

Midway* Through!

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Hey y'all!

So I'm at the midpoint of my internship at the Khalil Center and it's been a pretty interesting time so far.

I've gotten used to the daily grind and am able to get from the office back home without my GPS (which, for someone like me who is directionally challenged, is a total win). I've found hands down the best burger I have ever eaten, seen some amazing 4th of July fireworks and learned quite a bit as well.

Being here has been really eye opening in so many ways. To start, it is the Islamic month of Ramadan, and as the center does have a spiritual focus, the practices of

Ramadan are integrated into daily life at the center. The clinicians and most clients are fasting throughout the day, and as per usual, time is taken out to observe the daily prayers. Interestingly, due to the “spiritual high” the month brings, the center isn’t as busy. If I didn’t see it before, right there I saw the link that religion and spirituality play in mental health.

I’m learning a lot about mental health in both an Islamic and clinical capacity. Currently I’m reading an article on a treatment model for Muslims with mental health issues and seeing that model be applied at the center. As I enter data into research sheets, I read through charts and see what the most prevalent issues are among Muslims seeking counseling services. Its interesting to be able to see how many people are affected by something and then discuss that with different clinicians and see how disorders are diagnosed and treated. Something interesting I learned is that treatment varies both by client and clinician, age, gender and even clinician gender can play a role in diagnosing and treating clients.

I feel like my skill set has grown since starting my internship as well. I am able to better integrate myself into the cultural society of the Khalil Center and the local Islamic community. I’ve formed pretty solid relationships within the office, which makes going in everyday less of a chore and more of an activity. When I go in to the center, I have the opportunity to ask questions and learn how to diagnose and treat different disorders, how to handle when clients yell or don’t cooperate and how to deal with all different types of people. The kind of patience and ability to listen you observe and hopefully begin to develop in a setting like this is something invaluable and useful even outside of a work setting.

Part of my internship requires that I attend community group events at the local mosque. These are women’s groups that discuss Quran and Islamic values and traditions. The groups don’t all focus on mental health, but the sense of community and the topics of faith play a part in the spiritual growth that I was hoping to gain from being here. Spending Ramadan here, away from my home has also been a new spiritual experience in that it is my first time not spending this month with my family. I found new mosques to pray in, new friends to break my fast with and new communities to be a part of. On a slightly tangential note, a Tulane friend (#rollwave) had family living close by and I was lucky enough to spend 2 nights of Ramadan observing prayer and spending time with them in their home.

Overall, this experience has taught me so much. About spirituality, mental health, and myself. Its been an amazing past few weeks and I’m excited to see how the next few go!

Until next time!!

—Hafsa

*My internship is in Chicago, and Midway is an airport here (I thought it was clever)