Lynnae Thandiwe - Identifying and Using Professional Identity in Client Centered Services for the Legal Professional

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Trauma Informed Principal: Transparency and Meaning Making

Summary of Assignment and Activities:

(1) Students will define their professional identity profile.
(2) Students will connect their professional identity to client centered practices.
(3) Students will share comments on each other's profile and practices in small groups.

Why this assignment: In the legal field, we are generally helping others navigate a legal issue that is related to some trauma. As part of trauma informed education we can be better equipped to help our clients if we understand their trauma and our own trauma.

As a client navigates through a legal problem their emotions and well being will not be static. We can develop tools and strategies to help the clients and help ourselves as practitioners.

Useful terminology and concepts:
Coregulation:
Toxic stress: long term exposure to stressful situations
Emotions: emotions trigger whether we are able to learn. Emotions provide a gateway between rational thought and nonrational processes.
Professional identity: The values, beliefs, skills shared with others in a professional group.
[1] The American Bar Society states, a "law school shall provide education to law students on bias, cross-cultural competency, and racism: (1) at the start of the program of legal education, and (2) at least once again before graduation."

[1] See Matthews, J., Bialocerkowski, A. & Molineux, M. Professional identity measures for student health professionals – a systematic review of psychometric properties. *BMC Med Educ* 19, 308 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-019-1660-5 citing, Adams K, Hean S, Sturgis P, Macleod Clark J. Investigating the factors influencing professional identity of first year health and social care students. Learn Health Soc Care. 2006;5:55–68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-6861.2006.00119.x.

The American Bar Association  professional identity focuses on what it means to be a lawyer and the special obligations lawyers have to their clients and society. The development of a professional identity should involve an intentional exploration of the values, guiding principles, and well-being practices considered foundational to successful legal practice. Because developing a professional identity requires reflection and growth over time, students should have frequent opportunities during each year of law school and in a variety of courses and co-curricular and professional development activities."

Useful principles
Stress from one area in life can show up in other areas of our lives
Trauma and stress can make it more difficult for us to perform optimally

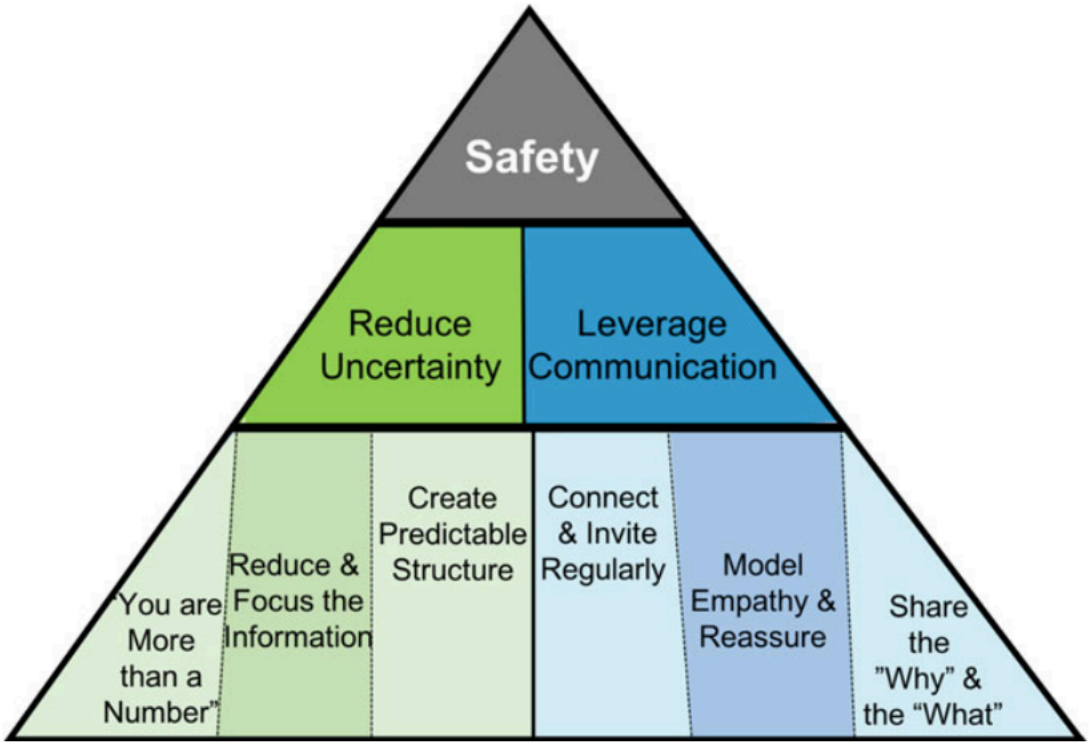



**Fig. 3.1** Strategies to ensure safety

Mays Imad, Our brains, emotions, and learning: Eight principles of trauma-informed teaching. *2022 citing* P. Thompson & J. Carello (Eds.), *Trauma-Informed Pedagogies: A guide for responding to crisis and inequality in higher education* (pp. 35-47). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92705-9_3

Useful concepts:

> A paralegal is a person, qualified by education, training or work experience, who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, corporation, governmental agency, or other entity and who performs specifically delegated substantive legal work for which a lawyer is responsible. (ABA House of Delegates, 2020):

American Bar Association ("ABA"))
Related Guidelines for Paralegal Programs:
G-302: The primary concern of a paralegal education program is to develop professional competence, which requires both general education and legal specialty course work as defined in G-302.

Assignment: Stating your Professional Identity
Identify your professional identity. How has trauma informed your identity?
Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to identify and determine your professional identity. Our professional identity can guide and inform our career choices, help to make us successful, and guide us in seeking appropriate supports.

Sample:
My Professional Identity Characteristics (Values & Principles):
(1). Integrity
(2). Being thorough
(3). Being helpful
(4). Being knowledgeable
(5) Getting positive results for clients

Tensions: I cannot always be transparent as an attorney or educator
My professional identity as an instructor and legal professional is that I value creating opportunities for others to thrive. I believe as an instructor, I can learn different techniques and methods that I can use to foster an engaging learning environment. I believe that I have to model the skills that I want students to develop. Modeling creates some trauma and stress for me because a model implies perfection and therefore I have been frustrated

and disappointed when I find errors or mistakes in my work.  This stress exists even though I can acknowledge that
I also have shifting stresses that involve finances, family,  At times, family, finance can be a source of joy, and at times that can be a source of worry.

How does this look in my interactions with clients and students?  (1). I can **communicate** information in multiple ways and multiple times without judgment because stress and trauma can impede a person's ability to understand and receive information.

(2) I can **share** resources that may help students and clients to navigate issues relating to stress, e.g. counseling,tutoring,  resources to basic needs(food banks, financial assistance, medical assistance).

(3) I can **acknowledge** that the situation, assignment, or situation may be a source of stress or trauma.

Questions to consider in stating your own professional identity: What does it look like in a professional setting when you identify your trauma, your client's trauma,
What are the tensions between your professional identity, your roles, and the client's goals or outcomes?

Example:  My professional identity to be seen as competent and caring sometimes clashes with my roles and personal commitments.

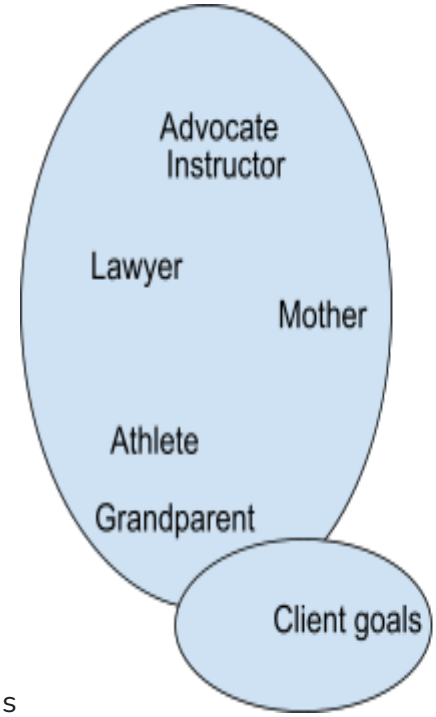
What type of civil litigation issues might you face in practice? How might these issues impact your professional identity?

What kind of goals could you set related to this project

1. Understand the importance of the person related to the legal goal.
2. Be aware of tension between winning for client and my roles/time
3. Be aware of tension between providing feedback and grades to students roles/time

Visual - You can create a visual aid (chart, video, picture, etc.) to explain your professional identity.

Roles:




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Final Reflection:
Did this assignment help you to understand and identify your professional identity?
How will you tend to your professional and personal wellbeing as a result of this assignment?