

Amy Q&A

Q&A with Amy Tichy

Q: Tell me what you are passionate about?

A: Helping others is the obvious overarching thing. To narrow that down a little bit more, it is the education aspect, whether it's the transmission of knowledge, facts, education of one's self, or learning about yourself and how to better yourself and live a whole, healthy life.

Q: Do you think you get to show some of that passion in the work that you do here?

A: Absolutely. When I sit down and talk with the youth, I process through different decisions that they've made for better or worse, and I see good decisions come out, those sorts of things.

Q: What are your fondest memories from working with youth transitional services?

A: It would be those successes; when you see somebody put something together, have someone move off into more independent living, graduating high school, going to college or succeeding in college.

They can connect all the steps that they took and the help we were able to provide for them there. It's super fulfilling!

Q: How do you cope with those who aren't successful?

A: Oh yeah, that. Some days you really need to go back and look at the ones that are successful just to remember that it can happen.

Patience. Reminding yourself that these guys do have that same potential, that it is a process and, they've got to work through that process at their own speed.

Q: Have any of those situations that have been negative, impacted how you feel about your work at all?

A: To a degree. I have had a couple of circumstances where someone really let me down - for lack of a better phrasing. That's a learning experience, and it takes some reflection to keep from becoming jaded and to accept that that's going to happen.

In this field, it doesn't matter how informed you are, you're still going to have some naivety to yourself.

Q: For those kids who find it difficult to succeed, do you go back and try and help them?

A: Sometimes. One of these instances, I needed to take a little bit of a break and step back because I knew I was emotionally torn up over what they had done.

I've since met with them and we've started working together again.

There needs to be a little pause in some days for you, but that's where your team really comes in handy. They're able to help cover and fill in, an unconditional positive regard until you can pull it back into yourself and be ready for it again.

Q: So, it takes a team?

A: Absolutely. I would be lost without my team.

Q: What would make you leave the human services?

A: The only thing that I can think of is if I were offered a long-term acting position. I can't see much else getting me out of human services in some way, shape or form.

Q: How about winning the lottery...?

A: Even then, I would still want to continue doing something in the field.

I am a helper and I need to help.

Q: You described a few minutes ago about a couple of negative situations you said you stepped back from. Can you tell me if there's anything that you did, that helped you turn that mindset around and physically recover?

A: A lot of self-reflection, talking with co-workers, processing my feelings and emotions and where they're coming from, and additional self-care, making sure that I'm taking care of me as best I can.

Q: So, would you recommend to others considering going into this field, that they have a strong emotional sense?

A: I think it's pretty darn important, in which case I recommend anybody in human services to have a personal therapist. There's a lot of stuff that you will cope with and vicarious trauma is a thing. I think it's important to have someone that you can bounce those ideas off, multiple people for different perspectives.

Q: What in your current position has impacted you the most?

A: Learning what limits to set for myself. Knowing about self-care, that I am going to have those sorts of things that I'm going to need to continually work on my entire life.

There are things that I need to be aware of every day to make sure that I'm not burning myself out and not burning others out, and being aware of the stuff that worked for me.

Q: What has happened in your life that has had a huge impact on the work that you do now?

A: I started off in education. That's where the love for transmitting knowledge started. I have two brothers that are/were in the (one isn't anymore and. Their experience started me on my road, seeing the needs that they had.

Interestingly, in my freshman year at school, I had a choice between sociology and psychology and I thought, "There's no way I'm doing anything with psychology. I'm not touching it". Now here I am, working very much so in the realm of psychology where you have trauma, depression, anxiety, bipolar, schizophrenia, and the whole nine. I would say that the things that my brothers were going through when exposed to war were a huge influencing factor for me.

Q: If you could tell the public or just someone who doesn't know why your work is so important, what would you tell them?

A: That I'm working with people. I think it's easy to put people into a box and see them as lazy or worthless. I don't think it's a conscious thing, but we categorize, it's what we do as

human beings. I challenge them to talk to these individuals, learn their story. The humanity portion of it isn't lost and the moment you speak with some you realize they're just like you. They have experiences, emotions, desires and, things they want to accomplish. They just have a different set of circumstances where they have not really gotten it right.

Q: If you could tell those same people how they could support your efforts, our efforts at Fraser, what would you say?

A: There's always the material component of items that we need, of funding to be able to continue the work we're doing. But I would also encourage them to just talk to someone, hear their story. That makes so much of a difference in the lives of these folks that we work with, to know that they're being heard.

Q: If you could do a TED talk to the world about your industry, what would you focus on?

A: That narrative piece I gave about hearing their story, but also talking about trauma and how that has changed and shaped them from such a young age. How people respond when you're in survival mode and the general public at large isn't living in this sort of situation. They don't have to go through that. People don't understand or realize that that is part of what is contributing to all these problems. A lot of it comes down to the differences of where you were born, who you were born to, and that's not a choice you get. That's something that's out of your control. They could do the best that they possibly can, but they still might need help.

Q: If you were to be speaking to people who are just starting in this industry, what would your advice be?

A: To get educated.

Ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

It's scary. And I told my staff that when they started that I would rather get 80 million emails from you asking me a question, asking me to confirm something, than you not ask, and you burn out, freaking out and losing your mind. Because everything can be overwhelming and scary.

Q: If there were any red flags that those starting up should watch out for, what would the red flags be?

I always tell my staff to be aware that you're going to get tested. They're going to push your buttons, they're going to see how tight to the rules you're going to stick. But on a broader scope, as I've gone through my journey, watch out from becoming jaded from seeing those failures.

It can really get to you if you're not careful. Be aware that there are going to be tough days and sad days. There are also those successful ones. Remember that that's what you're working through with every individual.

Q: Are there things that you would tell people to look for in an employer, in an organization, which serves this industry?

A: Compassion. If you don't have compassion from the top down, it's probably not a good place to be. You want people that are truly invested in the mission, the values and the work that everybody is doing in the organization. If you don't have that, then you're probably not at the right place.

Q: As a supervisor, what is your greatest asset?

A: I have relied a lot on my background in education. Being taught to be a teacher has helped me organize, structure, keep myself sane and help keep people on track with what they're supposed to be doing.

Q: Are there key things in your life that you treasure?

A: It's a tough question because there are so many. Values and integrity. Those somewhat subjective little qualities that are hard to define, for instance, being honest, being supportive, integrity, and respect.

Q: Are there key things in your career that you've learned, that you rely on from a day to day basis?

A: Organization, I would be so lost without organization. That gets me through my day, and my team. I would be so lost without my team. They pick up on areas where I'm not able to be on top of things and support me, just as I hope that I'm able to support them.

Q: What can you offer that sets you at Fraser apart from other businesses that are alike?

A: Personally, my background in drama therapy I think is a pretty big and obvious one. Having that education, I bring in a different perspective about hands-on, and unique and creative ways of learning and developing personal growth.

As far as Fraser, I don't have a ton of experience in a lot of other places. But that compassion that I was talking about, I feel it throughout the whole organization. I'm sure others in the area have that compassion too but I feel it very deeply here that we have so many diverse programs to fill needs.

Q: What do you say to potential employees or even current employees, when they talk about low wages at Human Services?

A: There is no great answer to that. But we talk about the reality of the field. You do not go into this field to make millions. That is the unfortunate truth. It's the sad truth. I feel football players, maybe, shouldn't be making us as much as they are.

But we can continue to advocate for ourselves and, there are ways to change it. It's just still a slow process. It takes these dedicated individuals to keep pushing for that. If you truly care about this kind of work getting done and being able to provide, that extra effort is going to be needed.

Q: What do you say when staff comment on tough working conditions that are related to mental health concerns and behaviors?

We talk a lot about self-care in the population. I remind them that people are in survival mode, they're reactionary because that's the learned behavior that they have from their circumstances.

When someone is affected personally, there is the need to rely on case managers or co-workers to be able to talk about these feelings. I also say, having a therapist is a great thing because they are the ones to process with.

We may get to a point where we review why are you in this field to see if your personal needs are being met, or if this field is becoming a detriment to your life. That is something we must examine because your health and happiness are very important.

If it's not something you can cope with right now, then maybe we should look at different options for you because I don't want someone here who's miserable.

Q: To summarize, is there a reason why you work in this industry?

A: I am a helper.

Q: What about Fraser makes you want to recommend the organization to others?

A: I talked about compassion, care, and support across the staff all the way up to the top of the administration; compassion and understanding across the board. I think it's the same kind that we give our clients and you don't find that everywhere. It's such an important thing because life happens. You have got to be able to adjust and roll with those punches. That support that we can show each other is just as important as the support we show our clients. If you're seeing it through the infrastructure, that speaks volumes as to how strongly the values are held that we show to our clients.

Q: Anything you want to add?

A: I'm glad that I'm here. It's been an amazing organization to work for over the last year.