

## **Gender related issues**

As I look back at the interactions I have had in my internship, I realize the interactions with gender related issues have been limited. I have seen students freely express their sexual orientation, but it has rarely been directly expressed or implied during an encounter with my clients. However, I do recall a situation when a client expressed, she was in a same-sex relationship. Her sexual orientation or preference had nothing to do with the services we were providing, but she felt comfortable to share that information with us. I dealt with it by simply treating her as I would anyone else, as a PERSON. I treated her with love and respect. I believe my spiritual formation is what encourages me to serve others and to respect their self-determination. Christ himself never force anyone to follow Him or obey Him. Even now, we all have free will and it is helpful to keep that in mind when dealing with others. Keeping this present helps me to understand that everyone is free to make their own choices, regardless of my personal opinions. This was an opportunity to integrate my spirituality by helping a person in need. I was able to serve the client as I think Christ would have, with love. God is such a loving and caring Father, and I see His love and grace manifest in my life daily. I simply want to be a vessel through which He can make His love known for others, I want to serve.

## **Traditional Marriages**

When I think of traditional marriages, I think of a mother, a father, and some children. I believe part of this is due to my upbringing and belief system. However, I understand there are many other faiths, traditions, and cultures that view marriage in a different way. I believe as a social worker I would approach marital views that differ from mine, the same way I approach any other beliefs that differ from mine. Whether that be a marriage unequally yoked, polygamous, homosexual, or a “traditional” marriage, I would treat all the same way, with love and respect. I think it is important to be aware of the differences that exist in our society and of potential situations we may encounter as professionals because we can prepare for such encounters. In my case, I believe that if I treat every person with love and respect, I am doing what God has called me to do. I believe in the importance of relationship and I cannot, as a helping professional, pretend to help others if I am not willing to create a relationship. Whether I agree with their lifestyle or not, I support the right to self-determination because I understand that God himself has given us all the right to choose. We are all free to believe what we want to believe, to live the way we want to live, and to marry who we want to marry. Therefore, as a professional I will provide the services I am competent in proving and continue to support the client’s right to self-determination.