

Spirituality in Clinical Practice

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Defining Ideas

Spirituality consists of one's awareness of, openness toward, and practices to cultivate a connection with the authentic self, with the divine, and with others. Its energy is peace and its goods are love toward the divine, the self, and all of creation ("neighbors" of many kinds).

Religion that supports spirituality will present its doctrine and practice as primarily relational.

Religion that does not support spirituality will present its doctrine and practices as primarily propositional.

Spiritual Assessment

A spiritual assessment should be part of every intake.

Possible Spiritual Inventory:

1. Are you part of a religious or spiritual tradition?
 - a. If so, what is most helpful about it?
 - b. If not, does religion or spirituality play a role in your life?
2. What most helps you cope with stress or difficult times?

Note: The question is not particularly religious, but provides

the client the opportunity to make either a spiritual or secular response, especially following the first question.

3. What most gives your life a sense of meaning?

Note: Whatever the answer, it can always be reflected on in terms of relationship, and that relationship will in turn connect the client to her/himself, and perhaps others.

4. Is there a group of people with whom you meet on a regular basis where you feel know, accepted, and loved?

Note: Explore this and, when possible encourage such a connection.

5. Is there anything which is troubling you and makes it difficult to have a relationship with yourself, God, or others?

Note: Here we may hear of anger at God over disease, or resentment that others have more of ..., or regret over not being....or doing..., or fear of death or ..., etc.

Four Pillars of Spirituality

1. Be Awake

A. To what is within you.

B. To what is around you in the immediate world, to the cosmos, and beyond.

C. To what is happening between you and another/others.

Note: Mindfulness breathing helps to cultivate an ability to be aware without the static of attachment / control / reactivity.

2. Be Thought-Full

To think about that to which one is awake.

To engage in curiosity, wonder, inquiry; to question reactivity in the self.

3. Be Reasonable

Test the logical process being used. Does it go against the rules of logic? Does it use a sequence of thoughts that require a series of assumptions to reach a conclusion? Is it objective or subjective? This does NOT mean one cannot utilize intuition or “gut knowledge,” but rather provides a check to make sure that one is not, for instance, assuming the worst based solely on a prior bad experience.

4. Be Responsible

To do what one can in order to achieve the highest good of all parties involved, so far as possible.

Universal Journey through Death to Enter Life and Practicing the Four Pillars

In a meditation dated Sept. 4, 2015 Fr. Richard Rohr writes:

*I also find that a meditation practice is necessary for transformation, except for people who allow themselves to be changed through great love or great suffering. Meditation then preserves and sustains what they have learned in love and suffering over the long haul. In other words, I know many "meditators" who are still quite self-absorbed people, and I have met people who do not even know the word meditation, who live in deep unitive consciousness. There is no one technique; **life and death** itself are the only technique.*

Note: Successful practice of the Four Pillars requires an ongoing dying and rising.

Paschal Mystery as Heart of Spirituality

Note: There are parallels of dying and rising in the traditions of the great religions. Further stages that surround the two primary parts may be found by searching on line for Hero's Journey. Today, we will utilize the Christian tradition as a model of how the mystery manifests.

Paschal is from the Hebrew word for Passover - *Pesach*. Mystery is from the Greek word for a secret being revealed - *Mysterion*. *Paschal Mystery is about the connection between Jesus' death and resurrection and that of humanity.*

Paschal Mystery is about the unfolding secret of what happens when one goes into death and come out in newness/fullness of life. It is at the heart of the mythic hero's journey motif.

For too many Christians the "cross event" is about Jesus and not about themselves. However, the Paschal Mystery says that the "cross event" is about God meeting them in their own places of alienation in order to bring them with Christ through death here

and now and into renewed life here and now. The Reign (Kingdom) of God is here and now.

The mystery is an en-counter — a going into the opposite to achieve authenticity. It happens in the intersection of Humanity + Divinity (God comes to aid us on the hero's journey — going into death with us to bring us forth renewed). And it is excruciating (from cruces) as ego's false self dies so that the authentic self may live.

This encounter is about facing all that keeps us from authenticity with God, Self, and Others.

The Four Pillars of Spirituality and Paschal Mystery Combined

This encounter reveals the darkness in which we are asleep rather than being AWAKE.

This encounter re-conginizes (re-thinks) our reactionary responses that stand in the way of being THOUGHTFUL.

This encounter faces all prejudices that keep us from being REASONABLE.

This encounter faces our disabling, often fear based, avoidance so that we may share in the abundance of acting in a way that is indeed RESPONSE-ABLE.

