

Alumni Spotlight: Whitney Newton (MACC '19)



Current title: Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Associate, National Certified Counselor (LCMHCA, NCC)

Favorite professor: Dr. Rodney Cooper

Favorite class: Multicultural Counseling

Favorite memory: One of my favorite memories is praying over Dr. Cooper before he transitioned out of the counseling program. I appreciated that prayer and God's word were valued at Gordon-Conwell and that we had the opportunity to pray over a professor before they experienced a transition in their life. I also appreciated when the professors shared personal details of their lives,

so that we knew how to pray for them specifically and intentionally.

What have you been doing since you left Gordon-Conwell and where are you serving now? Do you have a particular specialization?

I have been counseling full time at Hickory Grove Counseling Center. I specialize in trauma and in play therapy; I am EMDR trained and working towards becoming certified in EMDR. I am also working towards becoming a Registered Play Therapist. I work with individuals of all ages for a variety of concerns, such as mood disorders, OCD, trauma, life transitions, relationship difficulties, etc.

What do you love about your work?

I love sitting in difficult and painful places with clients. Often, clients tell me painful stories that they've told no one else, and I consider it an honor to journey with them as God brings them relief and healing.

I also love celebrating growth with clients. They work hard to achieve their goals and it's a good feeling to be able to celebrate with them when they reach one. This is a humbling experience for me, because I know it's a precious gift from them to me that they allowed me to be a part of their growth journey.

What are the particular challenges of serving as a therapist in your context?

Maintaining self-care and preventing burnout can be difficult as a therapist. While I love entering painful places with individuals, this type of work can take a personal toll. It is important to me to maintain boundaries and set aside intentional time to take care of myself. This intentional time may include seeing my own counselor, saying "no" to personal invites to things, engaging in a creative task, spiritual disciplines, etc. My goal

is to be a counselor long-term, so I need to take care of myself, and allow God to take care of me, so that I can continue to do this work.

Being a therapist also impacts my personal relationships, to some extent. I have introverted tendencies, so sitting with clients for 5-6 hours a day depletes my social energy. There are many times I need to use discernment regarding saying “no” to others and recharge alone, or if I need to “push through” and engage in fulfilling, personal relationships.

What has been Gordon-Conwell’s biggest impact/influence on your counseling practice?

GCTS has been instrumental in developing my professional identity. Gordon-Conwell taught me how to be a counselor. I learned the foundational counseling skills, how to conceptualize being a counselor, and how to balance professional ethics and laws with my Christian identity, among many other things. I wouldn’t be who I am today (professionally and personally) if I had



chosen to attend a different counseling program at another school. I truly believe God led me to GCTS for the specific purpose of molding me into who I am.

Gordon-Conwell has also been part of my growth beyond my graduate program. Dr. Pamela Davis is my clinical supervisor, and she has helped me stay grounded in everything I learned at GCTS. She is a large influence on my professional identity and I am so grateful to her for continuing to pour into me, as well as allowing me opportunities to journey with counseling students at GCTS. It has been energizing to pass along what I have learned to students in the beginning of their professional journey.

How has God woven together your Gordon-Conwell education with other life events to bring you to where you are now?

It is common for individuals to enter a counseling program due to painful experiences they’ve had personally. I was no exception to this. I have healed, and am continuing to heal, from personal traumas. It was this healing that jumpstarted my desire to help others. Unfortunately, I didn’t have an accurate view of counseling when I began my studies at GCTS, and I didn’t know how to practically offer God’s healing to others. GCTS came alongside my desire to help others and offered me tangible, practical ways to serve others.

The MACC program also required students to have didactic counseling. Other counseling programs do not require this, but I find it necessary to the growth of the counselor. My personal, spiritual, and professional identities are intrinsically linked. Any

impact to one aspect of my identity impacts other parts. Having a holistic approach to the development of students (spiritual, personal, and professional) was a blessing to me, and continues to be a blessing to others.

What piece of advice would you give to young alumni who are beginning therapists?

I would encourage beginning therapists to surround themselves with community, professionally and personally. Professionally, our community should hold us accountable to providing good clinical services. This community is also supportive regarding the difficulties counselors face, it helps us to continue to grow our skills and helps us stay updated on changes to the profession. Having a great supervisor and being surrounded by like-minded people helps me to continue doing what I love to do (and do it well).

Personal community is also very important. It's nice to have relationships where the other individuals aren't counselors. This space affords us the opportunity to not think about work all the time and just be ourselves. Christian community is especially important to your spiritual health, so plugging into a local church or body of believers is necessary.

Learn more about [Whitney Newton Counseling](#).