

**A Manifesto  
For the Social Worker Who Dares to Be**

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Inspired by my students in Direct Practice Section 004, Spring 2017  
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*A wish for you: May you take from it what speaks to you and take care not to discard the rest. At different points in our life chapters, things stand out to us more than others. You never know when seemingly bad advice can turn into a page-turner in your book.*

When you meet another soul, practice noticing the feeling inside before the thought that comes to surface. We miss half the gifts of another's presence because we judge them. Lead with love.

Master the art of taking criticism. Feedback from others serves us doses of what we can use and doses of what we can do without. Take what serves you and do not discard the rest. Remember – Sometimes the things we need are not things we expect to find.

When you give feedback, follow the golden rule: two glows, one grow.

Self-care is not selfish. There is a distinction and we must make it our business to abide to that difference.

Embark on your academic journey with a goal to *learn*. Grades are the byproduct of the process; they are not THE process.

Ask for help. Build a network. Bask in the glory of not knowing it all.

You can have it all, just maybe not at the same time.

For each client you encounter, find something you genuinely like about them.

Challenge the status quo. ~~Even if~~ **Especially if** you are leading the conga line.

Find what you are passionate about. Then, ask yourself *Why*. What about it makes you want to be the advocate or activist for it? Examine the beliefs that

accompany it. The life experience from which it was born. Be mindful about how you will use your self to uphold the integrity of this cause.

Do this work not despite the challenges it sometimes brings, but because of them. Embrace the difficulties and grow through the struggle.

Engage with the material in your classes as you would engage with another on a first meeting. It is alive – enjoy its fruits.

Think outside the box. If you don't see it in front of you, it does not mean it does not exist. Go around the bend.

Get clear about what you know, and also what you do not know. Practice competently.

Be integrative. Think whole-person. Look for ways to engage the culture and unique gifts of each client. In this work, the mass-manufactured shoe at the mall is not always the best fit. *We* become the co-tailors for those we serve.

Remember that our clients make choices and utilize maladaptive behaviors that were once adaptive, and served a very important purpose of keeping them safe. They were protective coping mechanisms. Before offering a replacement, model gratitude for once being of valuable service... and watch as your client's faces glow.

You are an attachment figure for your client. *We* offer human connection. It is in the way we regard each individual that they are granted an experience of yet another way to connect with another being. This is often transformative.

Find a source of inner growth- enlist a mentor, try on therapy, read an inspiring book. Do something consistently that challenges and inspires you.

Get to know your shame triggers and how they impact your work.

Co-collaborate. Co-create. Enjoy working within the inter-disciplinary realm. Embrace another lens. Other professions have beautiful gifts to offer us.

Embody gratitude.

Always keep snacks in your desk drawer.

Find a way to thank your clients for sharing themselves with you. What a sacred thing they do – what courage it takes.

Take care of your spirit. Feed it wisely and often.

From time to time, pull up the NASW Code of Ethics. Your head knows it, but give your heart and soul a gentle reminder.

Do the dance. Learning the steps is useless unless you get out there and cha-cha. You'll never achieve perfection at this art form. Focus your energies on connection and be the wave. And often times, know when to be the cork.

Be more than an advocate for the cause. Be an activist.

Remember, when it comes to achieving your goals, there will be many naysayers on your path. A word of encouragement I give to parents fighting for funding their child's right to an appropriate education - A NO is usually a Maybe that will turn into a YES. Be persistent and bold.

Leave no stone unturned.

Learn the culture in your agency or organization. Get to know key players and their roles. An agency is an organism like any other.

Be the one that spreads positivity and points out the strengths in situations and people. Stay away from the dysfunction in organizational cultures that preys on negativity. Be the light.

If you are offered supervision, take it.

If you can help it, don't build a practice in the town you live in. There is nothing cute about waiting to pay for TP on a register line with your client.

Boundaries are essential. Knowing how to walk the line is an ongoing and fluid process.

Become friends and mingle with social work peers who have different viewpoints. It keeps you fresh.

Stay informed about the world, politics, your community. Advocate and embrace the right of advocacy of another.

Connect with others on things you like rather than things you dislike.

Stand up for self-determination for all people, including you.

Find your voice but lead with your intention. It speaks volumes.

The more you share, the more you have. Live and practice as if the world is abundant and generous. If someone wants your notes, share them. If someone asks for a referral to your go-to, give it. There is no glory in treasures if we cannot share them with other beings.

Engage in research. Put your unique mark on this beautiful profession and help it grow. Find your own way to do this.

Build your brand. Find your niche. Get to know what joy in your body feels like, and notice it when you read literature or study an approach. Go with what moves you.

Rumble. Rumble hard. Dare to question your own beliefs.

If you're given the opportunity to lead a group, take it. There is magic in the power in the collective.

When you do not know what to do, do not panic. Get comfortable in silence and space. Within that space is an opportunity to be. Answers come.

Take the job you never thought you'd want. Grow through experiences, thank the time you had, and move on.

If you tried a new technique and it doesn't work out... Listen to Jay-Z....*On to the next one, on to the next one....*

Talk to your self. Often. You have important things to say and you are wise.

Your spirit introduces you before you even speak. Take responsibility for the energy you bring into a room.

Be curious **and** kind. The former without the latter is judgment dressed up in glitz.

Do more joining and less pushing.

No matter what you read or how efficacious something is, find ten more articles that say so. And ten others that say otherwise. Think critically.

This work will touch you personally. Do the work around countertransference.

When you tell someone you are a Social Worker, stand up straight and communicate it proudly. Have a ::mic drop:: moment. You are part of something extraordinary.

Practice empathy and master compassion.

Connect to your anchor. Breathe.

Get in touch with your unique gifts. The world desperately needs them.

You will never truly know the magnitude of the impact you have on others. It is grand.

Keep in touch with your professors. When we tell you to please reach out and let us know how you are doing and what work you are pursuing, we mean it. We wait for those emails and calls.

With love and gratitude for the gifts you've given me,

Professor G