PERSONAL POWER

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Introduction

The events of the 911 tragedy continue to loom heavily in our consciousnesses and will be remembered as long as woman and man are alive. It was a day of infamy.

September 11th, 2001: I sit at my kitchen table attempting to comprehend the incredible. I ask myself, “Can I possibly stretch my boundaries of moral sensibility to truly prize and to offer (true) empathic understanding to someone who would mastermind such terror? For weeks and months thereafter; here, there, and everywhere-- I have been awakened and reawakened to the unbelievability of human desire for destruction and to intense human fear.

Standing up from my table, and throwing my hands in the air I shout aloud “THIS IS HAPPENING!”;” and in the next breath, “UNBELIEVABLE.” Alternately sitting and then pacing, and then seeing and then lost, my imaginary conversations with Osama bin Laden ebbed and flowed in clarity and obfuscation. My growing acceptance of him as a real person evolved at once quite rapidly as the fearsome murderous flesh and being of a once unknown assailant appeared everywhere. And this, despite my near total being a reflection of a most certain inflexible will toward peace. Violence owned me but with a shutter. No agreement whatsoever; nor approval of the act. The reality of acceptance was more a glimmer than a complete and transparent unconditional positive regard. I rather more felt quite a lot of sorrow and also pity—and saw at once that neither pity nor compassion were likely reflections of a truly empathic state.

In projecting onto Osama Bin Laden my own deep remorse for his actions-- for am I in my humanity also not capable of like behavior-- I wondered could Osama himself experience even the slightest sense of shame? I forgave him in his admission of wrongness (that was actually rather easy for me). And yet, my absolution had a tenuous hold. What might he think of Jo Cohen Hamilton’s (a Jewish American none-the-less!) offer of absolution? My question “How can you live with yourself now,” even quite gently and genuinely asked, was coupled with the answer that agreement to be sentenced to life or even death would be the only alternatives. Such behavior simply could not go unpunished. Suicide was a possibility self-recrimination. I revealed most obviously my incomplete acceptance of Osama’s personhood insofar as his actions, so dastardly to me, were a part of the person. I saw with utter and complete possibility that neither my compassion nor forgiveness nor humanity made contact. Empathy has little chance when an aggressor single- and master-
mindedly lives and relives destruction of anything other than its aim. In Parade Magazine (Reading Eagle, April 7th, 2001), Elie Weisel understood a significant part of terroristic individuals to relate to very deep and most times unconscious desires for belonging. At least some of my fictitious characters could relate to my empathic fantasy, “It is very difficult to live with yourself now....,” and “What are you going to do,” and “there’s a chance they’ll take mercy on you....”

The tragedies that occurred on September 11th emphasized the significance of people’s actions. Who a person is in his essence will shape his actions. What she does, helps to define the essence of who she is. While they could be theoretically, conceptually thought of separately, action and essence are humanly inextricably linked.

I struggled at the kitchen table to accurately perceive what was within the range of my understanding about what would provoke, evoke, inspire, drive and pull deliberate massacre. It seemed to me that to fly myself to my own death, to the death of the passengers, to the death and destruction of my path’s aim, I would need to harbor a number of personally objectionable internal forces. They are the beliefs, feelings and behaviors I especially aim not to be. As I understood them on that day and upon reflection, they are:

**Rageful objectification.** I see real human beings as objects of my projection of evil. In this framework, anyone and anything standing against my aim must be obliterated.

**Self-Aggrandizement.** I terrorize and destroy “in the name of holiness.” I harbor not a sense of moral servitude, but rather a self-righteousness sense of self-importance that I call servitude. I am holy justified indignation.

**Self-Righteousness.** I bear no guilt nor shame. I take full responsibility and am a hero to my followers. I follow no-one. I make Allah proud. I do the work for Allah. Allah is not in me, but outside of me. I am the voice and action of Allah.

**Self-Abasement.** I scorn accusations of wrong-doing. I have no empathy. I am isolated from any idea that opposes my own. I cannot tolerate and know not of anxiety that I might be wrong in any way. I project. I deny. I regress. I isolate. Only you believe that I am worth less. Not me

The fear is fading; yet the (perhaps) unimaginable threat is not simply a threat. The “unbelievable” has become real. It is at least in this way that we have “changed forever.” We had become too comfortable and too complacent. My personal power is all that I have; and yet it is nothing. My personal power is nothing; and yet, it is all that I have.

On the afternoon of September 11th, 2001, millions were in shock. Myself, and students enrolled in my Fundamentals of Counseling class were in shock. We had begun to connect two weeks earlier. The previous week, we had off of class for a holiday schedule change, so this was to be our second class, and we were looking forward to being together once again. The journeys together that we were anticipating that night would change. Class was cancelled.

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In this emotionally difficult time I still wanted to continue to provide the instruction that was my responsibility and the students' right. I wanted us to have the opportunity to learn together. The day after September 11th I drafted an assignment to the class, asking, "What is personal power," How do you use personal power in your life," and "How do you anticipate that your personal power will influence your work as a professional counselor? Nine of them consented to have their response submitted for publication as part of this manuscript on personal power.

Lauren Hancz

Personal power can be defined as the power an individual has to exert influence over others. Personal power can be seen through one's words, but also, and maybe even more forcefully, through one's actions. Often times, individuals hold very strong beliefs due to their immediate environment, such as family, friends, religions, values, and morals. Once an individual accepts this culture, it is hard to see things in any other way. People who have very good communication skills can effectively express what they think and feel. Even more importantly, an individual who wants to exert his/her own personal power over someone or a group must be persuasive in how they communicate. Think back to such speakers as Martin Luther King, Jr. who could make the whole crowd as he did. Words are just words, but when communicated so eloquently, and by a charismatic speaker, groups of people can be swayed to an individual's thinking.

Another way to exhibit personal power is through one's actions. Behavior and manners could possibly speak out to an audience much louder than words. It is very likely that the terrorists who crashed airplanes into the World Trade Center thought that they were using there own personal power to make a statement to the world and show us that they too can influence others.

Sometimes personal power is enhanced because of personal achievement. As people get older and become more educated, knowledge can add to a person's personal power. The more knowledge a person has, the more equipped a person becomes to support their point of view. Likewise, people who are noted for their achievements in other areas, such as sports or entertainment, tend to hold more personal power. That is why advertising agencies will pay phenomenal amounts of money to use these people to endorse their products. Personal power is a strong tool of persuasion. It can be used to gain positive results, but at the same time people can abuse their power and take advantage of others.

An example of using personal power positively is to consider a teacher with an irate parent or child. Teachers can use their personal power through communication skills and bring them down a level so that they can talk with ease. Problems cannot be solved when communication is blocked. If the teacher can use good communication skills to exert power the parent or child, problem solving then becomes easier. Here, words and body language can make a difference. If the teacher responded with the same angst as the parent or child, it would make it quite different to work things out.

As a counselor, personal power is viewed much differently from that of an everyday individual. When a counselor is dealing with parents, teachers, or administrators, personal power can be used similarly, but in a workplace the employed must be more careful as to how much they try to exert power over others. Counselors in a school setting are there to help
others and to promote a good well-being. Too much coercion to think one way may end up causing conflict in the end.

It is especially important to limit how much a counselor uses his/her personal power when they are dealing with a client. The counselor is there to be empathetic to the client, and to listen to what they have to say. An understanding and non-judgmental attitude is needed to full benefit the client. One of the many important purposes of the counselor is to reflect what the client is feeling and to help them come to their own conclusions about their problems. Using one’s own personal power would not benefit the client because the counselor should not force his/her own values and morals on client.

It is quite obvious that personal power can be strong tool when dealing with certain situations. However, a counselor must use discretion when bringing their personal power into work. The most important thing a counselor needs to remember is that they are there to provide guidance and help to their clients. Taking advantage of such situations could hurt a client’s well-being, and that is the complete opposite of what counseling means.

Judith Flores

Personal power is a special kind of power that gives us the ability to do anything. There may be different forms of power, but personal power is a quantity of power that takes over and "makes you" do the things that you can do. That personal power comes out from each individual when it is needed more. My personal power comes into use whenever I need to get through a difficult period of my life and when I need to help others.

This difficult period may be emotional, behavioral or intellectual. My personal power has been very functional during these last few days. After listening to the terrible occurrences of New York City and Washington D.C., I had to use my personal power in order to face the reality of what was going on. After having lived all my life in New York City and seeing the World Trade Center everyday, it was impossible to believe that they would not be there on my future visits. Once I gave myself the power to be strong and the courage to see that NYC will never be the same, I wanted to help others. My sister was the one most affected by this horrible news. She was in tears and devastated emotionally. I had to use my personal power qualities such as being a sister and a good listener to comfort her. I listened to everything that was going on in her mind and everything that she was feeling. Her personal power was very weak and once she started opening to me she grew emotionally stronger and her personal power grew stronger as well. All she needed was to have an emotional release of everything that was going on inside of her. Communication between us was full of empathy, understanding, and memories. Then once I had this small counseling session with her she made me see that I am capable of showing empathy to others. My personal power can also be used to initiate small counseling sessions, which are very much in need due to the tremendous amount of post-traumatic stress. Also many people are depressed due to them not having any news of their family relatives or those who may have died in the disaster. The people in NYC and Washington DC need as much help and power that the can get in order to take overcome their intense levels of hatred and anger that they may have within themselves. Many want war and the elimination of those people who may be of the same nationality, religion, or race as those who created this disastrous situation. However, this is not the solution. This will only bring about more violence and hatred to spread throughout the world like a brush. As a counselor, I can use my personal power to set counseling sessions
addressing groups of people who may be full of hatred and anger. In those sessions, I would create an atmosphere of verbal encouragement and trust in order to make them see that violence is not the solution. Instead the solution should be a more peaceful means of negotiation. For example, they could admit that these people are full of hate and violence, but that by them adding to that violence it only makes things worse. The problem that I see from this population is their capacity of showing empathy to others. Since they feel that others do not understand their reasons for acting in the way that they act. I would also use my personal power to encourage the Arabic and terrorist population to attend one of my counseling sessions so I can find the cause of all their hated and help them to change their behavior and thoughts. And for those who want to find the main leader and make him pay for what they did, I would discuss with them to take a slow and careful analysis of evidence, before making any judgments. My personal power will be effected by these people who attend my counseling sessions in that my power will take over their hatred and to look at situations of this nature from a different perspective.

Personal power can take you over during those times when you are full of hatred or negative emotions that may make you act in ways you never thought possible. Instead my personal power can be used as a much stronger force. It will also be affected by my work as a counselor due to it being a shield that will protect me from having a negative reaction to all of the feedback that I am receiving from the clients. It will allow me to show that what they are saying does not affect me in any way, which will deviate my thoughts away from them. Instead I will be "all ears" to their thoughts and capable of helping them through this difficult period in their life. I would show them that my personal power is capable of doing anything within my power to help them. This personal power that lies within me, will also help me to grow as a person and as a counselor.

Karen Breidingер

Personal power comes from within. It is an inner-strength that anyone can develop to gain a better sense of control in his or her life. Personal power means becoming aware of personal talents and then having the confidence to act on them. Personal power enables you to convey to others who you think you are. It may develop from events experienced throughout life. Another individual's personal power can develop positively or negatively depending on the influence or impact this individual receives from other sources. A person may look to family members, parents, or their peers for verification during life's experiences. This can naturally encourage or discourage confidence and the development of personal power. A lack of confidence and self-esteem could cause a deficiency in the development of personal power.

Personal power can allow for a medium between caring for yourself and others. Without this a counselor could become dictatorial or authoritative, without regard for the effect that it may have on another person. For example, if a counselor is developing a pattern for success, big or small, it will increase the client's personal power. Failure, however, can also weaken or decrease personal power. A counselor may develop unrealistic or unreachable goals as to satisfy a self-serving behavior.

A counselor's personal power can have positive effects. Being open and friendly can influence others and play a huge and integral part in the development of a relationship with someone. Working as a team and confirming that communication is a two-way street is also vital. Being proactive and positive can also yield some positive results.
A deep-rooted sense of personal power can also have a negative effect or impact as a counselor. A strong sense of personal power or self-esteem, as a counselor, could potentially over-power another’s decision on how to act or behave. The lack of awareness of someone’s self-esteem or unresolved issues could also affect personal power. The lack of knowledge of someone’s childhood experiences could also have a negative and unexpected result.

The role of a counselor is one of an active role, but not a dominant one. Both the counselor and the person counseled must participate in when the counselor facilitates personal growth. A counselor’s hope or disinterest in the individual may hinder another if they are more intense than the other person is feeling. If a counselor responds too frequently, for example, the conversation can become dominated by the counselor, not letting the client do the work. A counselor’s job is to help another to confront experiences, not to add new things, or to force someone to believe what the counselor’s personal theory may be.

I utilize my personal power everyday, keeping in mind that my drive, my motivation, does not negatively manipulate another person or become self-serving. Cooperation and helping others along is needed when there is evidence of struggle. In a leadership role it is important to work with others as a team, working closely with others to redefine tasks. Leadership and power are separate ideas. These two terms both suggest the ability to take a role and have an impact on it. Having a sense of personal power gives the implication that goals can be set and then accomplished.

A new experience with independence encourages the development of personal power. Familial experiences while growing up also play a part in this development. Mixed messages sent by family members about your abilities or setting limits on what you believe you can do can definitely lead to a restricted sense of personal power while growing up. Positive expression of personal power involves taking responsible action for yourself and consideration for others.

The self-development of a person depends upon and can vary from person to person. Personal empowerment and self-discipline can enhance the development of personal power. A counselor’s empathy, the interest, and comfortability can prove to be a good beginning to help someone improve their quality of life and personal power.

**Katherine Martin**

Personal power is something that I find myself often overlooking. If I think about the subject of personal power, of course I realize that I possess it, however on a day-to-day basis I rarely think of how I am using my personal power in my interactions with others. I am sure that I influence others by the things that I say and do, often times without even realizing it. I also use this power to get the things I want and to achieve the things I want to achieve. It is through one aspect of my life that I really take pride in my use of personal power and that is my education. I realize that there have been many intelligent people who have helped me along the way but I also feel that I have used this power to get me as far as I am today in my education. I used this power throughout high school and college and did not realize that it was my personal power that was helping me reach my goals to achieve an excellent education. It was through my use of personal power that I forced myself to study that extra hour longer or write one more draft of the final paper. There are many times when in college
especially when I was the only one that would be able to help myself whether it be with homework or dealing with being on my own. I used this power in learning, but I also used this power to get myself through a transition time from home life with many siblings, to college life on my own. That was to this day one of the toughest struggles I have had and I feel that no matter what encouraging words others may have had for me, it was ultimately myself who needed to be there for myself to get through this hard time. I continue using my personal power today in graduate school and will continue to use it for years to come.

As I said earlier I didn’t really think about personal power on a day-to-day basis, however I know that during my years as an elementary school counselor this will have to change. I will have to be very aware of my own use of personal power because of the obvious possibility of influencing others, especially younger children. I will be in a position of authority with these children and I know that I will have to be very conscientious of what I am saying and doing when around these children. I have always felt that children are sometimes overlooked and the adults around them tend to decide what they need since they are the more powerful ones in the situation. Many times the adult choose what they feel is best for the child and without much consideration for what the child happens to think on the subject. You can only look to see how many children are pressured into activities from sports to ballet when they in reality don’t want to be doing these things. I hope to always remember the needs and wants of the children I am dealing with and I do not want to ever get to the point when I assume that I know best and overlook their opinions and thoughts. I don’t want to look at myself one day and realize that I am using my personal power to influence the children I come into contact with. I know that I must be careful not to impose morals, values, or judgments to the children I am working with. I also have to be careful not to lose my personal power in the process. I cannot get so caught up in trying not to impose my personal power on others that I find myself left with no personal power of my own.

I guess that this exercise has helped me to take the issue of personal power more personally and realize that I myself am a part of this concept. It is important for people to realize their personal power and not use it any negative or hurtful ways. This is especially important for those who are in the practice of helping others.

Liayn Mercado

I have always been patient and non-judgmental and, most of the time, kind to the point of a personality flaw. That was the role I played within my family and that is how I survived and those became my powers. My personal powers were based on pleasing others and hoping that through my subservience to them, they would take pity on me and somehow figure out what my needs were and graciously meet them for me.

This personality lends itself to developing a wide range of interpersonal skills. When preoccupied with meeting the needs of others, you become skilled at reading non-verbal cues, facial expression, and tone of voice. Other personal powers I have developed are the ability to be a good listener and to completely focus on another person for extended periods of time.

As a people pleaser, many of the skills I developed are inherent for the helping professional; however, there are several drawbacks as well, such as worrying about how I will empower a client when I can not empower myself. Over the past several months, I have
worked extensively on becoming more assertive and as a result, I have made major life changes.

Since January 2001, I left an abusive relationship with my husband, became an independent working mother of two pre-school aged children, and started running up to six miles a day. On October 6, 2001, I plan to run my first race for Domestic Violence Awareness and this is my declaration of independence.

I still find that often times, I am afraid to say what I think if I feel someone might disagree, but overall, I can see so much progress in my life and in the risks I have been willing to take for me. I have found personal power that I did not know I had. I have found a fighter within me, of all people! My next step is to try to use this new-found fighter for my clients with whom I currently work and they need it the most because they are children in the foster care system who have very little voice.

In my future endeavors as a counselor, I think my strengths will always lie with working with people who need empowerment and who are "recovering people pleasers" like me. With regards to very strong-willed personalities, I would definitely have the tendency to be intimidated by them, but I have surprised myself with some of my more assertive actions, and this has bred self-worth and self-confidence within me.

In a high school guidance counseling setting, my strengths will be fairness, empathy, patience, and acceptance of others. As adolescents are inherently on a quest for independent thought and action, I am well aware that they will test my newly blossoming assertiveness. This will likely be my focal point and an area in which I will self-assess on a regular basis, but also, I feel it will be an opportunity for me to build assertiveness skills.

Amy Wagner

If asked how I use my personal power six months ago, my answer would have been completely different than it is now. Since returning to school for my masters degree and working at a job that I find very fulfilling, my answer is nothing like it once would have been. My personal power came to me in February when I decided to quit my high paying, "corporate" job to come back to school and work in student affairs in higher education. I made the decision that money, for me, was not happiness and that helping students like my previous mentors helped me was the best way to use my personal power. As a Resident Director for Housing and Residence Life I get to help students all the time.

I use my personal power everyday when I get out of bed to face another day of student problems and concerns. I use it as my internal motivation for helping people get through problems I faced not too long ago and would not have been able to get through without the assistance of advisors. My personal power is really my knowing that I have the experience and ability to help other students get through the tough times that college can thrust upon them. I know what they are going through and I genuinely want to make their experiences as positive as mine was at Kutztown University.

My personal power effects how I counsel these students about roommate problems, relationship concerns, academic issues and all the other instances they come to me about. I use personal power when I empathize with them about not liking their roommate or a
professor. I also use it when they become upset with me if I have to discipline them when they are caught breaking a rule in the residence hall. On one hand, I can understand where they are coming from. They want to have as much fun as they can while they are here, but now I am able to make them understand that they need to have fun but not break the rules that were put in place for their own safety.

I think that as I go further and further into this job and my career in student affairs that my personal power will change. It is inevitable that the longer I am out of school, the less I will understand about college students of the current day. I hope that I still am able to use my personal power in a positive way and motivate myself to motivate others, but I know that the place where my motivation comes from is bound to change from time to time. To be completely honest, I am looking forward to it changing again because it went so well for me the first time. I cannot wait to see what I am capable of doing the next time it changes.

I can only hope that my personal power changes my counseling techniques in a positive way. I will add maturity and experience to the conversations that I have with students and instead of ending every conversation and thinking of what I should have said. I will be able to think of more appropriate insights right on the spot. I will also hopefully become more patient with students and know more of what to expect. Right now, a lot of things they bring to me are huge surprises that I did not prepare for. Only time and practice will help me to better prepare for the daily crises that arise in the lives of college students.

Eric Macklin

I use my personal power in many ways each day in my life. I use it as a supervisor at my workplace, as a student and as a friend. I have a very strong and often dominating personality. The people who know me have come to expect that I will always state my opinion on whatever topic is being discussed.

At work, as a supervisor of a dozen employees, I like for things to be done the way they are supposed to be done. I am a very organized person and I do my work correctly and on time and I expect the same of those who work for me. My style of management has afforded me the respect of those I supervise and therefore my staff is willing to work harder for me. I have an open door policy and whenever someone is experiencing a problem, I make myself available to listen and assist in fixing the problem. This is part of my personal power, I have made it clear to my staff that I do care about them and that I want them to be content in their jobs. They are then willing to perform well for me and do more then their job descriptions require. It is a mutually beneficial situation.

As a student, I use my personal power during class discussions whenever I state my feelings on a particular subject. I have very strong beliefs about most "controversial" issues and I express them when it is appropriate. I believe that simply stating how I feel about an issue, even when I am in the minority, let's others know that I am an independent thinker. It may even allow others to feel more comfortable expressing their opinion, or possibly get them upset enough to respond. I enjoy debating with others and will often say something extreme to get someone to respond. I also use my personal power when doing group work. I often take the role of leader, thereby having more of an influence on the group.
My personal power will be very important as a counselor. My ability to listen reflectively will be a great asset. I try to respond to what a person is saying with a comment that lets them know that I am aware of what feeling they are trying to express. I try not to say something like “I know exactly how you feel” because I always hate when someone says that to me. I will sometimes tell the person that I can’t image what that particular situation feels like and ask them to explain it to me.

Another use of my personal power when counseling will occur when I listen to someone speak about a problem. I will allow him or her to say what he or she feels without making judgmental comments. This sometimes will require me to keep my strong opinions to myself, but I’ll decide when it’s inappropriate to express them and refrain from sharing them. I’ll decide what to share based on the how I feel the client will react to my opinions. I will refrain from sharing how I feel when I sense that it will not benefit the client or would do them harm. When appropriate, I do believe that it’s important to communicate to the person experiencing a problem how I feel about something without making them feel they must share my opinion. I don’t think it’s beneficial to patronize someone and only tell them what they want or need to hear. It’s important to be truthful while being compassionate.

My personal power will be effected by my work as a counselor. I know that I will have to force myself not to take home the problems of my clients. I hate to see people suffer and I will need to force myself to remain somewhat detached so I can effectively counsel people. I will also be effected when I see that even with my help, a client may not get better. That will be an aspect of counseling that will be hard for me to deal with.

Maura Daly Foraker

I feel that I exert a great deal of personal power. I am a divorced mother raising a young son. I am also a certified special education teacher instructing students with severe emotional disturbances.

As a mother, I wield a tremendous amount of personal power to influence young life. From the time my son was born I have had the ability to mold a new member of the human race. It was, and still is, my duty to teach him how to be a productive member of society. The task is mine to pass along to him the values and mores of our society as well as the beliefs and customs of my culture, my religion, and my individual family.

Being divorced adds another level of personal power into my life. It is my responsibility to shield my son from any unpleasant feelings I have about his father, to make him feel as though he has a family even though we live apart. This, at times, is very difficult. I have been deeply hurt by my son’s father and yet I must uphold a positive image of him for my son. I also must listen to my son as he cries about missing his father. I must comfort him in his loss when his loss is in some ways my gain. I must listen to my son repeat horrible untruths he has been told by his father. I could use my power in a negative way and respond to my son with anger. I could retaliate against his father through him. Instead, I use my personal power to benefit my son. I try to always remember that I need to look out for his best interests, not my own personal feelings.

Research tells us that young humans require a high degree of stability and consistency in order to reach their optimal potential. I hope that I have used and will
continue to use my powers wisely to fulfill this need for my child. I strive each and every day to provide for him the loving structures that will allow him to grow as a person but keep him emotionally and physically safe.

As a professional, I also wield an awesome power. Teaching students with emotional disturbances, it is not rare that I observe the root of my students’ problems to be that their parents were unable to provide the structure, stability, consistency, and limits that I endeavor to provide for my own child. I am entrusted with these young lives for more than seven hours every day.

I try to provide for them the structure they need to feel emotionally safe. I instruct them in ways to better deal with anger and frustration. I do everything in my power to restore their self-esteem and help them view themselves in a more positive light.

In addition to touching them on that personal level, I affect their lives in other ways as well. I am the individual who has a great deal of influence at meetings concerning student progress. I design educational and behavioral goals. A team makes the final decision about which goals are added to their educational plan, but for the most part, my opinion carries a great deal of weight. I am also a frequent “touchstone” for the support personnel in these children’s lives. Probation officers, therapeutic support staff, mobile therapists, and behavior specialists come to me for information about these children and their progress in the school setting.

It is important that I am ethical and professional in my dealings with these young lives. My assessment of their behavior and progress can have serious and far-reaching effects on their lives.

I believe that as a counselor I will have the ability to affect my clients’ lives on a large scale. They will be coming to me seeking help in solving problems they have been unable to solve on their own. They will view me as someone who has a thorough understanding of people and their actions. It will be my responsibility to guide people to find answers to their problems without projecting my own morals and values upon them.

In many ways my power as a counselor will be quite similar to the power I currently hold as a parent and professional educator. My opinion may be held as truth. My actions and my words may be held up as examples of how someone “should be”. On many levels I am currently a role model. I am looked to for warmth and acceptance. My students, their parents, and my superiors expect me to behave on some levels as a counselor. When I actually hold the position of counselor I expect that role to increase.

Stephen Mickulik

Of all of the things that fall into the category of my personal power, self-control, is the power I have control over most; yet often stumble underneath. In my daily life I use my personal power in different “funnels” and “diffusing devices”. These funnels and devices are the things I do; the hats I wear. My power comes from God and from my role in my community and at my workplace. I would like to think that my desire to channel my power toward helping and betterment of others comes from inside.
As for the funnels of my power, I think of these as the things I do on my job. I teach. All day long I am exercising young minds. Making impressions and living as an example to young High Schoolers is my work. I have the power, here seen as the license to wield control, over the academic futures of my students. But there is always more to power from a funnel than the deliberate act or the understood effect of the action. For example, my power to assign a group of words to be memorized for the next day’s class carries a certain workload as far as the student is concerned. His evening will now be spent pining over some words because of my power. Time and attention will be drawn from his life because of three simple words, “Vocabulary Quiz Tomorrow.” What began as a simple sentence from me has translated into hours of work for another thus a funnel.

My diffusing devices are my fiancée and my car, my two greatest loves. In exercising my desire to give attention to my fiancée all of my nervous energies are quelled and truly in giving and doing things to make her more comfortable I am pleased and feel whole. Now I’ll just be honest, I love my new car too. My personal power was the choice to load it with automobile toys like a sunroof and these nifty radio controls on the steering wheel. The car is a Chevy but I feel that I have achieved real farfignuten. Once again, I am calmed and enjoy my ride in my car the more I pamper it. This use of my personal power seems almost selfish yet it creates a balance for my personal well being. This person and this thing diffuse my sometimes over-extended nerves and bring me back to being calm.

I am a brother to three young men and to three young women. I am a son, a grandson, a lover, a teacher, a student, a cantor, and a best friend. Within each of these rolls is the opportunity to exercise my personal power. In short, I have an effect on the things and the people around me. Realizing this and aiming to do well for others with this in mind is how I interpret a good use of personal power. I feel that understanding one’s personal power is directly married to two ideas. First, my personal power is related directly to who I understand that I am to myself. Second, my personal power is related to whom I affect and interact with day in and day out.

Funny that I would immediately assume that I use my personal power for good. Deep down I am sure one could view my motives with suspicion. One could suggest that my motives and enforcement of personal power for no more than personal gain. Sadly, I must admit the record of events pertaining to my choices clearly describe the latter point at times. However, concerning the deepest part of who I am, it is my desire to really help and not tear down that is my truest motive for wielding any power at all. I am still learning how personal power is acquired and dispensed, and that makes life just so interesting.

If each of my students now is affected by my power I wonder in awe how my students will be affected by me as a counselor. Maybe I would not be effective at all and I have tons to learn, I’m fairly new at this. I think my personal power as a counselor will have a greater effect if the student to counselor ratio’s come closer to what the researchers are stating. But honestly, I will not give up. If I am laden with five hundred children to counsel (and this is not a drastically inflated figure), I will press on as long as my personal athletic power to stay awake will permit. I am enjoying the ride at this point as I remain unsure of my role as a counselor and as I learn of the new things to do in the profession.
Steven P. Kachmar

Personal power may be perceived as a power that comes from within an individual. It is constructed by a strong sense of self, positive self-esteem, independence and initiative. The foundation from which personal power exists is that of an individual’s self-awareness of personal talents and resources, and having enough confidence in these attributes to act on them. The development of this intrinsic power is instilled in every person by their parents or guardians and their reinforcement of positive self-characteristics. This construction process begins as soon as a child is born and receives positive reinforcement for acting appropriately in the context of what their elders and culture deem to be so. The child seeks out what is proper and considered appropriate and does it in order to achieve a positive response to those it deems important in its life. This process continues throughout development with the individual being confronted by new tasks and dilemmas in which it tries to overcome. By completing and succeeding in such endeavors, the individual seeks for the affirmation of their abilities, which in turn instills confidence.

My personal power and the construction of it is very similar to that discussed above. As a child and young adult, I have been taught to seek what is right, no matter how difficult it may be, and to do it. I was and continue to receive much affirmation for overcoming times of desperation and challenges. I have continuously been reinforced by my parents for the completion of tasks in which I have demonstrated my true abilities. This positive and continuous rearing has, in my opinion, provided me with a strong sense of self-esteem and pride, as well as a great deal of independence and initiative. The ways in which I use this power varies depending on the situation at hand. I believe that I consistently seek out the right or positive course of action and act upon my convictions. In doing so, I rarely doubt my own abilities and believe that if I happen to fail in the task at hand I will ‘pick myself up’ and try again. If I happen to fail a second time, I will continue to persevere and be resilient in my attainment of the goal. I also believe that I consistently strive to do what is best for others, although it sometimes means that I must compromise my personal happiness. This, in my opinion, is a critical component to my personal power, in that the sense of doing what is right and proper may elicit personal pain and result in sacrifice. I believe that this pain reinforces an individual’s independence and ability to make decisions they believe are proper, thus strengthening the person’s personal power and human spirit.

I believe that personal power is not only present when an individual is faced with monumental dilemmas, but is also present in everything one does. For instance, I am writing this paper or account of how I use my personal power and how I will use it as a counselor, on the basis of my personal beliefs of what is and is not appropriate and viable. Thus, my personal power, or my ability to think independently and demonstrate initiative, despite its minuteness, is present and is being utilized.

As a counselor, my personal power will have a definitive impact upon my work and will in turn be affected by my duties. I believe that being a counselor requires an individual to utilize a great portion of their personal power in order to face and help clients confront their dilemmas. As a counselor, clients will be looking to me for guidance in order to better cope with various situations and stress, and to guide them toward better decision-making practices. My personal power will be a decisive factor in this process of which I am confident it will withstand. I believe that my personal strength will assist me in empowering clients by
Personal Power

constructing powerful relationships by being empathetic, non-judgmental, and demonstrating a caring attitude. I will be able to harness my personal power and show each client that I am focused on his or her individual situation and am willing to take as much time as necessary to help him or her achieve the goals they have established. My personal power will also help me to communicate productive behavior patterns to the client, so the client can change and begin experiencing these patterns as well.

As a graduate student in the field of counseling psychology, I am sure that my personal power will be affected as counselor. Due to the variety of counseling situations, types and personalities of clients, and my own personal life, I am confident that I too will experience periods of emotional depletion or burnout. However, I am also confident that I will have, by that point, constructed a system through which to alleviate stress and regain my focus as a counselor and as a human being.

I believe that my personal power is strong and that I can deal with whatever challenges I am faced with. I am also confident that my ability to demonstrate independence, initiative, and maintain a strong sense of self esteem will not diminish. I believe in these things because I am confident in my rearing and in the decisions I have made when dealing with critical situations thus far in my life.

Barbara Malcolm

Upon reflection of the assignment of enumerating and explaining my powers, I was surprised how the list could grow with the various “hats” I wear. My current titles include woman, mother, nurse, and student. Each position incorporates responsibility and satisfaction. To fully realize the potential of each title, I draw upon many innate powers to explore, learn, and utilize these titles.

My title of woman is the only position not chosen. Yet this position creates and utilizes the strongest powers I possess. As a woman I am able to nurture, envision and reflect. The power of nurturing enables me to enmesh myself in a situation without clouding the situation with my own emotions. This power helps me to see the others persons needs as the primary focus of attention. Through a woman’s eyes, I am able to envision the potential of others, and therefore see beyond the current dilemma. To envision the future of others, and myself, is a powerful tool for hope. Hope sustains living, and so to elicit hope by envisioning the future engages the strength women possess. Reflection incorporates the power to revisit the past without allowing the past to engulf me. I am in control of the past through reflection, and can resource its valuable lessons.

Choosing to be a mother gave me the greatest power to create life. This power of creation molded my responsibility to humankind by creating the children that the future needs to survive. Motherhood is not to be taken lightly. There is great power in participating in each day of a child’s life. No other job can compete with the unrequited love and unbounded happiness of children. Creation also brought out the power to perpetuate the values that I have nurtured in my life. Generations of mothers before me will attest to the power of joy in creating and rearing children.

The role of nurse, both professionally and personally, instilled the powers to heal, change the course of destruction of diseases, and the determination to see the whole picture in
life and death. Again, these powers bring about great responsibilities when holding the mental and physical health of others in my hands. I take these powers very seriously. With these powers also comes the serenity of seeing the continual flow of life and death. I have utilized my powers of determination to forward my career and my commitment to others. During a crisis or routine events, I need to focus and not waver on decisions or deadlines.

Having returned to the academic sector later in life, I found many new powers for which I have had serendipitous experiences. Learning new and renewed information with wizened eyes gives me powers of enlightenment and encouragement in the different paths I travel. When seeing the “broader picture” of research and teachings, I can understand their significance in career and work.

My different powers, that of woman, mother, nurse, and student are unique for each role, and yet intertwine the fundamentals of me, and how I carry on my life. Counseling is a natural extension of all my roles, and yet I’ve had no formal teaching in this area. Hence, the reason for my quest in this program. My hope is to utilize the powers I have and to mold them into the counselor I want to be. I surmise the powers I do possess will be an asset in counseling, for they have not failed my understanding and compassion of people, so far.

However, the reading for this course on empathic listening was already helpful in listening to a young woman tell of her experience during the September 11th attack. I, at first, was trying to utilize the powers of motherhood, in nurturing, and the powers of nursing, in healing her wounds. I, instead, allowed her to talk, and only encouraged some thoughts for her to explain herself further. Upon reflection, my powers may be the source of initial counseling, but need to be refined to better utilize their attributes for this role.

It is said that life is but a stage, and we are all actors. But I realize that in describing each “hat”, their roles sound as if they fit into a different act of my life. This is not so. The woman, mother, nurse and student titles are an ever evolving and dynamic circle of powers that are molding me into who I am. My powers allow me to explore, learn and embrace every aspect of my life. Each day brings new experiences, and with my powers I am ready and eager to give life my all.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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