

My Personal Philosophy

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When I was 14 years old my parents decided to move my siblings and me from the UK to the US, specifically the sunny state of Florida, to open an equestrian business. It was a Tuesday morning when we received the call. My dad was informed that there was a slaughterhouse in Louisiana which packed horses onto trailers and shipped them across the border to Mexico for them to be slaughtered, processed, packaged, and brought back into the US for human consumption. The animal lover in me was crushed and I could not understand why an establishment like this was even legal. Eating horse felt almost barbaric to 14 year old me. I realised, after tending to our five new rescues, how hypocritical it was for me to think this. As someone who had eaten meat up to this point, I felt like I had no right to have a moral highground. I ate chicken during Sunday roast dinners, and burgers at family barbeques. Who was I to say that eating horse meat was wrong? I decided I needed to do something about this moral dilemma. I wanted to quit eating meat cold turkey but my parents were concerned it would stunt my growth and development. We decided to meet with my family pediatrician and discussed these concerns with her. She advised me that a vegetarian diet would not stunt my growth, and at most I would have to focus on nutrient packed meals which were high in protein and supplements certain vitamins like iron. She provided us with some external resources and websites to further answer any questions or concerns my family or I had. Although this experience is what shaped my decision to become a vegetarian, it was the discussion with my pediatrician that allowed me to feel confident making this choice and what led me to adopt a cognitive based philosophy. She provided me the resources and information which allowed me to make that choice and showed me how important effectively delivering and receiving information is in shaping an individual's personal decisions. I believe this experience aligns with the

cognitive based philosophy because it shows how my pediatrician was that reliable information source for me during this time.

Another experience that shaped my personal philosophy was when I was the President of my high school's HOSA club. Our biggest event of the year was 'Dig Pink', a pink themed volleyball tournament. It was during the month of October and was intended to raise money and awareness for breast cancer in our local community. As a club, along with our mentor the school nurse, we made informational flyers on breast cancer statistics, potential risk factors/symptoms of breast cancer and also how to do self exams. Along with these flyers being posted in hallways and bathrooms, we used homeroom to provide short presentations to different classes throughout the week and also provide extra information and useful resources. I became really passionate about breast cancer awareness and have continued to mentor my high school's "Dig Pink" event. Being that source of information for students made me passionate about health promotion, even though I was not aware that was what I was doing at the time, and furthered my understanding that my personal philosophy is cognitive-based.

The most recent experience that has shaped my personal philosophy occurred this past summer. I began volunteering at Athens Heart Clinic where we have patients with many conditions, one of these conditions being diabetes. One patient in particular had type II diabetes and was chronically overweight. They realised a change was needed to better maintain their glucose levels, weight, and have an overall healthier lifestyle. The issue this patient faced was that they had the motivation for a healthier lifestyle but they did not know what to do to make these healthy choices. So they decided to come to the clinic to speak with Dr. Agarwal and our team about potential medication, diet and workout plans to help them reach their goals. Months later, the same patient came into the clinic and showed a huge improvement in their health. Their

glucose levels and weight were down and they felt like they had more energy. From this experience, I learnt how influential providing resources and information can be in helping individuals make choices that benefit their health. Although this patient had the motivation to come into the clinic to begin this change, they did not have the knowledge and needed professional help. I learnt that by providing information and resources to this patient, they were able to better their health and take back control over their type II diabetes. I found this experience to be the most impactful in determining my personal philosophy as cognitive based and also in reinforcing my desire to become a physician's assistant. Seeing progress in health and development of healthy lifestyle choices in action, has continued to motivate me in pursuing this career.

Based off of these experiences, I believe that my personal philosophy is cognitive-based. I believe that providing and receiving information is so important and influential especially in an age where we have so many online forums and resources available. I believe that the cognitive based philosophy has been presented in my ideas and enforces how important I believe effective information distribution is as a future health promoter. From my personal experience with my doctor learning about if a vegetarian diet was a healthy option for me, to becoming a reliable resource outlet to my local school community discussing breast cancer awareness, I now understand how important it is to receive and provide reliable resources and information. I think one of the most influential experiences I had was at Athens Heart Clinic. Although I was not personally affected by this experience. I gained a whole new perspective on how important medical professionals are, simply because they are that reliable source for health related information. Even though the patient came in knowing they needed to make a change, the resources our team was able to provide them had a huge impact on their lifestyle changes. This

experience gave me a personal real world example of how I, as a future healthcare professional, can make a positive impact on my future patients by being that reliable source.