Communicating Professionally

 It is often said that proper grammar is the key to success and to communicating in a professional manner. This statement is considered very accurate by most professionals and employers and also holds true when it comes to a career in counseling. Excellent grammar and communication skills are attributes that must be constantly strived for and improved upon, as it is necessary for all professional fields, including mental health counseling. Mental health counseling encompasses various skills, including speaking, listening, and writing. All of the skills needed to practice as a mental health counselor may be practiced at any time. Those skills are often important for other professions as well, and should not be neglected. While not everyone has mastered proper grammar usage, there are multiple resources to improve grammar skills, which enables professional communication. The use of proper grammar skills is very important when it comes to obtaining and keeping a job, as described by Adams and Weins.

Susan Adams and Kyle Weins have both written articles about the importance of using proper grammar in the workplace. From the *Forbe*s article, “Why Grammar Counts at Work,”Susan Adams claims that using proper grammar in the workplace helps convey that the employee is paying attention to the employer. She also states that it conveys respect to the person an individual is speaking with. Adams also suggested that proper grammar usage helps define how considerate someone is, and that it defines their knowledge in general. Being grammatically correct shows the employer one’s ability to arrange and coordinate things, which is a useful skill in most occupations. (Adams). Susan Adams is not the only one who believes that proper grammar usage in the workplace is important, so do high executives such as Kyle Weins. Kyle Weins, the CEO of ifixit.com, has been published in an article from the *Harvard Business Review.* Throughout the article, Weins states several other reasons why proper grammar in professional settings is important. He claims that the reputation of a person is built upon what he or she writes, and what they post online. He continues on to clarify that one’s written words, specifically online postings are representations of the author themselves. Kyle Weins states that proper grammar is important and does in fact correlate to positive characteristic traits such as inventiveness, as well as executing tasks properly. Using correct grammar in speaking and writing also conveys that the speaker or author is meticulous. The grammar level of an applicant may show several characteristics of the prospective employee. (Weins)

Professional grammar usage is shown essential for most occupations, including counseling. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* states that to become a mental health counselor, a person needs a master’s degree in clinical mental health counseling, as well as an internship, and an accredited license to practice. Taking these things into account, it may be assumed that someone who pursues a career in mental health counseling must have exemplary reading and writing skills. To work in the profession, one must also have excellent communication skills in order to properly and effectively communicate with his or her clients. This may include speaking in person with the client or by some other form of communication such as over the phone or via email. From prior academic classes, instructors have indicated that working in the mental health field usually requires the counselor to study the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. This being said, it is probable that mental health counselors read the most up to date version of the text, the *DMS.* It is also likely that mental health counselors take notes during or after sessions with their clients, and that they often write as a means of communication between themselves, clients and other professionals in the field. Often the notes of specific cases are shared among counselors for recommendations of treatment. So, to help maintain a professional relationship with clients, proper grammar and editing skills are important during written and typed correspondence. Obligations of mental health counselors include listening to their clients express their problem or situation, and discussing the problem with them so that the client may cope with, or overcome their struggle (*Occupational Outlook Handbook)* In order to stay aware of developing mental health information and news, mental health counselors may read the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, or other journals that relate to their field.

There are various ways which I can improve my professional communication skills so that I can prosper in any job I obtain, and eventually achieve my goal of becoming a mental health counselor. Attending Thomas Nelson Community College and taking an English or communications class is one clear way to continue to develop my professional communication capabilities. Taking English Composition 111 and using resources provided such as *The Little Seagull* will assist in mastering professional correspondence, especially professionally written correspondence. *The Little Seagull* provides grammar rules and guidelines, as well as assignments to refine grammar skills, such as “Inquisitive”. While it comes to written correspondence, I believe I communicate clearly and effectively; however, I do know that I need to improve communicating with large groups of people. This is partially because I get nervous when addressing larger groups or audiences. Practice is a proven method to become more comfortable with a task. This may also apply to public speaking. Practice may be as simple as going over a speech to one’s self in front of a mirror or reciting the speech in front of close friends and family to build confidence slowly. Along with practicing in front of a mirror, I will also enroll in a public speaking course that is offered at TNCC. The course is mandatory for my major of social science, but I will truly work to appreciate the course and grow more confident in my public speaking abilities. While in the course I will commit myself to it, striving not only to earn a good grade but also to improve my skills by practicing speaking to large groups of people. I consider myself a strong listener, but it is one of the most important skills required for my desired career field, mental health counseling; understanding that superb listening skills are required for what I hope to be my future career leads me to the conclusion that I must continue to fine-tune my listening skills as well. Listening is a skill which involves not only hearing what is being said but understanding what someone is saying. This may be done by focusing on the words that are spoken and what they mean in context to the conversation. Often listening involves taking notes to reflect on after the conversation (or session) so that one may go back and review what was said in order to gain an accurate understanding. I am a believer that practice makes perfect, and college, in general, is perfect practice to continue to develop my listening skills.

Whether it is serving at a local restaurant, working for Kyle Weins at ifixit.com or working as a mental health counselor, professional communication is a must. It helps convey one’s overall aptitude and sometimes even their work ethic. It may be what stands out to an employer to hire an applicant or an indicator that an employee needs to be let go. That being said, everyone who desires to work, in any field, should not settle for poor or even mediocre grammar skills, but strive to continue to develop the necessary skills to communicate efficiently professionally.

Works Cited

Adams, Susan. "Why Grammar Counts in the Workplace." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 20 July 2012. Web. 12 Sept. 2016. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2012/07/20/why-grammar-counts-at-work/#372ac6a84431>>.

“Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists.” *Occupational Outlook Handbook,* U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 17 Dec 2015 Web. 16 Sep. 2016 <<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/mental-health-counselors-and-marriage-and-family-therapists.htm>>.

Weins, Kyle. “I Won’t Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar. Here’s Why.” *Harvard Business Review*. Harvard Business Publishing, 23 July 2014. Web. 12 Sep. 2016. <<http://hbr.org/2012/07/i-wont-hire-people-who-use-poo>>.