

The Art of Self-Supervision

By Laurie Ponsford-Hill

The task was given to me to create a self-portrait and to write a synopsis of a portion of the book "The Art of Self-Supervision" by my clinical supervisor, who is the author of the book. My first thought was one of hesitation as I do not see myself as being an artist however, I found the exercise to be enlightening and enjoyable once I started it. I began the process of needed self-reflection prior to putting pencil to paper and pondered how I see myself in light of my pursuit of becoming a counsellor. As the author, Ponsford-Hill (2018) states, the creation of a self-portrait involves the artist looking inward and taking a snapshot of the sum of their life experiences. It is a portrayal of how one views oneself. The act of self-reflection presented in this book is one in which the individual actively seeks to understand oneself (Ponsford-Hill, 2018). It is a meaning-making process based on past and present experiences that allows for one to grow in their knowledge of self. The author supports the view that psychotherapy can offer opportunities for self-reflection, not only for the client, but also for the therapist.

The self-portrait is a way for the artist to make meaning both for the artist and the one who looks at it, according to Ponsford-Hill (2018). It comes about by the act of self-reflection and shows how the artist views self in the world. In the process of drawing my self-portrait, I reflected on my new role as a counsellor and what it means to me. I created my self-portrait by drawing the image I imagined in my mind. Ponsford-Hill (2018) describes a self-portrait as being a picture of how the artist views him or herself. Her explanation that the self-portrait from a theological point of view "reveals God within the artist's soul" resonated with me.

Before I began to sketch my portrait, I thought about the most important reason I had for becoming a counsellor. I realized that my desire to come alongside others and walk with them through their struggles was a response to God promising to walk with me on this journey called life, through my painful and peaceful times. I rely on the love and compassion God has for me to fuel my compassion and concern for others. In my self-portrait, I have drawn one hand raised to the sky which represents my prayer for wisdom and discernment as I seek to support others. My hand extended out is an invitation to hurting people to allow me into their struggles and to help relieve them of the burdens they carry. I found this exercise to be a confirmation of how I view myself in terms of what I have experienced as a therapist-in-training and the direction in which I desire to go in this chosen field of work.