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# **Social Work Practice Meets Religion & Spirituality**

# Workshop Abstract

- Facilitator presents an overview of spirituality and religion and their influence on social work practice.
- Participants gain an understanding, examination, and appreciation of faith, religion, and spirituality and their connections with other aspects of people's lives.
- Participants explore ways to include spirituality and religion in the engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation processes.

# Workshop Outcomes

- Understand diverse spiritual and religious definitions and perspectives and their implications for social work practice
- Apply a practice framework of knowledge, values, and skills for a spiritually-sensitive social work practice; and,
- Assess the impact and relevance of the social worker's personal religious/spiritual history on the social work helping process.

# Touchstones

## Respectful Communications Guidelines by Eric H. F. Law

- R - Take Responsibility for what you say and feel without blaming others
- E - Use Empathetic listening
- S - Be Sensitive to differences in communication styles
- P - Ponder what you hear and feel before you speak
- E - Examine your own assumptions and perceptions
- C - Keep **Confidentiality** – *with all its various meanings discussed*
- T - Trust ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong

• Retrieved from [www.kscopeinstitute.org/2007-02\\_Kaleidoscope\\_Newsletter.pdf](http://www.kscopeinstitute.org/2007-02_Kaleidoscope_Newsletter.pdf)



# Defining Religion

“...institutional groups promulgate doctrine, beliefs, and practice important to many people (Dudley, 2016, p. 1).

It is important to people’s spirituality because it provides a major source of beliefs and practice and provides a means for expression. Religion exist as an external entity (Dudley, 2016, p. 1).

# Defining Religion

“Love, inner peace, and mystery are central concepts taught and practiced by religious groups” (Dudley, 2016, p. 7).

Provides... “a relationship with a Higher Power and rules of morality and ethics are central to many of their teachings (Dudley, 2016, p.7).

Has Sacred Doctrines, Religious Beliefs, Religious and Spiritual Practices

# Defining Spirituality

Dudley (2016) adopts the following definition:

*“A search for purpose and meaning in life, a sense of connected with self, others, and the universe, and an ability to transcend our immediate experience to something larger known by many to be a Higher Power beyond human power” (p. 40).*

# Global Spirituality & Religion

- Muslims are projected to be the world's fastest-growing major religious group in decades ahead.
- Christians have had a large share of the world's deaths (37%) because of the relatively advanced age of some Christian populations.
- Religious "nones" are projected to decline as a share of the world's population.
- Hindus, Jews and adherents of folk will not keep pace with global population growth.





# United States Spirituality & Religion

- The Christian share of the U.S. population is declining, while the number of U.S. adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing across the country.
- The US remains home to more Christians than any other country, and roughly 7 in 10 Americans identify with some branch of the Christian faith.
- One of the most important factors in the declining share of Christians and the growth of the “nones” is generational replacement.

# South Carolina Spirituality & Religion

- Fewer people identify as white Christians (evangelical and mainline).
- Religiously unaffiliated has grown from 10% to 17%. (from 1 in 10 to almost 1 in 5)
- Shifts are being driven by racial and ethnic changes.
- Percentage of white residents went from 73% to 61%. Black residents went from 19% to 25%. Hispanic residents went from 4% to 6%.

Retrieved from

<https://www.ppri.org/spotlight/the-religion-and-politics-of-south-carolina-a-state-portrait-from-prris-american-values-atlas/>

# Statement of Need - SOWK Meets Spirituality & Religion

In U.S., the majority of the people who social workers contact within service delivery are likely to be religious in some way (Ellor, Netting, & Thibault, 1999; Hodge, 2003; Pew Research Center, Religion and Public life, 2015; as cited in Dudley, 2016).

However, many people are non-religious and their spirituality is equally important and finds expression in other ways.

# Statement of Need - SOWK Meets Spirituality & Religion

In a qualitative study with people who had cancer, Taylor found seven spiritual need categories:

1. The need to relate to an Ultimate Order;
2. The need for positivity, hope, & gratitude;
3. The need to give and receive love;
4. The need to review beliefs;
5. The need to have meaning;
6. The need for religiosity;
7. The need to prepare for death



# The Ethics of Spiritually Sensitive Practice

## NASW Code of Ethics

- **“1.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity**
- (a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- (b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients’ cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients’ cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.

# The Ethics of Spiritually Sensitive Practice

## NASW Code of Ethics

- 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” (NASW, 2008)

# Constructing a Spiritually Sensitive Approach

“being prepared to effectively engage spiritual and religious issues in the helping process whenever they are important to helping clients” (Dudley, 2016, p. 1).

# Engaging the Spirituality & Religion in Different Levels of Intervention

- “Micro level, such as hope wonder, joy, belief, and coping with deeper suffering;
- Mezzo level, as intimacy, connectedness, and I-Thou relationship (Buber & Kaufmann, 1971);
- Macro level, as justice, unity, empowerment, oneness, and cooperation with others” (Dudley, 2016, p. 7)



# Spiritual Development & Everyday Life

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – used superficially to imply spiritual development starts after all the lower needs are met.

Victor Frankl (2006) in midst of greatest deprivation and oppression that we call forth a response of creativity, discovery of meaning, and sense of divine support.

# Spiritual Development & Everyday Life

James Fowler's Faith Development Theory-Stage

Primal Faith; Intuitive-Projective Faith; Mythic-Faith;  
Synthetic-Conventional Faith; Individuate-Reflective  
Faith; Conjunctive Faith; Universalizing Faith (Canda  
& Furman, 2010, p. 254)

“Overtime people refine and change their contexts of faith, both within stages (at the same level of complexity and sophistication) and by moving to a more advanced stage of faith” (Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 257)

# Spiritual Development & Everyday Life

Canda & Furman (2010) state “Spiritual growth is the total process of development of meaning, morality, relationships, and orientation toward ultimacy throughout the life span” (p. 264).

# Spiritual Development & Everyday Life

Fowler's set of categories to understand a person's developing faith:

1. "The things or *qualities with greatest value* to us;
2. The master stories that we use to guide and explain our lives
3. The *images of sacredness or power* that sustain us; and
4. Our *locus of authority* for what we consider moral and right" (Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 257)

# Engagement:

## People's Spiritual and Religious Identities

Entering the conversations

Using words but not speaking in direct language  
of spirituality and religion

Seeking Meaning for our Lives

Finding Purpose

Pursing Hope

Embracing Love

Seeking an Inner Source of Peace

Experiencing Wonder



# Spiritual Assessment

Spiritual assessments that are more open ended and flexible so they adapt to different practice settings and spiritual perspectives.

Avoid overly structured approaches – Such as “Are you Christian, Jewish, or other” likely give counter productive messages

Need to be completed in a collaborative manner with clients where the context is respectful, empathic, and client-centered relationship & dialogue.



# Spiritual Assessment

Should not be completed in a hasty manner

Done with a holistic strengths perspective

“When clients describe transpersonal experiences or experiences unique to particular religious beliefs and practices, social workers must be wary of imposing irrelevant, ethnocentric, or religiously biased assumptions and judgements” (Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 263).

# Implicit Spiritual Assessment

Least intrusive approach

“...Cultivating spiritually sensitive relationship with client, without talking explicitly about relation or spirituality, we cue the client to our openness, receptivity, interest, and respect for whatever is important to her or him” (Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 265)



# Implicit Spiritual Assessment Sample Questions - Handout

1. What currently brings a sense of meaning and purpose to your life?
2. What helps you feel more aware and centered?
3. Where do you go to find a sense of deep inspiration or peace?
4. When do you feel times of great peace, joy, and satisfaction with life?
5. What are the most important sources of strength and help for you in getting through times of difficulty or crisis?



# Brief Explicit Spiritual Assessment

Social workers work in settings with limited time and resources for interactions with clients.

Brief assessments quickly clarify whether spirituality is important to the client and relevant to the practice situation.

(Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 265).

# Brief Explicit Spiritual Assessment

Meaning, Importance, Membership, Beliefs, Relevance, and Action (MIMBRA).

Has an opening statement and six longer questions that directly address spirituality, faith, and religion (Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 266-267).

Handout....



# Detailed Explicit Spiritual Assessment

Completed when clients express they want to pursue detailed exploration of religion, spirituality, or faith in relation to their situation and goals.

May need to refer to specialist, traditional healers, clergy, and mentors.

(Canda & Furman, 2010, p. 267)

# Explicit Spiritual Assessment

The Joint Commission on Accreditation

[https://www.jointcommission.org/standards\\_information/jcfaqdetails.aspx?StandardsFaqlId=765&ProgramId=46](https://www.jointcommission.org/standards_information/jcfaqdetails.aspx?StandardsFaqlId=765&ProgramId=46)

Suggested Questions

# Sample Micro Spiritual Interventions

“A spiritual intervention has been defined as an activity, type of treatment, or action with a spiritual focus introduced in the helping process” (Dudley, 2016, p. 241).

# Macro Spiritual Interventions

“Macro spiritual interventions typically involve activities that are introduced at the organizational, policy, or community levels of practice” (Dudley, 2016, p. 241).

Focus on social justice issues: hunger, low wages, availability of affordable housing

# Macro Spiritual Interventions

Moral Mondays

The Reverend William Barber

Website

<http://moralmonday.org/>

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8H-AHTvOR4w>



# Evaluating Spirituality Sensitive Practice

Determines the impact of spiritually sensitive programs and practices on the clients it serves.

Provides evidence that spiritually sensitive interventions are effective in helping clients.

Use tools that focus on the client's empowerment processes

Determine how prepared agencies are to focus on spiritual engagement, assessment, interventions and such

Determine staff competencies in spiritually sensitive practice.

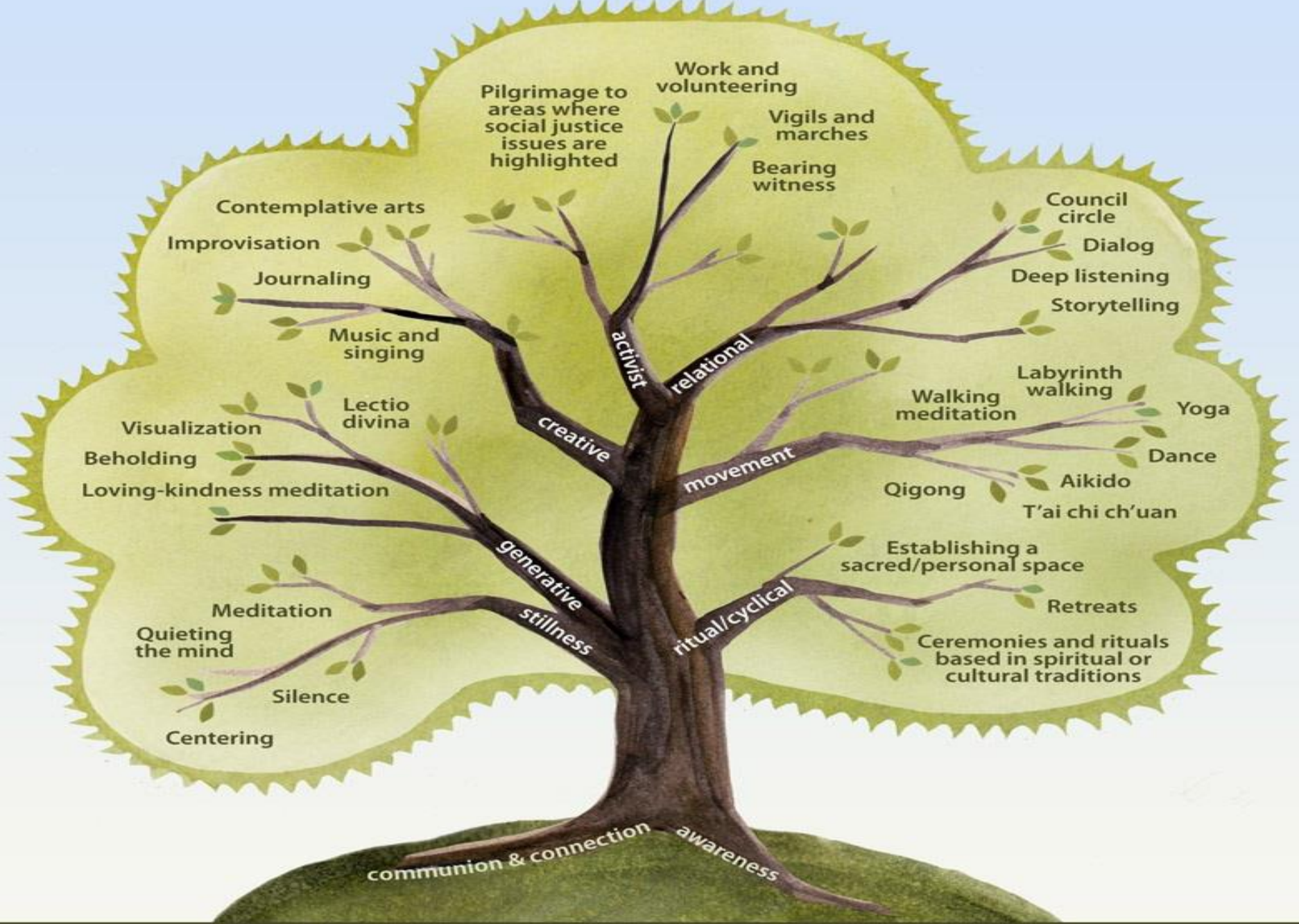


Evaluate the worker's competences  
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**Tools for the Journey**  
**Tree of Contemplative Practice**  
**Center for Contemplative Mind in Society**

[http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/t  
ree](http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree)

Handout



# The Tree of Contemplative Practices

[www.contemplativemind.org](http://www.contemplativemind.org)

# Tools for the Journey

## Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/>

# Comments

# Questions

# Thank you for coming!



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As **Gamecocks**,  
our spirit has  
**No Limits.**



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