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HPRB 3020S

Philosophy Paper

3.2.16

In the U.S., children are encouraged to grow up and be whatever they desire. When making this decision, young people often reflect on the heroes in their lives who impacted them and how those heroes were able to overcome obstacles in their own paths. As a child, I remember having long debates with my elementary school peers over which superpower was the best and how we would use it to save the world. When asked what superpower I would choose, I always responded saying, “I want the power of being in someone else’s shoes.” We had recently learned idioms in our class and I was proud to understand that this did not mean to physically put on someone else’s sneakers. I had learned that to “be in someone else’s shoes” meant to empathize with someone who is different from me so that I may better understand where that person is coming from. This was the superpower I believed would enable me to save the world because, the better you identify with someone else, the easier it is for you to know why they may be hurt or offended by certain words/actions, and this will in turn help you to know how to counsel them when they are struggling. Superheroes in my life, as well as understanding what makes their “powers” special, are factors that have contributed to my desire to know and help others.

As I have grown up, I have come to recognize that no single person is the same as another. Each person has unique and individualized experiences that affect their own philosophy towards life. This principle has been ingrained in me since I was a child. Growing up, I was fortunate enough to have parents and a family who valued diversity, both in personal knowledge

and experiences. I was born and raised in New Jersey, and at the age of fourteen my family moved to a state that was its polar opposite, Georgia. While needing to adjust to different cultures on a domestic level, my family also found value in travelling to regions internationally. I was bred to have a love for other cultures and people.

Although travelling and moving with my family gave me some insights into the diverse world around me, the most life-altering experience that I have ever encountered was working with a non-profit organization in Athens, Greece. This organization was established to help refugees seeking asylum from war-torn countries, primarily in the Middle East and North Africa. During the three months that I was there, I worked with individuals from Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Sudan, and Greece. We did not share the same culture, we often had opposing religions and views, we did not speak the same language, and most of all, we had not suffered through the same circumstances. For me, understanding that each individual looks at life through a different lens, often as a result of the way he or she was raised and the different events that occurred in his or her life, is very important to me. Through learning more about others around me, I have begun to value and become passionate about the values and beliefs that others hold. The more I learn about others, the closer I grow to them and the more I have a desire to help, encourage, and empower them in any way possible.

In regard to my career in the health field, I believe this insight will greatly assist my efforts in understanding the best ways to help and provide assistance to the people and community I am working for. During my time in Greece, as I learned more about the people our organization was serving, I realized that many of the differences I had previously recognized contributed a great deal to the barriers these people faced when accessing proper health. For example, many of the individuals seeking help from our organization represented countries that

had severe gender inequality issues, including the inability for women to obtain an education or leave the house without the presence of a male. Through interacting with these refugees, I learned that both of these issues directly affect the women's knowledge of proper healthy behaviors, as well as their accessibility to health care services. The difference in language was another serious hindrance to communicating about basic health needs. There is a scarcity of health pamphlets and educational booklets that are written in the native tongues of the individuals we worked with. Health brochures in a wider range of languages is a critical resource that many nations do not have, and that lack of materials is a barrier to these citizens and refugees developing a proper understanding of health issues. Forming relationships and understanding the culture and beliefs of the people I worked with allowed me to identify the health problems they face as well as the solutions that best fit their needs.

In regards to health and my philosophy towards health promotion/education, many of the philosophies in my personal life constitute as the foundation for my view of the world relating to health. Health is at the core of living. It affects every aspect of our life, including physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. Good health means a balance of all facets of life in which one can experience personal freedom, allowing them to accomplish the goals they desire. Because of this, each individual's definition of health is different and will be obtained accordingly. I believe that acquiring good health is as equally important for an individual as it is for society as a whole. The health of one affects the health of all, and therefore our goals as health promoters must reach all levels of the general public.

As a health promoter, I believe that the preferred course for helping an individual or population reach good health is through enabling the community, gaining their trust, educating the people, engaging with the society we work with and providing them with skills to make their

own healthy choices. For these reasons, I believe that the decision-making philosophy is the best approach to obtaining good quality health. This philosophy focuses on helping the people we serve to choose a behavior that will be most advantageous for their health. In order to help them find and understand the best approach towards healthy living, one has to be familiar with the background, beliefs and culture the individual or community is operating in. These aspects include the person's social more, cultural and societal philosophies, and the physical environment they reside in. I believe that no one person's life is more valuable than the next, and therefore, each person deserves the right to have equal access to health tools and services, no matter their race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic status, etc. This being said, the importance of understanding how to use those tools and services by the people we are providing them for is vital. Providing people with the tools needed to make a proper health decision and then teaching them how to choose the proper behavior is the best way to promote good quality health.

When we, as health promoters, are able to immerse ourselves into the cultures and lives of others, we can use that knowledge to facilitate a plan of action that is best suited for that individual or community's circumstances, and therefore provide them with the best chance at a healthy future. The differences that separate us from one another are in fact the very characteristics that make us unique, and those differences should not be ridiculed but should be understood and used to promote a positive outcome.