

Reflective Practice and Its Contributions to ACPE's Flourishing

Susan Freeman

As a reader, contributor to, and now board member for the *Reflective Practice* journal, I can attest that this resource has contributed significantly to my flourishing as a person and a professional.

Human flourishing reflects a state of being that some associate with the word *eudaimonia*. Positive psychology innovators developed a Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being, which they associate with these six dimensions:

1. self-discovery
2. perceived development of one's best potentials
3. a sense of purpose and meaning in life
4. investment of significant effort in pursuit of excellence
5. intense involvement in activities
6. enjoyment of activities as personally expressive¹

All six dimensions have been at play in my CPE career. I began the process for becoming an ACPE certified educator in 2006, was certified in

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Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry

ISSN 2325-2847 (print)* ISSN 2325-2855 (online)

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2009, and have been working in the Clinical Pastoral Education world since then—in hospice, home health, and hospital contexts. I have leaned on the *Reflective Practice* journal for guidance during my training years, for opportunities to share my own writing, and for direction and inspiration as a teacher, spiritual care provider, supervisor, and leader.

Writing theory papers—addressing theology, education, and personality—was one of the most rigorous challenges of the certification process for me, as it is for many certified educator candidates. It was certainly an “investment of significant effort in pursuit of excellence”—eudaimonia dimension #4. Like others who had gone before me, I turned to the Theory Papers of the Year section, published in each issue of *Reflective Practice*, for ideas on how to approach this task. Reading through sets of papers was stimulating, motivating, and encouraging. Eventually, after my own papers (finally) passed, I submitted them to the journal. “The Art of Supervision: Canvas, Song, and Dance” was published in volume 31. The journal continues to publish papers that not only model theory articulation as a resource for certified educator candidates but also provide opportunities for seasoned educators to re-familiarize themselves with compelling theory and/or to encounter new ideas and innovative approaches to theory.

For several journal issues, I have had the privilege of serving on the committee to select theory papers for publication. Indeed, new approaches and expressions of theory are emerging! In its online format, the journal is able to publish artwork, PowerPoints, or other visual images. In its 40th volume, the journal published Nancy Wood’s work entitled “Playbill: ACPE Theater ‘Replacing Judgment with Curiosity.’” This contribution included an invented playbill, photographs, and other images. Publicizing the creativity of the “next generation” of certified educators enriches us by sharing new ways of understanding our profession and nurturing our flourishing.

Topically, too, the journal contributed to my flourishing as I encountered difficult educational and professional challenges. The journal tackles sensitive, complex, and even contentious topics. During my process of becoming a certified educator, I became increasingly aware of the potency of sexual feelings in supervision, mentoring, and education. I was grateful to discover that *Reflective Practice* had devoted a symposium in volume 21 to the theme of sexuality in supervision. Eighteen in-

dividuals contributed their voices! The range of views and experiences provided a framework for wrestling with this often taboo topic. I appreciate the invitation and normalization inherent in the journal's boldness for addressing challenging topics. I turned again to these articles many years later, reviewing them as I prepared to lead education seminars on this topic for groups of certified educator students attending a multi-day seminar on supervision. The topic was popular! Without the journal, I doubt I would have engaged this important topic to the degree I did, either as a supervisory student or as a teacher of supervisory students.

The journal has challenged me to "up my game" in developing expertise in areas that I have felt I *should* pay more attention to but did not prioritize. The journal reminds me of the bar to which my profession should strive. An example of this is in volume 38, where the Chaplaincy Education section focused on transference and countertransference. One scholar wrote an essay on the topic, and others were invited to respond. I was honored to be one of the respondents. Thinking deeply about this topic, reflecting on others' views, and feeling compelled to hone my skills around and deepen my awareness of this subject pushed me to improve my effectiveness and insights as an educator and a chaplain. Addressing eudaimonia's "development of one's best potentials" is an important contributor to a sense of flourishing.

I appreciate the way the journal nurtures a diversity of voices and viewpoints. In volume 33, along with Peter Yuichi Clark, I joined a "roundtable conversation" with Dagmar Grefe on her then recently published book *Encounters for Change: Interreligious Cooperation in the Care of Individuals and Communities*. This creatively structured book review included reflections from the perspectives of different faiths. In the spirit of eudaimonia, with the multiple voices represented, this review rose to a more "intense involvement of activity"—eudaimonia dimension #5.

Each edition of the journal includes numerous book reviews, inspiring me to invest more effort to raising my own learning "in pursuit of excellence"—eudaimonia's dimension #4. With their unique theological and spiritual perspectives, numerous articles have lifted my "sense of purpose and meaning in life"—dimension #3. Fortunately for me and the hundreds of individuals who have contributed reviews and essays to the journal, we have had the opportunity to enjoy the flourishing that comes with an activity that is "personally expressive"—dimension #6.

I celebrate the readers, writers, and future contributors to the journal. It is a resource for all of us as we grow in “self-discovery”—dimension #1—as people and as professionals.

NOTES

- 1 Alan S. Waterman et al., “The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being: Psychometric properties, demographic comparisons, and evidence of validity,” *Journal of Positive Psychology* 5, no. 1 (2010): 44.