UNC School of Social Work
Clinical Lecture Series

"Are You There, God?
It's Me…and My Therapist:"
Spirituality as Cultural Competence

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Objectives

• Participants will be able to:
  • Compare and contrast three different conceptualizations of spirituality
  • Recognize at least four approaches to the assessment of client spirituality
  • Practice five concrete strategies for integrating spiritual practice into mental health and wellness care

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF RELIGIOSITY AND SPIRITUALITY

What Is Meant by Religiosity?

• Religion—community-focused, formal, organized, and behaviorally oriented
• Orthodoxy/doctrine/religious affiliation
• Religious attendance
• Religious participation/involvement
• Subjective religiosity—attitudes and beliefs about the role of religion in daily life

Gallup Poll on Religiousness in America (2012)

• American religiousness
  ◦ Very religious—40%
  ◦ Moderately religious—29%
  ◦ Nonreligious—31%
  (Based on self-reported importance of religion and religious attendance)

Gallup Poll on Religiousness in America (2012), cont.

• Religiousness increases with age.
• Women are significantly more religious than men.
• Blacks are more religious than any other race or ethnic group in America.
• Mormons are the most religious of any specific religious group in America; Jews are the least.
• Religiousness is highest in Southern states, including Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.

Gallup Poll on Religiousness in America (2012), cont.

- Religiousness is lowest in states located in the two northern corners of the country.
- Upper-class Americans are less religious than those with lower levels of education and income, but attend religious services just as often.
- Republicans are significantly more likely to say that religion is important in their daily lives and more likely to attend religious services regularly than either independents or Democrats, although Blacks are a major exception to the significant correlation between religiousness and Republicanism.

Armstrong (1996)

- A relationship with God or a Higher Being that brings meaning and purpose to one's existence, and affects the way in which one operates in the world

Elements Of Spirituality Described

- Spiritual Beliefs
  - The content of one's spiritual beliefs (e.g., "I believe that God is with me.")
- Spiritual Characteristics
  - Affective traits associated with one's spirituality (e.g., feeling peaceful)
- Spiritual Actions
  - Ways that one's spirituality affects relationships with others (e.g., applying standards of fairness)
- Spiritual Experiences
  - The phenomena that lie outside of natural or typical experience (e.g., seeing an angel)
- Spiritual Practices
  - Spiritual habits developed consistently over time to maintain or enhance a deeper connection with God (e.g., prayer, meditation)

Armstrong (1996)

Pargament (1999)

- "..[H]owever people think, feel, act, or interrelate in their efforts to find, conserve, and if necessary, transform the sacred in their lives."

Canda and Furman (2010)

- A process of human life and development
- • focusing on the search for a sense of meaning, purpose, morality, and well-being
- • in relationship with oneself, other people, other beings, the universe, and ultimate reality however understood
- • orienting around centrally significant priorities; and
- • engaging a sense of transcendence (experienced as deeply profound, sacred, or transpersonal)
- • Private and public components
- • Religious or nonreligious expressions
- • Healthy or unhealthy manifestations

Dangers of the Bifurcation of Religiosity and Spirituality

- "First, the polarization of religion and spirituality into institutional and individual domains ignores the fact that all forms of spiritual expression unfold in a social context and that virtually all organized faith traditions are interested in the ordering of personal affairs (Wuthnow, 1998). Second, implicit in the evolving definitions is the sense that spirituality is good and religion is bad; this simplistic perspective overlooks the potentially helpful and harmful sides of both religion and spirituality (Pargament, 2002)."

Rationale for Cultural Competence in Spirituality

- Spirituality is an important aspect of culture, and our ethics codes compel us to develop competence in our psychotherapy with spiritual clients.

1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity

- (c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.

Building Spiritual Competence in Social Work

- 26 programs offered dual or joint degree programs in social work and divinity/theology, representing 12.1% of social work programs
- UNC/Duke MSW/M.Div program was founded in 2005 by Dr. Amelia Roberts-Lewis (UNC) and Dr. Willie Jennings (Duke).

From the 2013 Annual Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States Council on Social Work Education

DSM-5

- V Code, 62.89 (Z65.8)--Religious or Spiritual Problem
- In this section, "culture includes language, religion and spirituality, family structures, life-cycle stages, ceremonial rituals, and customs, as well as moral and legal systems" (DSM-5, 2013, p. 749)

DSM-5, cont.

- "Examples include distressing experiences that involve loss or questioning of faith, problems associated with conversion to a new faith, or questioning of spiritual values that may not necessarily be related to an organized church or religious institution" (DSM-5, 2013, p. 725).

Why Is Spirituality Important To Well-Being?

- Spirituality is positively correlated with number of measures of well-being.
- Spirituality is a useful tool for making meaning out of our life events and circumstances.
- Spirituality provides plentiful resources for positive coping.
- Spirituality is a foundational element of our identity and closely connected to our basic needs.

Spirituality And Medical Care: What Do Patients Want?

• 95% of Americans believe in God

•77% believe physicians should consider their spiritual needs

•73% believe they should share their religious beliefs with their physician.

•66% want physicians to inquire about religious or spiritual issues if they become gravely ill.

Anandarajah et al. (2001)

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Spirituality And Medical Care: Do Doctors Discuss Spirituality?

•11% of physicians inquire about spirituality.

• < 20% discuss spirituality in >10% of encounters.

•Barriers to discussion of spiritual issues:
  •Lack of time (71%)
  •Lack of training (59%)
  •Difficulty identifying patients who want to discuss spiritual issues (56%)

Anandarajah et al. (2001)

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Four Components of Cultural Competence (Sperry, 2014)

- Cultural knowledge
- Cultural awareness
- Cultural sensitivity
- Cultural action

ASSESSMENT OF SPIRITUALITY

Benefits of Spiritual Assessment

• Invitation to enhance the provider-client relationship

• Can help providers understand the patient's/families spiritual beliefs

•Suggested to be done as routine practice

•Recommended to be conducted early in the therapeutic relationship

•Several models of assessment are available

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Taking A Spiritual History

○ "How important is spirituality or religiosity in your daily life? In what ways?"
○ "Did spirituality or religiosity play a role in your upbringing? Describe."
○ "Are you or have you ever been a part of a religious or spiritual community?"
○ "Do you experience a Higher Power in your daily life? If so, how?"
○ "Are there spiritual practices you follow regularly?"
○ "What gives your life purpose or meaning?"
○ "Are there any spiritual needs you would like me to address?"

Spiritual Assessment

HOPE **Model** (Anandarajah & Hight, 2001)

H: Sources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love, & connection

O: Organized religion

P: Personal spirituality & practices

E: Effects on medical care & end-of-life issues

Spiritual Assessment, cont.

FICA **Model** (Puchalski, 1999)

F: What is your faith or belief?

I: Is your faith important in your life?

C: Are you a part of a spiritual or religious community?

A: How would you like me to address these issues in your care?

Spiritual Assessment (Canda, 2009)

- Begin a conversation about spirituality using:
  - An indirect approach (e.g., "What brings inspiration to your life?")
  - A direct approach (e.g., "What motivated you to start your spiritual journey in life?"

(From the Strengths Model of Mental Health Recovery)

Spiritual Assessment (Canda, 2009)

- Follow up when clients mention spirituality by:
  - Inviting more conversation (e.g., "You mentioned that your friend helps you with your spirituality. Could you say more about that?")
  - Moving to action (e.g., "You mentioned ways that you've had difficulties or struggles with spirituality. Would you like to address that in your recovery goals?")

(From the Strengths Model of Mental Health Recovery)

Projective Spiritual Assessment Tool

- The most profound spiritual/religious experience I have ever had…
- I practice my spiritual/religious beliefs in specific and concrete ways by…
- One positive memory that I have from my spiritual/religious experience is…
- At this point, I see the purpose of my life as…

- Excerpted from The Armstrong Center for Hope Religious/Spiritual Assessment (2011)

INTEGRATION OF CULTURALLY COMPETENT SPIRITUAL INTERVENTIONS

Similarities Between Mental Health Care and Spirituality

- Interest in the good of humanity
- Opportunities for one-to-one work
- Location in the community often facilitates the involvement of individuals as well as families
- Centrality of community to wellness
- Use of programmatic emphases to further their causes
- Acknowledgement of human pain and suffering
- Attribution to both internal and external conditions in human problems
- Resources for growth

Tensions Between The Disciplines

- Science and religion have a long history of tensions about truth claims, particularly since the Enlightenment.
  - Our own training (positive and negative)
  - Relative lack of empirical literature
  - Historical domain of the clergy
- There are differences of opinion regarding the relative importance of ways of knowing about the world.
- Members of each discipline may use different language to describe similar phenomena.
- Much lower levels of religious involvement among mental health professionals
- Value conflicts exist between the therapist and client

Integrating Spirituality into Treatment

- Why integrate the two?
  - Honors the true experiences of the client
  - Acknowledges the "elephant in the room"
  - Taps into the source of power to change *as the client perceives that power*
- The goal of the therapist is to support, rather than persuade or give instruction in, the faith system.

Levels of Integration

- Introspective practices of the therapist
- Conceptualization of the case
- Assessment of the major spiritual themes present
- Selection of treatment interventions
- Implementation of spiritual practices in therapy
- Each of these levels may be incorporated implicitly or explicitly

Areas Of Particular Sensitivity

- Therapist and client must establish preferred terminology
- Comfort level of these discussions depends partially on therapeutic alliance
- Therapist must acknowledge the client as the "expert" regarding the faith system
- Therapist must avoid assumptions or stereotypes surrounding faith systems

Issues That May Respond Well To A Spiritual Approach

- Suffering
- Grief and loss
- Lack of meaning and purpose
- Anger at God or others
- Forgiveness
- Control issues
- Hopelessness or despair

Celebrating The Fullness Of Who We Are

- Body
- Soul
- Spirit
- Communal Beings

Spiritual Disciplines (From Richard Foster's *Celebration Of Discipline*)

Inward Disciplines
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Study

Outward Disciplines

- Simplicity
- Solitude
- Submission
- Service

Corporate Disciplines

- Confession
- Worship
- Guidance
- Celebration

Thirteen Spiritual Tools to Enhance Psychological Health (Plante, 2009)

- Prayer
- Meditation
- Meaning, purpose, and calling in life
- Bibliotherapy
- Attending community services and rituals
- Volunteerism and charity
- Ethical values and behaviors

Thirteen Spiritual Tools to Enhance Psychological Health (Plante, 2009), cont.

- Forgiveness, gratitude, and kindness
- Social justice
- Learning from spiritual models
- Acceptance of self and others (even with faults)
- Being part of something larger than oneself
- Appreciating the sacredness of life

Spiritual Interventions with Youth

- Play
- Art
- Storytelling
- Writing/Journaling
- Guided imagery
- Support families in using religious or spiritual resources to address problem behaviors

Local Example of MBSR: Duke Integrative Medicine

- "Our Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program is a method of using meditation and yoga to cultivate awareness and reduce stress. It is based on the ancient practice of mindfulness, which is about waking up, being fully alive, and being present for the richness of each moment of our lives. Within this awakening, we gain access to our deepest inner resources for living, healing, and coping with stress."

Components of an MBSR Program

- One day-long session
- Eight weekly 2.5-hour classes
- A weekly suggested reading
- Support materials, including a program manual and guided meditations and yoga instructions on CDs
- Commitment to 45-60 minutes of daily practice at home during the program

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

- Goals of mindfulness practice from a spiritual perspective:
  - To experience ultimate reality as it is
  - To grow in wisdom of the heart and of action
  - To experience freedom by letting go of attachments to the demands of your own desires, cravings, and intense emotions
  - To increase love and compassion toward yourself and others

Body-Mind-Spirit Intervention (Chan et al., 2006)

- Body
  - Foster awareness of negative and positive body signals
  - Develop strength through physical exercise and dietary advice
  - Discover meaning by understanding that somatization breeds further illness, and optimism boosts the immune system

Body-Mind-Spirit Intervention (Chan et al., 2006), Cont.

- Mind
  - Foster awareness of negative and positive states of mind
  - Develop strength through the use of cognitive reappraisal, coping skills, and relaxation/meditation
  - Discover meaning by appreciating the unpredictable nature of life, and by experiencing and appreciating a full range of emotions

Body-Mind-Spirit Intervention (Chan et al., 2006), Cont.

- Spirit
  - Foster awareness of "low" and "high" spirit
  - Develop strength by engaging goal setting, practicing mindfulness, and appreciating life and nature
  - Discover meaning by living for the moment, practicing loving-kindness, and devoting oneself selflessly to helping others

CASE EXAMPLES

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Psychological and Spiritual Wellness for All Ages

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