A Curriculum for Mental Health Providers
Kelly Arora, PhD

Rationale
Key theory and components
Sample: Interspiritual dialogue & listening skills
Challenges to measuring outcomes

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SIT Competencies: Attitude

Demonstrate empathy, respect and appreciation for clients from diverse spiritual backgrounds

View spirituality and religion as important aspects of human diversity

Be aware of how our own spiritual background and beliefs may influence client relations


SIT Competencies: Knowledge

Know that diverse forms of spirituality exist; explore spiritual beliefs, communities and practices that are important to clients

Describe how spirituality and religion can be overlapping, yet distinct, constructs

Understand that clients’ spiritual experiences may be difficult to differentiate from psychopathological symptoms

Recognize that spiritual beliefs, practices and experiences develop and change

Be aware of spiritual resources that may support well-being and recovery from psychological disorders

Identify spiritual experiences, practices and beliefs that have the potential to negatively impact psychological health

Identify legal and ethical issues related to spirituality in psychotherapy

Communicate empathically and effectively with clients who have diverse spiritual backgrounds

Inquire about spiritual background, experience, practices, attitudes and beliefs as part of a client’s history

Help clients explore and access their spiritual strengths and resources

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SIT Competencies: Skills

- Identify and address spiritual problems, and make referrals as needed
- Stay abreast of research and professional developments regarding spirituality as it relates to clinical practice, and engage in ongoing assessment of one's own spiritual competence
- Recognize the limits of one's qualifications and competence in the spiritual domain, and make referrals as needed

Spirituality

Search for the sacred

Transcendence
- Ultimacy
- Boundlessness

Spirituality: A Way of Seeing

God is nowhere

God is now here

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Spiritual Sensitivity

We can be spiritually sensitive without spiritual "expertise"

Immersion in a spiritual tradition does not make us spiritually sensitive.

Spiritual Diversity

Christian Denominations

- Catholic
- Episcopal
- United Methodist
- Unitarian Universalist
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Spiritual seeker
- Presbyterian
- Lutheran

Buddhism in the U.S.

- Zen leanings
- Simple & accessible
- "Sympathizers"

Religious Fluidity

- 44% of Americans have switched religious affiliations as adults

- 16% of American adults are unaffiliated;
- "Nones" are now the 4th largest religious group in the US

History of Tension

[Religion works] by distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner . . . by forcibly fixing [adherents] in a state of psychical infantilism and by drawing them into a mass delusion.

Sigmund Freud

1930

Civilization and Its Discontents

4/21/15

HCCN
Secular Privilege in Psychology

History of Tension

Fear of Psychology

Religion: Missing or symptomatic of psychopathology

Psychological systems of counseling may lead a person along the broad way which leads to destruction... The entrance into new life through faith in Jesus is the small gate.

Reasons for Tension?

Jesus as pharmacist

Medical Deity?

Values Systems

Healing rituals
Purification to enter the Holy of Holies
Membership for full services
Sacred texts
Vestments
Healers “see” into mystery
Pilgrimages to healing sites
Confession & penance

Empiricism
Mystery
Individualism
Community
Skepticism
Faith
Autonomy
Surrender
Pragmatism
Transformation
**People Want Spiritually-Sensitive Care**

- If you had a serious problem in your life that required counseling, would you prefer to see a professional counselor who represents your values and beliefs?
  - 1992: 66%
  - 2000: 63%
  - N=1000 / N=508

- If you had a serious problem in your life that required counseling, would you prefer to see a professional counselor who integrates your values and beliefs into the counseling process?
  - 1992: 81%
  - 2000: 72%
  - N=1000 / N=508

**Religion is a Cultural Fact**

- According to the 2014 General Social Survey, 74% of Americans believe in God's existence and 68% believe in life after death.

**Spirituality is a Resource**

- Public Religion Research Institute
- Religion & Politics Tracking Survey 2014

**Doctrinal Programs**

- Examples:
  - Baylor University
  - Bowling Green State University
  - Boston University
  - Brigham Young University
  - Columbia University
  - Fuller Theological Seminary
  - Loma Linda University
  - Loyola University of Maryland
  - Regent University
  - Seattle Pacific University
  - University of Denver/Iliff School of Theology

**20%**

- 20% of Doctoral Programs are Examples:
  - Baylor University
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**Religion is a Cultural Fact**

- According to the 2014 General Social Survey, 74% of Americans believe in God's existence and 68% believe in life after death.
Lower rates of suicide
Less anxiety
Greater well-being, happiness & life satisfaction
Lower rates of depression & faster recovery
Lower rates of alcohol & drug use
Less delinquency & criminal activity
Greater marital stability & satisfaction

Social: Each body is a variation of normal; illness and disability are socially-constructed limitations
Energy Body: Illness is imbalanced or blocked energy

What does this mean for my life?
MORAL
Did I do something to deserve this?

BIOMEDICAL
Autoimmunity is known to be influenced by genetics and jumpstarted by an environmental trigger

“How, OK, it’s not like you’re not dying. Still want to go grab that beer?”

SOCIAL
I wondered if my tendency to criticize my body and to stuff my “unfeminine” emotions like anger and frustration deep into the caverns of myself made me more likely to become ill.

How a person views illness may play a bigger role in determining health outcomes than the actual severity of the disease.

A treatment that does not consider the patient’s view [of the illness] is likely to fail.

85%: Depression is a loss of faith

Spirituality Embedded in Treatment

I asked God for help/support as I was trying to forgive
I prayed for the person who wronged me as I was trying to forgive

Spiritual forgiveness intervention
Secular forgiveness intervention

Search for the sacred
Beliefs
Relationships
Practices
Meaning making
Values

Medical and faith work together, but faith is “the indispensable element for healing”
Promising Treatments
Meditation for Vascular Headaches
Wachholtz & Pargament 2005

Headache Occurrence

Time Period

Pain Tolerance

GOD IS PEACE.

GOD IS JOY.

GRASS IS GREEN.

SAND IS SOFT.

I AM CONTENT.

I AM JOYFUL.

Theory
Kenneth I. Pargament, PhD
Clinical Psychologist/Educator
Psychology and Religion
Religious Coping

Carrie Doehring, PhD
Clergy/Educator
Values and Intersectionality
Multicultural Care

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I can attest that nothing wracks the conscience of someone raised Protestant like failing to carry out one’s occupational duties in a timely and efficient manner.

Steve Chapman, Chicago Tribune on missing work because he had the flu.

Clinicians, being human, have personal feelings and judgments about their patients and are influenced by the degree of value congruence between themselves and patients.

Gartner et al. 1990

Know Yourself

What’s your approach to spiritual dialogue?

- Rejectionist
- Exclusivist
- Inclusivist
- Respectful

Rejectionist
- No sacred reality
- Fix the problem vs. dialogue
- Spiritual beliefs & practices are signs of psychopathology

Exclusivist
- One understanding of and way to connect with the sacred
- Agreement & conversion vs. dialogue
- Reject scientific/medical expertise

Inclusivist
- Connectedness & unity
- Focus on commonalities diminishes differences

www.oprah.com
I'm not a God person... I am an atheist

My definition of God is humanity and the love of humanity

There is an inference with God that there is a presence, a creator or an overseer

We will never know

Diana

Respect ourselves as we share authentically, without imposing our beliefs & values

Respect the "irreducible differences" that make the other person unique

Respect our common humanity

Resistive-Sensitive Dialogue

Listen Compassionately

Listening and being present are acts of compassion

Marina Abramovic: Art is Present

Authenticity Detection

National Academy of Sciences 2011; Ellis & Campbell 2004

20 seconds

Foundations for Dialogue

Notice Differences and Follow the Client's Lead

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I know what God is like
I know what your language about God means
I know what your religious tradition

Use the Patient’s Language

I feel lost. I don’t know why this is happening to me.
I just read a book about ...
I prayed about it...

Responses that shut down dialogue
It’s good to send positive affirmations into the universe.
It sounds like the dream was meaningful to you.

I had a dream and when I woke up, I called and made this appointment to talk about it.

The Universe sent me a sign to come here today.
I’m glad you didn’t ignore a sign from the Universe.

The Universe sent me a sign to come here today.
I’m glad you didn’t ignore a sign from the Universe.
Would you say more about this sign?

Challenges to Measuring Training Outcomes
No widespread systematic training for entry levels of spiritual and religious KSA competence
No formal agreement on KSA competencies
Need to differentiate between training for generalists vs. specialists

Questions & Comments
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I feel lost. I don’t know why this is happening.
I’m sorry.

I just read a book about ...
I prayed about it...

I feel lost. I don’t know why this is happening to me.
I just read a book about ...
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