TREATING THE WHOLE PERSON:  
Moving Beyond the Mind and Body to Incorporate the Spirit

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Learning Objectives:
- Describe the rationales for conducting a spiritual assessment
- Review the two-stage approach to spiritual assessment

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Presentation Overview

- Definitions of spirituality & religion
- Rationales for conducting spiritual assessments
  - Assessment is foundational to subsequent practice
- Brief (comprehensive) spiritual assessment tools
- Tips for conducting an assessment
Defining Spirituality and Religion

No agreement among scholars or practitioners

Definitions of Spirituality among NASW Graduate Students (N=303)

- 33% -- Personally constructed (with no mention of the transcendent)
- 23% -- Belief in/experience of a higher power
- 13% -- Belief in/experience of God
- 11% -- something beyond the individual
- 9% -- Don’t know/no answer
- 5% -- Connection to others/world/universe
- 6% -- Other

(Heide & McGrew, 2006)

Definitions of Religion among NASW graduate students (N=303)

- 25% -- Organized beliefs or doctrines
- 23% -- Practice of spirituality/faith
- 13% -- Personally constructed
- 12% -- Belief in/experience of God
- 11% -- Belief in/experience of a Higher Power
- 10% -- Community
- 9% -- Institution
- 7% -- Humanly constructed
- 17% -- Other
Definitions of Spirituality among the general public (N=100)

Approximately 70%
- Belief in God/seeking to grow close to God
- Belief in a higher power or something beyond oneself/sense of awe and mystery in the universe

Approximately 30%
- No mention of the transcendent

(Gallup & Jones, 2000)

Rationales for Conducting a Spiritual Assessment
(Addressing spirituality in practice)

1. Ethics
2. Respect for client autonomy
3. Accrediting & agency requirements
4. Interest in clients’ strengths
5. Knowledge of clients’ worldviews
1. Ethics

- NASW Code of Ethics (2008) lists six standards that explicitly or implicitly mention religion (1.05a, 1.05b, 1.05c, 2.01b, 4.02 and 6.04d)
  Nurses should promote an environment in which the:
  “…spiritual beliefs of the individual, family, and community are respected.”
- Difficult to be respect clients’ spiritual beliefs if one doesn’t know what they are.

2. Respect of Client Autonomy

- Many clients want to integrate their spiritual beliefs and values into service provision
- According to Gallup data reported by Bart (1998), 66% of the public would prefer to see a professional counselor with spiritual values and beliefs, while 81% wanted to have their own values and beliefs integrated into the counseling process

3. Accrediting & Agency Requirements

- The Joint Commission, formerly known as JCAHO, accredits most hospitals as well as many other health care organizations in the USA
- Hospitals
- Nursing homes
- Home care organizations
- Substance use agencies
- WHO Committee on Pain Relief

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4. Interest in Client Strengths

- Growth of the strengths perspective
- Use clients’ assets to ameliorate problems
- Hard to operationalize clients’ spiritual strengths to solve problems without conducting a spiritual assessment to know what those strengths are

Find *strength* in my religion or spirituality

(General Social Survey 2004) N = 1340

- Many times a day—19%
- Every day—29%
- Most days—18%
- Some days—10%
- Once in a while—11%
- Never—12%

Find *comfort* in my religion or spirituality

(General Social Survey 2004) N = 1340

- Many times a day—19%
- Every day—31%
- Most days—18%
- Some days—9%
- Once in a while—11%
- Never—10%
My religious community is very helpful
(General Social Survey 1998) N = 1373

- Strongly agree—17%
- Agree—37%
- Not agree/disagree—14%
- Disagree—17%
- Strongly disagree—10%
- Don’t know—5%

Most Exhaustive Empirical Review

Koenig, King & Carson (2012)
examined approximately 4,000
quantitative studies on spirituality

Spirituality and Mental Health Outcomes
(Koenig, McCullough & Larson 2012)

Spirituality is associated with higher levels of:

- Happiness, joy, and life satisfaction
- Hope and optimism
- Purpose and meaning in life
- Quality of life
  (typically when facing major life challenges)
Positive Mental Health Outcomes

- Adaptation to bereavement
- Self-esteem
- Internal sense of control
- Social support
- Social capital
- Martial stability
  > satisfaction, commitment &
  < infidelity, abuse, separation, & divorce

- Less depression and faster recovery from depression
- Lower rates of suicide and fewer positive attitudes toward suicide
- Less anxiety

Positive Mental Health Outcomes

- Lower rates of alcohol and drug use or abuse
- Less delinquency and criminal activity
- Less loneliness
- Less risk taking, hostility, & anger
- Better physical health
  < Alzheimer’s, cancer, heart disease, hypertension, & stroke
  > immune functioning, self-rated health, & longevity
5. Knowledge of Clients’ Worldviews: Cultural Competency

- Clients’ spirituality can affect attitudes and practices in many areas of significance to helping professionals
- To provide effective, client-centered services, health care professionals must have an unbiased, culturally sensitive understanding of clients’ spiritual worldview

How many examples can you come up with regarding how spirituality affects attitudes and practices (values) in the following areas?

- animals
- child care
- diet
- death, grieving & burial practices
- interpersonal communication styles
- marital relations
- medical care
- military participation
- recreational and financial practices
- schooling
- other areas?

Cultural Competency:

The key to effective practice with those who are different from us
**Spiritual Competency: Definition**

1. Knowledge of one’s own worldview and associated values, beliefs, & biases

2. Empathic understanding of a culturally different, spiritually-based worldview

3. The development of intervention strategies that are appropriate, relevant, and sensitive to the client’s worldview

(Hodge, 2004)

**The Continuum of Spiritual Competency**

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<tr>
<th>Spiritually</th>
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- When we agree with another group’s value system, it is easy to portray their values positively

- When we disagree with another group’s value system, there is a tendency to frame the other value system negatively

- This dynamic operates at low levels – dressing daughters
Take home point:

- Empathic understanding of culturally different world views is essential to effective practice

  - Islam

Common Islamic Values

- Community
- Connectedness
- Consensus
- Interdependence
- Community actualization
- Group achievement and success
- Community reliance
- Respect for community rights
- Self-control
- Sensitivity to group oppression

Common Western Secular Values

- Individualism
- Separateness
- Self-determination
- Independence
- Self-actualization
- Personal achievement and success
- Self-reliance
- Respect for individual rights
- Self-expression
- Sensitivity to individual oppression

CommonIslamic Values

- Identity rooted in culture and God
- Complementary gender roles
- Pro-life
- Sexuality expressed in marriage
- Implicit communication that safeguards others’ opinions
- Spirituality and morality derived from the shari'a
- Spiritual/eternal orientation

Common Western Secular Values

- Identity rooted in sexuality and work
- Egalitarian gender roles
- Pro-choice
- Sexuality expressed based on individual choice
- Explicit communication that clearly expresses individual opinion
- Spirituality and morality individually constructed
- Material orientation

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Rationales for Conducting a Spiritual Assessment

1. Ethics
2. Respect for client autonomy
3. Accrediting & agency requirements
4. Interest in clients’ strengths
5. Knowledge of clients’ worldviews

Brief (& Comprehensive) Assessment

- Commission’s requirements for assessment
- 2 brief assessment tools
- 4 comprehensive assessment tools
  - strengths
  - limitations

Joint Commission’s Spiritual Assessment Template

Brief Assessment--three areas:
- Denominational affiliation
- Spiritual beliefs
- Spiritual practices

For purposes of determining:
- the impact of spirituality, if any, on the provided care/services and
- if further (i.e., comprehensive) assessment is needed
Short assessment approach that complies with the Commission’s requirements
(Hodge, 2004)

- I was wondering if you consider spirituality or religion to be a personal strength?
- In what ways does your spirituality help you to cope with the difficulties you encounter?
- Are there certain spiritual beliefs and practices that you find particularly helpful in dealing with problems?

Alternative Short Assessment
(Koenig & Pritchett 1998)

- Is religious faith an important part of your life?
- How has your faith influenced your life (past and present)?
- Are you part of a religious or spiritual community?
- Are there any spiritual needs you would like me to address?
FICA Model
(Borneman, Ferrell, Puchalski, 2010)

- Faith or belief
- Importance
- Community
- Address

Alternative way of conceptualizing the purpose of Commission’s requirements?

- To identify and address clients’ spiritual needs

What are common spiritual needs?
--Qualitative meta-synthesis (N = 9)
- Older adults
- Perceptions of their spiritual needs
- Healthcare settings

Five inter-related categories or types

1. Spiritual practices
   - prayer
   - reading scripture
   - attending religious services
   - admiring a sunset
   - being outside in nature

2. Relationship with God
   - cultivating a relationship with God
3. Hope, meaning and purpose
   - creative activities
   - conducting a life review
4. Interpersonal connection
   - pastoral visitation
   - friends and family
   - interaction w. others with same beliefs
5. Professional staff interactions
   - warmth and empathy
   - asking about clients’ spiritual concerns
   - praying with clients (or not)
   - linking with others to address spiritual needs

When to move from a brief to a comprehensive assessment

Four factors to consider:

- Client self-determination
- Practitioner level of cultural competence

When to move from a brief to a comprehensive assessment

- The degree to which the norms of the client’s faith tradition intersect service provision
  - A Native client facing a possible diagnosis of mental illness who reports hearing the Creator’s voice on a regular basis
- The salience of spirituality in the client’s life
  - Catholics who attend Mass weekly
  - Muslims who practice the “five pillars”
Comprehensive Spiritual Assessment Tools: Overview, Strengths, and Limitations

Verbally based instrument:
- Spiritual histories

Diagrammatic instruments:
- Spiritual lifemaps
- Spiritual genograms
- Spiritual eco-maps

Verbally Based Spiritual Histories
- Analogous to a family history
- Two parts, or two question sets
  - Initial Narrative Framework—provides practitioners with some tools for assisting clients in the telling of their spiritual narratives
  - Interpretive Anthropological Framework—A second set of anthropological questions, based upon the spiritual anthropology developed by Chinese spirituality writer Watchman Nee (1968), is provided to help social workers explore clients’ spiritual reality as clients relate their spiritual stories

Initial Narrative Framework

1. Describe the religious/spiritual tradition you grew up in. How did your family express its spiritual beliefs? How important was spirituality to your family? Extended family?

2. What sort of personal experiences (practices) stand out to you during your years at home? What made these experiences special? How have they informed your later life?

3. How have you changed or matured from those experiences? How would you describe your current spiritual or religious orientation? Is your spirituality a personal strength? If so, how?
Interpretive Anthropological Framework

1. **Affect:** What aspects of your spiritual life give you pleasure? What role does your spirituality play in handling life’s sorrows? Enhancing life’s joys? Coping with life’s pain? How does your spirituality give you hope for the future? What do you wish to accomplish in the future?

2. **Behavior:** Are there particular spiritual rituals or practices that help you deal with life’s obstacles? What is your level of involvement in faith-based communities? How are they supportive? Are there spiritually encouraging individuals that you maintain contact with?

3. **Cognition:** What are your current religious/spiritual beliefs? What are they based upon? What beliefs do you find particularly meaningful? What does your faith say about personal trials? How does this belief help you overcome obstacles? How do your beliefs affect your health practices?

4. **Communion:** Describe your relationship with God. How does God communicate with you? How have these experiences encouraged you? Have there been times of deep spiritual intimacy? How does your relationship help you face life challenges? How would God describe you?

5. **Conscience:** How do you determine right and wrong? What are your key values? How does your spirituality help you deal with guilt (sin)? What role does forgiveness play in your life?

6. **Intuition:** To what extent do you experience intuitive hunches (flashes of creative insight, premonitions, spiritual insights)? Have these insights been a strength in your life? If so, how?

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**Spiritual Histories: Strengths**

- Easy to conduct
- Appeal to more verbally oriented clients
- Concept easy for clients to understand
- Relatively non-structured format allows clients to relate their stories in a straightforward manner
- Allows opportunity to build therapeutic alliance with clients
- Central ideas can readily be integrated into more comprehensive general assessment
- Generally covers a clinically appropriate time span
Spiritual Histories: Limitations

- Not all clients are verbally oriented
- Face-to-face interaction may increase client nervousness about sharing an intimate topic, such as spirituality
- Some clients may prefer a more structured format
- Time may be spent exploring parts of clients’ stories that have little relevance to presenting problems
- May not cover all pertinent aspects of clients’ spiritual strengths (i.e., generational strengths may be overlooked)
- Little opportunity for individual, artistic expression

Spiritual Lifemaps

- A diagrammatic alternative to verbally-based spiritual histories
- An illustrated account of the client’s relationship with God over time—a map of the client’s spiritual life
- Constructed using paper, pencils, coloring markers, and other media
- Much like road maps, spiritual lifemaps tell us where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are going to (i.e., life review)
**Spiritual Lifemaps: Strengths**

- May be of interest to more artistically oriented clients
- Highly client-directed
- May appeal to less verbal clients
- Possible to assign as homework
- Lends itself well to existential interventions that emphasize the shortness of life
- Placing a client-constructed media at the center of the assessment process communicates the message that the client is a competent, pro-active, self-directed, fully engaged participant.

**Spiritual Lifemaps: Strengths (cont.)**

- For clients for whom spirituality is a highly personal and sensitive area, lifemaps provide a means of shifting the focus from the client to a more neutral object, a process that may help set clients at ease
- Less risk exists that social workers may jeopardize the therapeutic relationship through comments that are inadvertently offensive
- Counselors can focus on building therapeutic rapport by providing an atmosphere that is accepting, nonjudgmental, and supportive during assessment

**Spiritual Lifemaps: Limitations**

- Social workers may feel so removed from the process that this assessment approach makes poor use of therapeutic time
- Clients who are more verbal, uncomfortable with drawing, or prefer more direct practitioner/client involvement may find the use of a largely non-verbal, pictorial instrument to be a poor fit with their needs
- Individualistic—provides little information on generational assets
Spiritual Genograms

- Depicts a graphical representation of spirituality across at least three generations
- Colors are used to depict individuals’ spiritual traditions and symbols are used to portray affiliations, devoutness, spiritual awakenings, changes in affiliation, relationships between family members, significant spiritual others, etc.
- The end result is a graphic “color snapshot” of the overall spiritual composition of the family system that helps both practitioners and clients understand the flow of historically rooted spiritual patterns through time.
Spiritual Genograms: Strengths

- Highlights generational assets
- May be particularly useful when the family system plays a significant role in the client’s life
- Problems involving family members or family of origin issues are often effectively explored with spiritual genograms (e.g., marriage problems)
- Implicitly shows respect for members of the family system
- May hold appeal for clients who desire a very structured approach

Spiritual Genograms: Limitations

- Relatively time consuming to construct
- Require a fair degree of practitioner involvement to explain and conduct the assessment
- Place some limitations on how clients relate their spirituality
- Difficult to incorporate concepts into traditional genogram assessment
- Some clients may not understand the need to explore past events, wishing to focus on present strengths that can be operationalized to address current problems

Spiritual Eco-maps

- While spiritual histories, lifemaps, and genograms all tap some portion of a client’s spiritual story as it exists through time, spiritual eco-maps focus on that portion of a client’s spiritual story that exists in present space
- The client is drawn as a circle in the center of the paper and the spiritual systems are drawn around the client
- Although possible to add symbols, etc., the heart of the spiritual eco-map is the relationships between the client system and the spiritual systems, which are represented by various types of sketched lines
Spiritual Eco-maps: Strengths

- Focuses upon clients’ current, existential, spiritual strengths
- Quick to construct
- Relatively easy to grasp conceptually
- Since eco-maps focus on environmental systems rather than, for example, clients’ life stories, eco-maps may be particularly helpful in transferring attention from the client to the concrete, diagrammatic assessment tool
- Easy to incorporate concepts into a traditional assessment

Spiritual Eco-maps: Limitations

- Eco-maps may not appeal to more creative individuals, or clients wishing to express their spiritual journey in a less structured format
- The focus on the client’s relationships to spiritual assets in present space may result in a limited assessment that overlooks important historical factors
Tips on Conducting an Assessment

- Use language drawn from clients’ worldviews
- Picture yourself as a cultural anthropologist
- Exhibit interest and affirmation
- Develop awareness of perceptions of hostility people of faith often encounter in the secular culture
- Attempt to understand how the client’s spiritual assets can be used to address current problems—(e.g., explore how spirituality used to address past problems)

Collaboration with Clergy

- Use clergy as a resource when difficult issues arise or where spiritual expertise is needed

Respecting Clients’ Spiritual Autonomy

- Avoid coercing clients to change their beliefs
- Must stay within area of professional competency—avoid falling into the role of spiritual director
for your participation!

One must be the change one wishes to see in the world

― Gandhi