

ETHICALLY ADDRESSING SPIRITUALITY IN CLINICAL COUNSELING

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COUNSELING

“A professional relationship that **empowers** diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.” (ACA)

This empowering relationship exists within a clinical structure and employs guidelines we often refer to as ethics.

ETHICAL PRINCIPALS

Autonomy: The duty to maximize the individual's right to make his or her own decisions.

Contrast this with the concept of Paternalism.

ETHICAL PRINCIPALS

Beneficence: Principle that one should help others further their important and legitimate interests:

Negative (“Do not...”)

Positive (“Do not fail to...”)

PRIME ETHICAL DIRECTIVE

Autonomy
+
Beneficence
=
Empowerment



Empowering people to
recover from conditions
that impact multiple
domains logically requires
clinically addressing each
relevant domain.

HEALTHY ADJUSTMENT TO AGING



Most significant predictor of healthy adjustment

Socially supportive spiritual practices

Reframe past and current struggles

Not necessarily religious but may be

SPIRITUALITY IN SERIOUS ILLNESS AND HEALTH

1. Spirituality is important for most patients.
2. Spiritual needs are common.
3. Spiritual care is frequently desired by patients.
4. Spiritual needs are infrequently addressed in health care.
5. Spirituality can play a role in medical decision making.
6. Spiritual care is infrequent in health care.
7. Unaddressed spiritual needs are associated with poorer patient quality of life.
8. Provision of spiritual care is associated with better patient end-of-life outcomes.





WHAT IS “SPIRITUALITY?”

The way persons seek and experience ultimate meaning, purpose, transcendence, and the significant or sacred.

-Balboni et al, 2022

Relationship with the transcendent.

Spirituality is about the relationship between ourselves and something larger. Spirituality means being in the right relationship with all that is.

-Kaiser, 2000

WHAT IS “SPIRITUALITY?”

Common Answers & Perceptions:

Religion

God

Morals

A feeling

Prayer

Contact with nature

Different for everyone

Something other people understand

Something for other people

Something for hippies





WHAT IS “SPIRITUALITY?”

From the Latin *spiritus*, meaning breath, life.

No one is without life and thus no one is without a
WAY OF LIFE.

Spirituality is one's Way of Life
reflected in their Thinking, Speaking, Acting,
and in the Quality of Relationships
with Self, Others and all of LIFE (God, Higher Power,
Nature, etc.)

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Spirituality is not something to “get”,
nor is it something that can be lost.



The question is not “Do I have
spirituality?”

but rather, “Is my spirituality healthy
or unhealthy?”

WHAT IS “HEALTHY”?

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

(World Health Organization, 1948)

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Physically Healthy Characterized by:

Proper Diet and Nutrition

Exercise

Rest and Attention to Physical Needs

Physically Unhealthy Characterized by:

Lack of proper nutrition

Sedentary lifestyle

Lack of rest/ignoring physical needs

Disease

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Healthy Spirituality Characterized by:

Connection

Mindful Awareness

Mindful Celebration of the Gift of LIFE

Unhealthy Spirituality Characterized by:

Disconnect

Lack of awareness

Denigration of life



WHAT IS “SPIRITUALITY?”

Spirituality is one's Way of Life

reflected in their Thinking, Speaking, Acting,

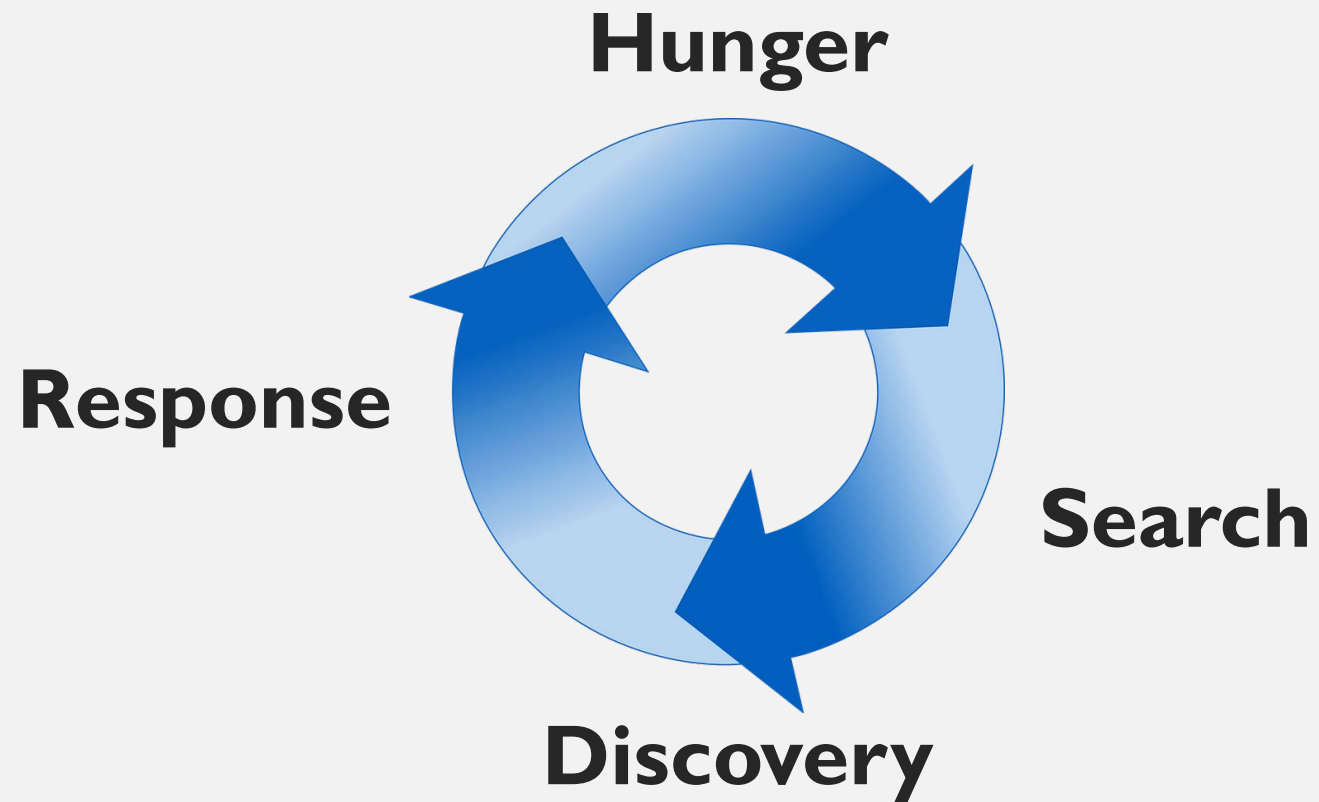
and in the Quality of Relationships

with Self, Others and all of LIFE (God, Higher Power, Nature, etc.)



THE “IMMENSE LONGING”

(BESHARA)



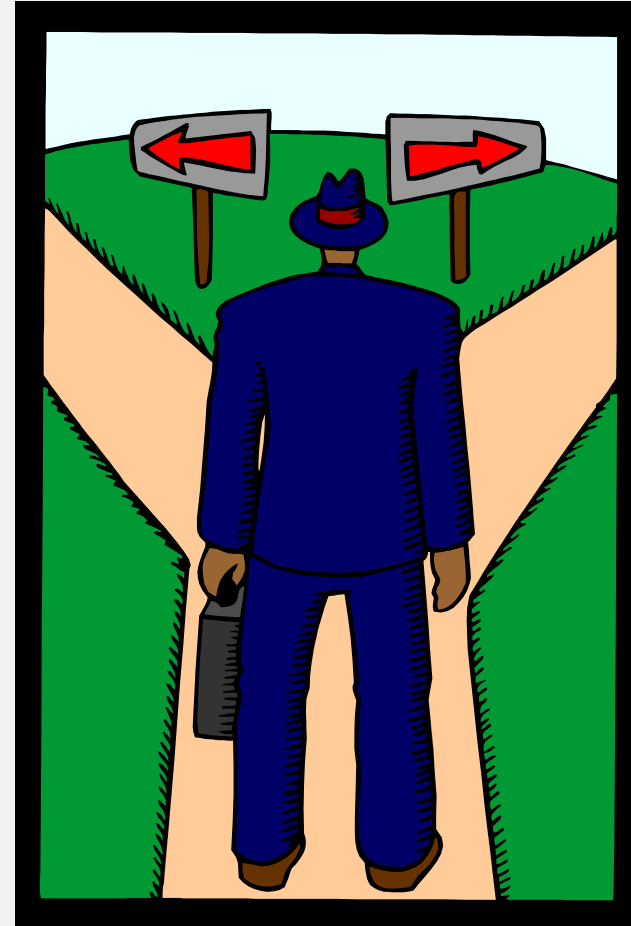
THE TWO PURSUITS

All persons are living life in one
of two pursuits:

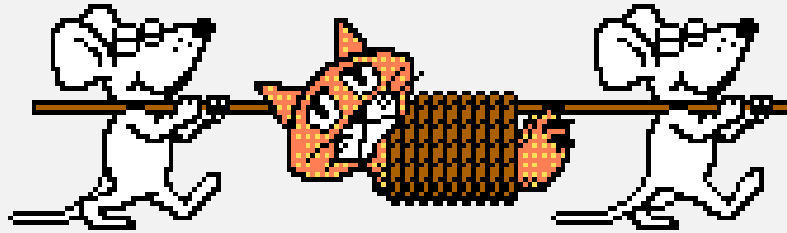
“The Pursuit of **Happiness**”

OR

“The Pursuit of **Peace**”



“**Happy**” comes from the Old English: **hap**, meaning **luck**.
Happiness is about feeling good based on **external stuff**.



Peace is about having a sense of **wholeness** and thus being
“okay” regardless of whether or not one is happy with one’s
circumstance.





CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Juxtaposing Clinical & Spiritual

Clinical work as spiritual practice

Science and spirituality are not contra

Relief from suffering

Increase mindfulness and distress tolerance

Maintain professional boundaries

SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT

Religious Traditions of Childhood

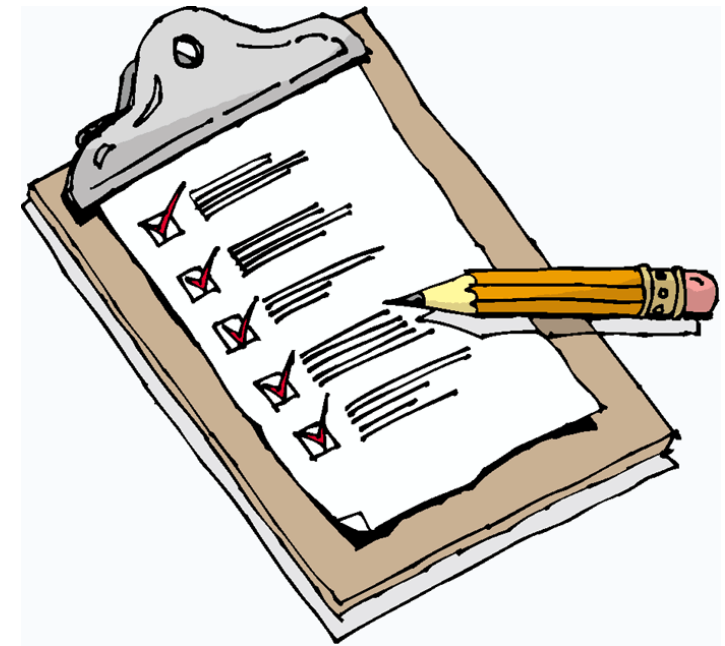
Perception of God/Higher Power

Issues of Brokenness:

Shame, Guilt, Resentment, Grief,

Abuse, Fear, Isolation

Desires, Dreams, Goals, Pursuit





SPIRITUAL TREATMENT PLAN

Socially supportive spiritual practices and mutual aid groups such as AA/NA.

Readings

Exercises

Reframing “A Journey of Becoming”

THE SPIRITUAL TIMELINE

Significant events that shaped relationship with the transcendent.

- What was the setting? Context?
- Who was there?
- What happened?
- What did it feel like then?
- What does it feel like talking about it now?
- What did you believe then? How did it shape your beliefs in the moment?
- How does it shape your beliefs or impact you now?

THE SPIRITUAL TIMELINE

Couple's House

Couple

Ex #1

Fear/Cared for

Grateful/Sorrow

Possessed. Fear. Special

Skeptical. Open

Camp

Ray & Chrissy.YG Kids

Cathartic. Divine.

Release. Love.

Distant. Personal

Divine touch Change.

Divine touch. Change.

YG Home

Leaders & Kids

Ex #2

Fear. Confusion.

Sorrow. Compassion.

Defective.

Responsible. Skeptical.

Trinity church

Full service

Recognized fake

Confusion. Sorrow.

Gratitude.Anger.

What else not real?

Responsible. Skeptical

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THE SNAIL – EXERCISE IN AWARENESS

Go for a walk...walk as slowly as you can.

PAY ATTENTION

Notice something you would otherwise have missed

Advanced: Learn something and be grateful



QUESTIONS?

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REFERENCES

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Beshara, R. (2006). *Treasuring the treasure: Exploring spirituality*. Allegra Print and Imaging.

Kaiser, L. (2000). "Spirituality and the Physician Executive: Reconciling the Inner Self and the Business of Health Care. *The Physician Executive*. 26(2). March/April.

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Stewart-Sicking, J. A., Deal, P. J., & Fox, J. (2017). The ways paradigm: A transtheoretical model for integrating spirituality into counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 95(2), 234-241.

von Humboldt, S., Leal, I., & Pimenta, F. (2014). What predicts older adults' adjustment to aging in later life? The impact of sense of coherence, subjective well-being, and sociodemographic, lifestyle, and health-related factors. *Educational Gerontology*, 40(9), 641-654.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED READING

***Shortcuts to God*, Gerald G. Jampolsky**

***Love Is Letting Go of Fear*, Gerald G. Jampolsky**

***The Return of The Prodigal Son*, Henry Nouwen**

***Reaching Out*, Henry Nouwen**

***The Tao of Poo*, Benjamin Hoff**

***Man's Search For Meaning*, Viktor E. Frankl**

***The Song of The Bird*, Anthony De Mello**

***Alcoholics Anonymous*, Alcoholics Anonymous**

***Breathing Underwater*, Richard Rohr**

***A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis**

***All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, Robert Fulghum**

***Uh-oh*, Robert Fulghum**

***The Four Agreements*, Miguel Ruiz**