic justice issues
  - lack of affordable, accessible professional social work education in parts of Virginia and
  - the lack of qualified social work practitioners in certain localities in our state.

- Presents opportunities for learning not afforded in face to face (f2f) classroom
Not Whether but How?

How to teach so that we
• recreate those learning opportunities that worked well in the f2f classroom and
• take advantage of the opportunities afforded us now by certain technologies.

This work is a work in progress, one requiring a substantial commitment of time and effort beyond that expended in my f2f classes.
From Yoda:

"Do or Do Not. There Is No Try."
Agenda

Review of

- Skills Practice assignment to develop engagement, assessment, and intervention skills.

- Tools to accomplish skills building
  - Learning tools
  - Media tools
Context of Skills Practice

- Second of four assignments
  - Structured Learning Journals
  - Skills Practice
  - Biopsychosocialspiritual Assessment
  - Group Presentations on Practice Theories

- Developed in response to needs:
  - How do we connect students from 23 different localities ranging from Washington D.C. metro area to the Eastern Shore to the mountains of Bedford County?
  - How do we teach skills/practice behaviors in an online environment?
Components of Skills Practice

- The two components of Skills Practice are

  - Creation and recording of online role-plays using a web conferencing tool, followed by

  - Writing assignment within a small group discussion board to apply course concepts, synthesize learning, develop critical thinking, and engage in self-reflexive practice.
Performance Narratives

- Performance narratives are role-plays but with key elements embedded that I want students to enact.
  - Client behaviors likely to evoke strong feelings in student practitioners
  - Safety concerns
  - Potential value conflicts and ethical dilemmas
  - Social and economic justice issues
  - Engagement challenges
  - Symptoms/behaviors for assessment
  - Intervention challenges
Sue is our first case. Focus with this scenario is on engagement and gathering information about presenting problems:
- recent lumpectomy,
- separation from husband due to his affair with another woman who was her best friend,
- a number of symptoms of depression including some vegetative symptoms – wt. loss, early a.m. awakening, anhedonia.

Introduces safety concerns:
- lives alone now,
- on Prosac, discloses previous attempts to self medicate with wine to help herself sleep.

Scenario typically elicits strong feelings in student practitioners.
Little Sue

Little Sue is Sue from previous scenario when she was young. She manifests separation anxiety from mother since father left home abruptly with no explanation to children, i.e. “he has simply run away from his responsibilities.” Symptoms are difficulty falling asleep, difficulty going to school, somatic symptoms of nausea, vomiting, headaches. Scenario allows practice in speaking with children and recognizing connection between unresolved losses in childhood and losses in adulthood. Also introduces ethical dilemma of confidentiality when Little Sue discloses to social worker that she is not talking with mother about her feelings of loss regarding father in order to avoid upsetting mother.
Memsahib

Memsahib is a scenario involving an Asian Indian grandmother recently immigrated to the U.S. secondary to death of her son in India.

Now living with second son, his wife, and two children who are second generation Indian raised in America.

Scenario affords practice in interviewing persons for whom English is a second language. Also offers practice with interviewing persons with cultural beliefs around seeking help only if “crazy” and with differences in child-rearing practices.

Finally, introduces elements of role change with move from India to U.S. and embeds issues of social and economic injustice with introduction of grandchildren’s use of Memsahib as a derogatory term that resurrects discrimination she suffered in India due to Anglo-Indian heritage.
Instructions for Skills Practice

- Students in small groups are asked to . . .
  - choose one group member to enact client’s narrative, making sure to portray key elements of the narrative for learning purposes, and
  - work together as a group to decide how to take turns conducting the interview.

- Students have one week to review the scenario, plan their narrative, and record it in Collaborate.
Instruction for Skills Practice

- Students are told . . .
  - It is acceptable to make a “mistake” because we learn as much from our mistakes as from our successes.
  - Embed a mistake if they think this will be helpful for learning. This is a key instruction as it creates safety in taking a risk.
  - Be creative and have fun with this! Often students come to the narrative in “costume,” i.e. curlers in hair, wearing a sari, hair in pigtails, etc.
Tragedy

(link to student photo & video removed when posting online)

- Tragedy is fourth and final scenario that provides opportunity to interview angry client who spent night in ER due to cocaine overdose.
- History gleaned from him and from mother indicates serious safety concerns that must be evaluated to determine need for hospitalization.
- Scenario embeds social and economic justice concerns and two ethical concerns.
- Scenario also offers opportunity to begin to apply some techniques from motivational interviewing.
Notesheets – Interviewers/Interviewees

- All students watch the role-plays.

- Students may use two tools to take notes while they watch. These are not graded but are a tool to help them recall what they saw.
  - Verbal & Nonverbal Behaviors – Interviewer Notesheet
  - Verbal & Nonverbal Behaviors – Interviewee Notesheet
### Verbal & Nonverbal Behaviors – Interviewer Notesheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Y or N</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appears able to be with and attentive to the client – not distracted by phones, paperwork, own internal processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses self to communicate genuine caring, authenticity – pay attention to interviewer’s posture, gestures, eye contact, tone of voice, facial expressions congruent with what he/she is saying, waiting through pauses and silences</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits behaviors that normally engender trust (is client sharing?)</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids &quot;parallel play&quot; (unwarranted self-disclosure)</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Allows client to complete thoughts</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Actively and accurately listens to both verbal and nonverbal behaviors and communications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uses &quot;furthering&quot; responses – &quot;uh-huh,&quot; &quot;yes, I see,&quot; &quot;tell me more about that&quot;</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tracks the client’s responses - follows his/her path of sharing about concerns</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reflects what he/she hears client saying – “So what I think you are saying is . . .”, “So I think I am hearing . . .”</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reflects client’s nonverbal behavior in questioning tone – “It seems like you it is difficult for you to speak about that,” “It seems like that might be painful for you,” “It seems like that made you really angry”</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uses clarifying questions as necessary to ensure accuracy of hearing client’s concerns – “You said [this]. Could you say more about what you meant when you said [this]?”</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summarizes or paraphrases as necessary to ensure accuracy of hearing client’s concerns and punctuate items for work</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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# Verbal & Nonverbal Behaviors - Interviewee Notesheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Y or N</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to attend to the interviewer in the session – not distracted by phones, surroundings, or own internal processes</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> Be mindful when cultural issues impact any of these factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee’s posture, gestures, eye contact, tone of voice, facial expressions, congruence of what he/she is saying, pauses and silences, other noticeable nonverbal behaviors</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to establish trust (is client sharing?)</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Any obvious transference?</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to articulate concerns (list main concerns)</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to clarify and/or correct any misunderstanding by interviewer</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to share feelings</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Ability to articulate goals</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to articulate or own his/her strengths</td>
<td>Y or N</td>
<td></td>
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The term comes from David Coogan’s 1999 book, *Electronic Writing Centers: Computing the Field of Composition.*

The “electronic exile” – a space to “sort through . . . competing discourses” (Coogan 42).

Writing “permits reflection, abstraction, and forms of thought impossible in an oral culture” (McLuhan, cited in Landow 32).

Coogan then used this space for “encouraging the creative juxtaposition or transformation of ideas,” fueled by “answerability” to the other within a dialogic process that develops critical thinking within a self–reflexive process (Coogan xix–xx).

Applied these concepts to create Reflection on Skills Practice Writing Assignment.
Reflection on Skills Practice

Purposes of Writing Assignment:

• to apply course concepts to scenarios

• to engage each student’s observing ego to critically examine what he/she has performed or observed and offer space to apprehend cognitions, affect, and behaviors

• to create a space for reflection, dialogue, and learning from other small group members
Reflection on Skills Practice

- Questions are added as content is covered during the semester.

- Some of the questions below have been adapted from those used over the years by me and other faculty in previous assignments in f2f classes.

- Countertransference issues –
  - What countertransference issues would be arising for you if you were the worker in this situation?

- Identity as professional social worker –
  - What will you say to yourself to enable you to respond as a professional social worker? Consider management of personal values, professional roles and boundaries, self-correction (self-talk), intentional use of self, etc.
Reflection on Skills Practice Rubric

Ethical issues –
• What value conflicts/ethical dilemmas are present for you in this situation, if any? Note: Be careful to distinguish between value conflicts and ethical dilemmas. If none, say none and explain reason.

Social and economic justice issues –
• What social and economic justice issues do you identify?
Engagement –
• What techniques did you/would you use to engage the individual, family, or group, for example, to establish trust, build rapport, etc.? (See Interviewer and Interviewee Notesheets here.) What barriers do you see and how will you plan for them?

Assessment –
• What is your assessment of the process between the social worker and the interviewee, i.e. what might the process tell you about transference and countertransference? The source of his/her difficulties? What strengths do you see?
Goals –
• What specific goals were established with the client? What additional goals may need to be explored?

Intervention –
• What intervention strategies were utilized and with what results? What specific human behavior and practice theories appear to be guiding the social worker’s assessment and interventions to date and in what way have they done so? Where might the worker need to empower or advocate on behalf of the client(s) with one or more significant systems in order to assist him/her to resolve the difficulty and move toward his/her goals?
Additional Learning Tools

- **Blogs**
  - Purpose is to “make thinking visible” (J. Kincannon, personal communication, March 12, 2015).
  - Alt-Lab encouraging use of blogs for “connected learning.”
  - Can be used both inside and outside Bb. Function like Blackboard Discussion Board with author posting and others commenting.
  - Can be open to individual, to group, to class, to world wide web if on website.
  - Cannot be collected, so if collection is necessary, use DB.

- **Individual Journals**
  - Allow private communication between instructor & student, unless instructor opens it to class.
  - Can be used for temperature checks.
  - Entries cannot be collected.
  - Considering use of it for check-in during group projects.
Stages of Media Production

Conceptualization  Image or sound capture  Editing  Encoding  File transfer
Media Tools for Web Conferencing

• Collaborate Advantages
  • Integrated into Learning Management System (Bb) so no need for editing, encoding, and ftping to server
  • Has excellent support via toll free #
  • Relatively consistent performance – most errors due to user error
  • Can share content – PowerPoint, applications, web tour
Media Tools for Web Conferencing

- Collaborate Disadvantages
  - Video lag/freezing with wireless connections or areas with problematic bandwidth
    Solution: Wire up – connect Ethernet cord to wireless router and computer.
    Solution 2: Check audio wizard and test with group before record to ensure microphones and video are working.
  - Audio feedback/echo when recording without headsets
    Solution: Use headsets.
    Workaround: Mute speaker when not speaking. Remember to unmute when speaking.
Media Tools for Web Conferencing

- Collaborate Disadvantages (cont.)
  - Option to convert recordings to MP4 misleading – converts images on whiteboard with audio, not the videos in audiovisual window.
  Solution: Must screen capture videos after produced.
Media Tools for Web Conferencing

- Web Ex Advantages
  - Integrates into Learning Management System
  - Has Meeting Center where all can speak & present
  - Has Training Center
  - Both together function to create a classroom environment
  - High video and audio quality
  - Can share content
Media Tools for Web Conferencing

- Zoom Advantages
  - Good audio & video quality
  - Can share content
  - Can record
  - Easy to use/intuitive
  - Basic account is free to anyone – allows no time limit on 1–1 connections; allows connection to 25 persons but no longer than 40 min.
  - Relatively consistent performance

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Media Tools for Web Conferencing

- Zoom Disadvantages
  - Must upload video to LMS or other server
  - My experience – some difficulty with recording other recorded material shown during presentations such as videos – needs additional testing
Conclusion

- Outcomes are observed and anecdotal at this point as reported by instructors, students (in course evaluations) and field instructors via liaisons. They include:
  - Increased integration of course concepts and accurate application to practice
  - Intentional use of field instruction with agendas, questions re: course concepts, external resources, etc.
  - Increased awareness of their own intrapsychic & interpersonal processes leading to insight, development of identity as a professional social worker, and intentional use of self.
  - Increased efforts to seek out additional information and/or alternative perspectives.
  - Increased ability to situate new knowledge in context of what is known and determining the “so what?” of what they are learning.
  - Improvement in writing skills due to the emphasis on scholarly writing
Benefits of teaching practice online for the instructor are . . .

- I know all the students in my class and I know them more fully than I knew my students in f2f classes.
- Writing in Structured Learning Journals and Skills Practice promotes self-disclosure.
- Teaching online promotes academic rigor. Students come to Discussion Board prepared. They are unable to answer questions if they have not read the material and/or watched assigned videos.
Conclusion

- Next Steps – pilot of standardized patient project to measure skill acquisition.
References & Additional Resources


