

Spirituality and Psychotherapy: A New Approach Toward Their Integration

Can spirituality and psychotherapy go together in a way that is beneficial to clients? If so, how could that occur in ways that are ethical and do not impose the beliefs of the therapist on the client? These and many other questions will be addressed in this course which will take you through a spiritual journey related to our profession of being psychotherapists and what it means to be able to effectively and ethically incorporate the essence of spirituality into our practice.

If your training was anything like my training, I was taught that these two things should never be put together and certainly not by me. To do so would be going into the purview of the priest, the rabbi, the minister, the church, the temple, the synagogue, the whole religious aspect of spirituality and that was not where psychotherapists needed to tread. Quite honestly, I no longer believe that. In fact, it is my belief that spirituality and psychotherapy can be paired ethically and in ways that are tremendously beneficial to clients. The information in this course will support why this is a belief that we really might want to consider in our practices as psychotherapists. Often, the best and the most successful and the most effective psychotherapists are the ones who are willing to take an appropriate risk, a risk with the best interest of the client in mind, to incorporate a spiritual dimension and component in psychotherapy. That in a nut shell is the essence of this course. Those are some among many of the questions that will be addressed and covered in this course.

Blaise Paschel noted that the inability of someone to be able to sit quietly in a room alone silently for five minutes is the root of everyone's trouble. I would ask that we consider this as a spiritual issue. If we look around at our society, our culture today, it is almost impossible to find anywhere that is quiet and that values silence. The best-selling book, *Quiet* by Susan Cain does an excellent job of examining in depth our fear of quiet and our discomfort with it. For an outstanding presentation of her work, I strongly suggest you go to www.ted.com and in the search box enter the name Susan Cain. One cannot watch this presentation or read her book without coming away with an entirely new view of how using the gifts that silence offers as a powerful substance to the soul and to our spiritual journey. I know some therapists, including myself, who have recommended this book to clients as a way to begin the exploration of ourselves, and ultimately our spiritual nature. Our televisions, our movies, our videos, our music, our phones, and just about everything is about sound and noise. Silence and being quiet, the kind of silence, the kind of quiet that still the soul are spiritual issues. I believe the most successful, the most effective, the most helpful psychotherapists are the ones that are able to help their clients learn to sit quietly alone silently in a room for five minutes. That five minutes may be literal as well as figurative.

Here are some interesting facts and statistics about how and why spirituality and psychotherapy should go together and can go together. Research supports that 95% of Americans believe in God and that 82% of Americans believe in the power of personal prayer. We know from another research study that 77% of therapists surveyed indicated that they attempt to live according to their religious beliefs and another 68% regard the search for spiritual understanding of one's place in the universe as

important for a healthy life. In my work in my masters program as well as in my doctoral program, I was trained to become a therapist who believed that there are five major dimensions and that these five major dimensions constituted a whole person. These dimensions we were taught were as follows: the intellectual side, the emotional side, the physical side, the social side , and the occupational side. This course is asking that psychotherapists consider adding a sixth dimension. It's going to ask us to take a leap of faith and accept that a whole person might actually have six dimensions. In addition to intellectual, emotional, physical, social, occupational, many psychotherapists believe there is a spiritual dimension. Psychology, the actual word psychology, literally means the study of the soul. It doesn't really matter what license one holds in order to do the work of a psychotherapist. Whether counselors, social workers,

couples and family therapists, or psychologists, we study the soul. Think of all the courses that are taken in those educational programs and consider that they were studies of the soul.

When we use the word soul in this course we're going to be talking about depth. The word spirit will also be discussed. If you can, think of soul as depth and think of spirit as height. So we will be referring to the depth of our essence of who we are, of what makes up us and to spirit as the height and breath of the same. Many people will use these two terms interchangeably. However, in this course, I will not be using them interchangeably. If you take a look at the work of James Hillman and the work of Thomas Moore for examples, you will see that these two words are very different and that they represent two entirely different concepts and two very different ideas. So, we're going to use soul but we are going to use it to mean depth. We will be using the word spirit and we

will be using it to mean height and breath. Therapist literally means servant of the soul. So what is being submitted for your consideration is that if you are a therapist, then you study the soul and you are a servant or an attendant of the soul.

I think it is very interesting to learn what the word psychopathology means. It means suffering of the soul. So when a therapist is working with a client to help alleviate, to help gain control of, to help get through the client's souls suffering, that therapist has moved into the dimension of spirituality, whether it is called that or not. Think back to the definitions that have been covered: therapists have been trained in the study of the soul; therapists are servants and attendants to that soul and it makes perfect sense that a therapist should incorporate spiritual components into his or her work in psychotherapy. In all actuality, this is being done anyway. How could it not be so?

Now, it's time to take a look at look at some definitions of spirituality. In researching this material I have found almost as many definitions of spirituality as there are people who are writing about spirituality and psychotherapy. I've chosen six particular ones to put in this course and certainly you are welcome to use your own definition of spirituality as you read the course material. I think these definitions of spirituality are very good, very clear, very concise and give us a good basis, a good foundation from which to look at the place of spirituality in psychotherapy.

Now, before I go on with the definitions of spirituality, I want to be very clear that this course is not a course on or about religion. For some there is a concern and worry about the concept of religion. Sometimes this is because of some of the more fundamental, very, very

ultraconservative, very right-wing approaches to religion (not spirituality) that have caused some people to devalue the place of religion.

The following is my personal belief and I challenge you to consider your position: I have a concern that what we've done is throw out the baby with the bath water. It is not the place of this course to talk about religion because this is not a course on religion. But please consider the following may be a very good way to categorize some areas: there can be spiritual people who are religious, spiritual people who are not religious, religious people who are spiritual, religious people who are not spiritual, and people who are agnostic or atheists. This course takes the position that everyone is spiritual whether he or she recognizes it or does anything to cultivate it or not. However, since religion is about rules, I don't believe everyone is ultimately religious. So, what are we going to be doing about this issue in this course? Will we not address anything about religion? Later in the material some of the definitions of religion will be addressed and I think that will help give the reader a better idea of why this is not a course about religion but rather a course about spirituality and how and when and if to integrate it with the practice of psychotherapy.

One last thing: Certainly there are many ways to refer to God. Many use the word God, the Goddess, The Ultimate Transcendent Power, The Devine, the Creator; the choices seem to be endless. There are many, many names, and for the purpose of this course and for the ease of this course and of the reader, I'm going to, when I am using my own words, use the word God or Source .

Now it is time to look at the six definitions of spirituality. By the way, I didn't make these definitions up. I'm using the words that the

writers and the researchers and the great teachers have used. However, when you see these words, if they don't fit with your view or the words that you use to define what we're talking about, then please by all means substitute your own word that you use.

This is the first one. Spirituality is the individual search for meaning and value in life and for a relationship with a transcendent power. Spirituality may or may not be experienced through religion.

The second one refers to a personal inclination or desire for a relationship with however one views God.

Our next definition is very, very simple. Spirituality is whatever motivates and inspires people to search for meaning and purpose in life. This definition does not use any word referring to an ultimate higher power and yet when we talk about purpose, when we talk about meaning in life, those are spiritual issues.

Our fourth definition is this: a transcendent relationship between a person and a higher being. Once again we're back to a relationship, a connection, a search for that ultimate connection.

The fifth definition that we are going to consider is this: an innate inclination towards transcendence that involves increased knowledge and love. If you are of the Christian persuasion, you believe, as most people of the Christian persuasion believe, it states in the bible, which by the way is a wonderful, wonderful book of wisdom, that God is love. So when we say that spirituality is a movement towards knowledge, an increase in knowledge, an increase in love, we're saying it's a move toward knowing God.

The last definition: it's an awareness and sensitivity to moral and existential issues.

These six definitions may not be anywhere near any definitions of religion that many of us have heard. These definitions of spirituality are not about the rules, they are not about the regulations, they are not about do this, don't do that. They're about a connection, a relationship, a desire to know, to learn, to love, to find purpose, to find meaning with whatever word you want to use to indicate higher power or God. So, by a combination of these six definitions of spirituality, we have a roadmap of the areas to be addressed in this course.

I think it's also important when looking at spirituality, especially looking at it is related to psychotherapy, that we also know what we're not going to be talking about religion. As was mentioned previously, here is the part where some definitions of religion are provided. Sometimes one of the best ways to understand a concept is to have definitions of what that concept is and to also have definitions of what that concept isn't. So, let me go through three definitions of what many researchers define religion as:

The first is the social or organized means by which persons express spirituality.

The second one is an integrated set of beliefs and activities.

The third definition of religion consists of the following: it offers a set of beliefs, and rituals, and symbols, and traditions that define various aspects of the individual. Religion helps provide a sense of identity because these beliefs and rituals and symbols and traditions play a vital, crucial role in our culture and in our society. They are dependable and reliable and predictable. People know what to expect and there is a sense of safety and security in that. There are many, many valuable things about religion and as I said earlier, I worry sometimes that in a

knee jerk reaction to some of the more fundamental, very ultra - conservative religious approaches we have thrown out all religion and in doing so we've thrown out all the really good things that religious beliefs bring us.

You may or may not agree with these definitions of religion; however, they will give us again, a baseline so that we can be sure that what we are talking about in this course is spirituality and that we will not be going into the rules and the regulations and the organization that religions offer. The focus of this course is on spirituality and its appropriate use in psychotherapy. In order to do this, it is important for us to understand the difference between religion and spirituality and hopefully, that is what has been accomplished in the past few pages through examining some of the definitions of spirituality and of religion.

A very important question as we begin to delve even deeper into the use of spirituality and psychotherapy is this: why would this even be a topic that needs to be discussed? Here's a great reason: because there is an ever increasing interest in the connection between spirituality and psychotherapy. It's virtually impossible to find any of the major magazines, newspapers, television, internet programs and so on that don't have something to do with spirituality. For example, go to Amazon and type in "spirituality". You will (or maybe not) be amazed how many books there are on spiritual issues. Google "spirituality" and look at all the hundreds of websites that come up regarding spiritual issues. There is undeniably an increasing hunger for all things spiritual. This hunger is not limited to the United States, but exists across the world, as people are attempting to develop and learn and connect with whatever one's version of a higher power might be.

Researchers seem to be all but consumed with the idea of spirituality and with the myriad of questions that idea brings up. The research overwhelmingly supports and has concluded that we are hard wired to be spiritual beings who want to connect with a higher power in whatever way we define that higher power. This brings us to a hugely important question related to psychotherapy: if there is an increasing interest in the world about spirituality then what does that mean for psychotherapists and their clients? It means that there is an increasing interest in incorporating the wonderful, the helpful essence of spiritual meaning into our work as psychotherapists and ultimately into the lives of our clients and certainly this is something that we, most people, most therapists have been taught to stay away from as we spoke about earlier. Personally, I don't believe that it is possible to stay away from this anymore, nor do I believe that we should if we stay away simply because of "the rules". For example, when a client sits in front of me and says "My life has no meaning, I don't know what I'm doing here, I don't know what it is I'm supposed to be doing, and I sure don't know who I am or who I want to be" I believe these are spiritual questions. If most therapists are taught to stay away from things spiritual as they are related to therapy, then what does a therapist do in this situation? Why would therapists need to understand and be willing to go there with a client? Because our clients in various ways are practically begging us to do this. But remember, most therapists were taught not to do it and pervasive conventional wisdom, and often times some codes of ethics supported that if we did do it that we are somehow being unethical.

Now we are back at the original questions:

1. Can spirituality and psychotherapy be integrated into the psychotherapeutic relationship?

2. If so, how can it be done ethically?

Addressing these two questions will occur in a ways that treat each each question individually and also in ways that integrate the responses to the two questions.

Here is an excellent point at which to address these important questions. The answer to the first question is a resounding YES. This answer is overwhelmingly supported by research. These two elements CAN be integrated in a counseling relationship, but there is absolutely no requirement to do so. The therapist who attempts to make this integration without any understanding of it will do harm. The therapist who knows this integration needs to occur because it is in the best interest of the client and doesn't address the issue also does harm. To state it plainly, any integration of spirituality and psychotherapy must be done in an ethical way. Two specifically important ways are to be very, very well-trained in codes of ethics and to know exactly what your own values are and what your specific value system looks like.

One of the best known authors in the field of psychotherapy is Dr. Gerald Corey. Personally, I love the way that he thinks about what it is that we do as psychotherapists and how we can do it more effectively and more helpfully. His belief is that there's absolutely no way a therapist can not expose her/his values in therapy.

I bring this, by the way, because it provides an excellent place in which to go into some detail about what values are. A value is simply what's important to you. If you made a list of your values, those values could be material things. For many people they are not material things

although they can be, but rather they are qualities. For example, someone might value honest, another person might value kindness or compassion, another person might value punctuality, another person might value sex, another person might value a bracelet that was left to her by her favorite aunt. If it matters to you and you prize it and you cherish it, it is a value.

Now think back to your own training. Is this what you were taught or were you taught to stay or rather to present yourself as completely valueless? I was taught not to expose my values in any way and certainly not to impose them. I do think Corey has a very insightful take on this though because he says there is absolutely no way that a therapist is not going to expose her/his values. There is no ethical problem in this. The ethical problem comes about only when we impose our values on our clients. I personally agree that there is absolutely no way not to expose our values to our clients. Our values tell people who we are and we tell our clients who we are in a myriad of ways. For example, the way that we dress, the language that we use, the way we answer the telephone, the language we use in emails or texts, the books that we have on our bookcases, all of these show the clients a piece of who we are and what is important to us. That, in essence is what a value is: something that is prized, cherished, treasured by someone. Anything at all is going to tell clients pieces of who we are and what we hold dear. There is not much way that we are not going to be exposing our values, and again, what Corey points out is that exposing our values is not a problem. In fact, many therapists actually believe this is a good thing because letting clients know who you are helps the client make crucial and important decisions about your being a good fit for her/him or not; it provides a better idea of discerning if this is someone that the client wants to work with, someone

that the client feels like she or he can work with, that the client feels like there is a possibility that this therapist just might be able to understand her or him and help with getting through the psychotherapeutic process. However, our values are only a problem when we impose them. An example of this would be when a therapist attempts to make her/his values be the values of the client. “This is what I think, this is what I believe, this is what I believe is good, bad, right, wrong, and therefore you must believe as I believe and if you don’t, then there must be something very wrong with you.” For a therapist to say those things, that would definitely be so unethical it’s incredible. As psychotherapists, we do not impose our values; however, I do believe that there is no way not to expose our values. So, when we talk about exposing our values, if one of our values is our spiritual side, that value will come out unless we have had it drilled into us, which many of us have had that happen, that we are to be on such a hypervigilant alert so as not to do this. I want to say again, I think we need to let go of that. Certainly we don’t want to impose our values, spiritual or religious or anything else, on our clients. I am simply suggesting that we as therapists consider that by not exposing who we are, we may be stopping a certain part of the therapeutic process that could be very, very valuable.

What kind of spiritual issues could come up in therapy? Here are four that come to mind in particular. The first one is the search for meaning and purpose. The second issue is one about clarifying our values and helping clients clarify their own values. It includes an understanding that what matters to us is a spiritual issue. A third one is seeking and having questions about and wanting to learn and know more about a relationship with God or a higher power. The fourth one is coping with

any kind of crisis that may arise. Many people have crises of spirit and many people have crises of simply being alive that cause them to question where they are spiritually.

It is also important that as therapists we don't judge a client's spiritual or religious experiences when there is a culture present that we are not that familiar with. It is really important to understand that there is a universality of spirituality. In many cultures this specific expression of that through religion or spirituality may be very, very different than the therapist's expression of religion or spirituality has been. So, it is very important when we are dealing with someone from a culture that is different than what we are familiar with or different than our own culture, that we become very aware that we may need to increase our understanding and we try to learn more about that culture in every way that we can.

There is an interesting research finding that I want to bring up right now and it is this: that when people tend to discuss spiritual concerns, they tend to become connected and united and when people discuss religious beliefs they tend to become separate. There tends to be a movement toward argument, a movement toward difference, a movement toward conflict. In fact, pick up any newspaper and you will find some article at least everyday about a religious war taking place in some part of our world, but when is the last time you picked up the paper and read an article on a spiritual war? That is what this particular study is talking about: that spirituality, because it's not a dogmatic set of "You better believe this or you're going to hell and you have to live this way and you have to look this way, act this way, believe this way" tends to bring people together. It is also no wonder that religion divides many times,

again and again. Given this study, it makes perfect sense that spirituality tends to bring people together, hence I've never seen any article or heard any report on CNN about a spiritual war. I think that's a very, very interesting study.

As psychotherapists we need to take a few minutes and look at spirituality and psychotherapy from a historical prospective and the best place to start will be with Sigmund Freud beliefs and then we will discuss Carl Jung's position about spiritual work. Their positions are night and day basically. Freud's position was distinctly negative. What follows is a direct quote from Freud: "Religion consists, spirituality consists, in depressing the value of life and distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner". If you have studied Freud to any degree you know that he was, in the beginning of his career he was very, very, very much against religion, spiritual issues, and so on and thought that they had no place in the psychotherapeutic arena. However, later in life, he was much more positive toward religion and spirituality. This makes sense because, as this seems to happen to many, many people, that these areas become more important to us as we age.

Carl Jung's position was a spiritual one from the beginning. He made spirituality the center of his therapeutic work and he believed that the recovery of the soul (remember that we have already had our definition of soul and spirit earlier) was essential for both individuals and for society. At one time in his career he made the statement that of all of his clients who were over the age of thirty-five, that there was not one of them who was healed who did not develop a spiritual orientation to life. He also said that a psychoneurosis has to be understood as the suffering of a soul which has not discovered its meaning and that the cause of this

suffering is a spiritual stagnation. He even went so far as to say that psychological problems are essentially spiritual problems. **Psychological problems , according to Carl Jung, are essentially spiritual problems.**

I am purposefully repeating his belief because of the profound influence a belief like this could possibly have on the work of a therapist.

These statements and positions and beliefs were the first to take the areas of spirituality and psychotherapy and attempt to show their connection. It would seem that the field of psychotherapy has certainly moved away from that. As I have pointed out some many times so far in this course, so many therapists have been taught to move away from the area of spirituality and any idea of even attempting to integrate it with psychotherapy. I would submit for the reader's consideration that the time has come for us to take another look in these areas and to re-think our position that spirituality and psychotherapy should not and cannot mix.

One of the things that the material in this course is attempting to do is to present a strong case that psychotherapy and spirituality were meant to be in the same sentence; that perhaps in some cases with some clients we actually do a disservice to the client by not being willing to look at the place of spirituality in the person's life.

A little more information about ethics and spiritual issues is called for right now. As therapists, we have to know our limits and our comfort zone around spirituality and we have to be able to set appropriate boundaries. We also need to know when to refer to the clergy for theologically based issues. In other words, the role of the therapist is not to carry out the role that is really ultimately meant to be the role of the minister, priest, rabbi, elder, and so on. It does not mean that therapists

cannot address spiritual issues, but rather that therapists must know when they are out of their league, and when it is more of a theological issue. Therapists must guard against crossing the line and moving into a role for which they are trained. Certainly we would not want the clergy in any shape, form, or fashion to do the work of the therapist. There are times when we know that for many people the first person they turn to is their minister, priest, rabbi when things aren't going well. The therapist becomes second. Certainly, there is a line between how far can the clergy go to be helpful. They are now expected to know when to refer to the therapist and the therapist must know how far to go to be helpful around spiritual issues and knowing when to refer to members of the clergy. Is there any information to help us understand the types of approaches the therapist may take. The answer is a resounding YES. There are four basic approaches that follow:

The first one is called rejectionism and this one is about religion and spirituality being reduced to a level of psychological defense or disturbance. If someone practiced from a rejectionism prospective, this would be a therapist who saw no place or no value whatsoever for spirituality in psychotherapy. This, in essence, would be Freud's initial position about religion and psychotherapy.

The second approach is called exclusivist. A person who calls her/himself an exclusivist sees spirituality in a very conservative and very fundamental way. It is the belief that there is one single route to a spiritual reality and the therapist knows what that single route is. This would be someone who might have very strong religious beliefs, a set of beliefs that are not negotiable. This will be a person who will have very, very firm non- negotiable beliefs about what is good, what is bad, what is

right, what is wrong. Many people will seek that kind of therapist because what they are looking for is someone who has very specific beliefs. The client prefers a therapist who has very specific beliefs about good, bad, right, wrong.

The third approach is called the constructivist and this is denying the existence of an absolute reality but recognizing the ability of individuals to construct their own personal meanings and realities. As one might conclude, this is not going to sit well with the approach we just talked about because with the exclusivist approach, this person is going to believe there is only one way. The constructivist is going to say, “I think there are lots of ways”, and that it is going to be up to every client to decide for herself or himself what way is the way for that person. The job of the therapist will be to help facilitate/build their exploration of that, hence, a constructivist approach.

The fourth and final approach discussed is called the pluralist. This approach is going to recognize the existence of an absolute reality but it’s going to allow for multiple interpretations and multiple paths toward that reality.

Those are the basic four approaches typically available when we talk about integrating spiritual issues into psychotherapy.

Another excellent question regarding issues about spirituality and psychotherapy is when and where should spiritual issues be addressed and there are five places I think that we might want to take a look at.

The first one approach is that the client simply initiates it. This may even come about when the client makes the first contact with the therapist. I know personally I have had clients call up and say, “This is so and so, got your name from so and so, and I’m looking for a therapist, and

are you a Christian counselor?” This person obviously looking for someone who by his or her definition of Christian who will be able to discuss the issue that the person will be bringing to therapy from a Christian perspective. Now that puts the therapist in an interesting situation because the word “Christian” certainly has many, many different definitions lately. There’s a lot of difference between being the Jimmy Carter kind of Christian and being the Pat Robertson kind of Christian. One thing that I suggest that therapists do is to ask the person who is calling what does she/he mean by Christian. Clearly if it is not going to be a good fit then the therapist would not want to take that client on. It goes without saying that the truly ethical therapist should have other therapists to whom the client could be referred.

The second approach includes things to consider about when and where spiritual issues should be addressed is at the initiation of the therapist. I think that therapists have the right to bring these issues up IF doing so is about helping the client and NOT about the therapist attempting to impose her/his values. I also believe, and the research does point to this, that the therapist should have some type of training about working with spiritual issues in the therapy arena.

I also think that in some situations we might be missing the mark if we don’t bring up the possibility that the issue for the client might be of a spiritual nature. In choosing to initially bring these issues up, therapists must be being very attuned to the response of the client and, once again, be very, very careful not to impose their beliefs or their values on the client. The ideal, perfect scenario is that the therapist doesn’t bring these issues up to impose his or her beliefs, but simply brings them up because the therapist believes that this might be something that is having an effect

on the client and should be addressed. The therapist then must know her or his comfort zone and be willing to address the issue of spirituality. Therapists must always keep in mind that to expose their values is ethical; to impose their values is completely unethical.

The third approach is when the information is used as a therapeutic intervention. Research suggests that the therapist consult with her/his supervisor or someone with whom the therapist consults and/or colleagues to ascertain if this approach is the one that is in the best interest of the client.

The fourth approach is that spirituality could be a part of the therapeutic relationship and that this is what the client was seeking the whole time. The therapist must be comfortable with this and welcoming of this approach. That therapist would believe that it is simply the nature of the therapeutic relationship that spiritual issues be addressed, that it is expected.

The fifth one is the work setting. Therapists might work in settings in which it is expected that issues of a spiritual nature be explored and addressed. For example if a therapist worked at a counseling center that describes itself as Christian, then having the approach to therapy to integrate spiritual and religious issues may or may not be expected and if expected, would be expected to be done from a particular belief or set of beliefs that are in line with the expectations of the work setting. If you go to work for a Christian counseling center, certainly it would be difficult for the team there to support you if you're an atheist or agnostic as that would not be in line with the mission of a Christian counseling center. If a client came in seeking Christian counseling and the therapist did not allow the client to explore the issue from that perspective, that would not

be a good fit for the therapist in that particular work setting. It also would be unethical to provide therapy from that position.

There are many other reasons also to look at spirituality and its place in psychotherapy. One reason in particular is that, as we talked about at the beginning of this course, therapists need to consider that the wellness model of health which includes only the five dimensions that most of us were taught and that I mentioned in the initial part of the course, may need to be re-thought and that a sixth dimension, which many, many professionals in the mental health arena support, the idea of a spiritual dimension be added.

Another compelling reason to look at spirituality and its place in psychotherapy is to recognizing its helpful place in the area of addictions. Any therapist who has done any work in addictions understands that it is a spiritually based approach. For example, think about the 12 Step Program. Addiction recovery programs do recognize the importance of a relationship with a higher power. In fact, the success of so many of the addiction recovery programs can be directly attributed to the fact that they are spiritually based and that there is a great deal of importance placed on that relationship with the higher power.

Another reason to look at spirituality in counseling is because many multicultural perspectives respect religious beliefs as an important aspect of the client's culture. Now if you think about that, then that's going to have an implication for what those religious and spiritual beliefs are. In the western culture we place a high priority on using counseling. There are all different kinds of counselors who come from a rich and varied background and we know that they play a vital role in our culture. However, if you come from a culture in which, for example, the family

rule is this: “That we do not air our laundry to the public and that no matter what’s going on in this family, we don’t talk about it”, then that person is very unlikely to seek conventional talk therapy. She or he may take it to whoever their spiritual/religious leader is or they don’t take it anywhere at all.

In fact, people leave the issues in the house and deal with it the best way they can; however, as many therapists know, nobody deals with it. It’s the elephant in the living room that everybody steps around but nobody acknowledges. So, having the multicultural perspective and knowing that it can bring about many different religious beliefs is even more of a reason to take a look spirituality in counseling. We know from a study by Probst that ignoring a client’s spiritual and religious beliefs can decrease the efficacy of counseling and that what is even more problematic is that ignoring these beliefs can lead to premature termination. In other words, the client may definitely leave the counseling situation because his or her issues around spiritual and religious concerns are being overlooked, being put off, or not being addressed at all by the therapist for various reasons. Lastly, in looking at reasons to look at spirituality in counseling, the research does support that encouraging, not pushing clients, to discuss their spiritual beliefs can have a very positive effect on the counseling that goes on between the client and the therapist. In other words, the more spiritually alive the client becomes, the more spiritually healthy the client becomes and the more spiritually healthy the client becomes, the more the overall health of the client increases.

If we’re going to make our best attempt to include spirituality in therapy, there would be a need for some goals to be set.

Here are six possible goals to be strongly considered:

One goal might be to learn to explore spirituality as an element that is a possibility for all clients.

A second goal might be to know the differences and the similarities between spirituality and religion.

A third goal would be to understand the interventions how to use them appropriately and ethically.

A fourth goal would be an understanding of how to discern the quality of a client's spiritual path; is a healthy path or an unhealthy one?

A fifth goal would be knowing how to use spiritual assessment instruments. As an aside, there are actually many quality spiritual assessments to be found.

The sixth goal is knowing the different models of spiritual development. We are at a point that if we are going to look at the inclusion of spirituality in psychotherapy, then we're going to have to look at what some of the potential blocks to that inclusion could be.

According to the research, there are six possible blocks that we need to take a good look at so that they can be recognized and then dealt with appropriately and ethically. Blocks to the ethical and helpful connection of spiritual issues in a psychotherapeutic setting include the following:

1. negativity
2. boredom
3. busyness
4. distraction
5. cynicism
6. superficiality

It is hugely important to keep in mind that any of these six can occur in both the client and/or in the therapist. Also, all six do not have to be present. The presence of only one block can cause an impediment to the therapeutic relationship and to the healing and helping of the client.

I would hope that every therapist would stop to think about how many times we might have the insight, the inkling, that a spiritual issue is what needs to be discussed at a point in therapy with our clients and we see that it is blocked and we might not quite understand what that block is about. I would submit that perhaps the block might be one of these six or more. We are at place now that we need to take a moment to examine when religious beliefs are unhealthy or dysfunctional. We have taken a look at what some of the blocks to the inclusion of spirituality into the psychotherapeutic relationship might be. Earlier in this course, we discussed what might be some of the goals of inclusion of spirituality in therapy. One of those goals was to understand how to discern the quality of a client's spiritual path.

We need a good, solid understanding of the goals of inclusion of spirituality and the blocks to spirituality.

I think both of these things help us to take a look at when religious beliefs may be unhealthy or dysfunctional. Therapists must keep in mind that just because there is a spiritual belief or a religious belief, or a spiritual issue or a religious issue does not automatically mean that it is a healthy one or that it is in the best interest of the client, nor should we automatically assume the beliefs or issues indicate unhealthy functioning on the part of the client.

We need to take just a few minutes and examine this. One way is for the therapist to examine how much passivity or dependency is used to

avoid taking self responsibility. Many of you have heard the old joke about the guy and the flood. There has been a flood and the guy is on the roof of this house and somebody comes by in a boat and says, "Come on and jump in and I'll take you to safety" and the guy says, "No, God will save me." Then somebody comes by in a helicopter and says, "Come on, climb up the rope ladder and we'll save you" and the guy says, "No, God will save me", and something else happens, but anyway, basically the guy drowns and goes to heaven and he immediately begins to question his version of a higher power, in this case the term he uses is God. "Why have I died? Don't get me wrong, this is good, I like heaven, no problem, but, you know, I was counting on you to save me." Then God replies, "Well, you know, hey, I sent you a boat, I sent you a helicopter, what more do you want?" So, sometimes when we look at the quality of the client's connection to religious issues, we need a way to discern if those religious beliefs are healthy or unhealthy in therapy. We need to examine how much the client may inappropriately depend on religion so as to avoid personal responsibility. We have a responsibility to help the client (and ourselves) examine her/his spiritual/religious experience. What is the experience bringing to the client's life? Is it bringing good things? When we talk about good, positive, and healthy things what we might want to consider is what is known as the fruits of the spirit. This term may sound familiar to you as this is the way it is expressed in the bible. Interestingly enough, they are also named in many of the books of wisdom that we have. The fruits of the spirit in that particular book of wisdom are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self control. However, if you take a look at the other world religions in addition to Christianity, every single major religion, and there are seven

of them including Christianity, all have something in their books of wisdom that contain the essence of what Christianity has named the fruits of the spirit. Some variation exists of these qualities are present in all major religions. They just call them different things and they use different words that are synonyms for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. When used appropriately, they can be good indicators to help discern the quality of the client's experience; is the experience one that is helpful or it is one that is not helpful to the client. Again, therapists must look at how much passivity and how much dependence the religious and/or spiritual beliefs bring in the client's life. Examining these qualities is a good way to start to look at when these beliefs are potentially dysfunctional or unhealthy.

Another sign that the thereapist must be aware of is the evidence of dualistic thinking. Dualistic thinking is a toxic way of thinking because it does not take into account the fact that there are two sides. Dualistic thinking describes the person who says that no gray areas exist. Some one demonstrating dualistic thinking would believe the following: This is wrong now, it's always wrong; this is right, it's always right, and there is no in between. Dualism presents a very set belief that it's all or nothing; there is nothing in between, according to dualistic thinking.

Another one is looking at how religion or spiritual experiences has helped or hurt or restricted the client's development. This is about guilt. Sometimes religious and sometimes even spiritual beliefs can bring a great deal of inappropriate guilt into a client's life. On a personal note, I am a fan of guilt when it is used appropriately. Guilt, when it is used appropriately, is corrective. Guilt says, "I can't believe I did that, I can't believe I said that, I can't believe that I have acted this way and I feel so

awful about it and I feel badly enough about it that I won't do it any more."

One feels remorse and remorse is corrective. It feels so bad to feel bad that you experience remorse and you correct the behavior and that is a very good thing. However, there is inappropriate guilt and this is the kind of guilt that therapists want to keep an eye out for when dealing with religious/spiritual issues in psychotherapy.

These are just a few suggestions for ways to discern if the client's religious beliefs are healthy or unhealthy as we continue to examine integrating spirituality in therapy.

Certainly the therapist would want to have adequate training and experience and information about all the different religions and all the different spiritual traditions and beliefs. Also, it would be a very good idea if the therapist had training in multicultural counseling. I don't know of any graduate program in the helping professions that doesn't require at least one course in multicultural counseling. I'm not sure that we can ever really add enough courses in that area. Obviously taking the courses is a great idea and I believe it is an idea that should be mandatory in graduate studies, but I believe therapists need to have actual experiences with many different kinds of people from many different cultures so as to really understand the unique multicultural perspective that many clients will bring to therapy as related to spirituality/religion.

Another suggestion for understanding the most appropriate ways of integrating spirituality into psychotherapy is to read the classic works in psychology about religion and spirituality and personally, I think one of the best places to start would be with the works of Carl Jung. I also think that

William James has some very important ideas about religion. He is certainly famous for his book *The Variety of Religious Experiences*.

Therapists must stay up to date regarding new information in the area of integrating spirituality and psychotherapy by keeping up with what the popular press says about this area as well as the research that is done with controls in place and is considered to be academic in nature.

It is absolutely crucial for therapists to have excellent supervision, to take ceu workshops, to attend lectures by experts in the field, to take university level courses on world religions, to commit to doing one's own personal work by going to therapy, and to continue to gain insight into one's own value system regarding spirituality.

What additional things do we need to look at as we continue to explore the integration of spirituality and psychotherapy? Here are six questions to consider:

1. A willingness to engage in self exploration regarding what's real?
2. Where am I going?
3. How do I get there?
4. What is it that is to be valued in my life?
5. Who am I?
6. What do I want?

Learning to be silent and to get more in touch with what you are, who you are, what you want, and where you're going are hugely important concepts. Examining these areas is absolutely crucial to every psychotherapist and are areas that psychotherapists work with clients about, even though most of the time they are not thought

about as spiritual questions, but in actuality they are significantly important questions.

There are some spiritual techniques to foster spiritual development that we probably should go through very quickly here. There happen to be eleven of them. Going back to the beginning of this course, let us remember that the examination of areas such as the following, Jung believed, is critical to the success of the client-therapist relationship.

1. Meditation.
2. Relaxation
3. Doing breath work
4. Using creative visualization
5. Imagery
6. Using awareness exercises
7. Daily positive affirmations
8. Dream work

9. Prayer has been very well researched on prayer and how its power is connected to spiritual growth.

The last two techniques that foster spiritual development are

10. Increasing faith in whatever way the client is able to do

that

11. Going on spiritual retreats.

I'd like to provide some what I hope will be helpful information about this last technique. I'd like to recommend attending spiritual retreats as a way for spiritual growth and for personal growth, for both client and therapists. Also, I would like to

emphasize one doesn't have to go to a formal retreat to benefit from attending a retreat.

There are many kinds and types of retreats and it would be extremely important to understand the purpose of a retreat you may be thinking about attending or recommending to your clients to attend. There are two books that can be very helpful in learning about retreats, what they're about, and how to find the most appropriate ones. One is called *Transformative Getaways*. This is a book about different places that are spiritual retreat centers and what those retreat centers offer.

Another book is simply called *Spiritual Retreat*. This is a book that provides information about many of the spiritual retreat centers that are over the United States and what you can expect from attending a retreat at a particular center, how to contact the center, what the accommodations are, and the kinds of programs they have offer.

As we continue in our exploration/journey of understanding the best and most ethical ways to integrate spirituality and psychotherapy (and to consider if they should even be integrated), I would like to ask every psychotherapist a very powerful question and it's certainly a very thought provoking question. Here it is: How do we make the spiritual real in every moment of our lives? Your answer to this question is hugely important because it has implications for how we incorporate and in what ways we incorporate spirituality in our therapy with our clients. If a therapist believes that making the spiritual real in every moment of our lives is

important to both the client and the therapist, then here are some suggestions as to how to attempt to do that:

- Using objects and places because symbols reveal what it means to be connected (remember that Jung was very interested in symbols)

- Including nature and animals in our lives

- Making a commitment to ensuring leisure time and creative time in our lives. We say we're just too busy because it's true: We are definitely too busy. One of the most helpful things about incorporating spirituality into our lives, not just in psychotherapy but in our lives, is that when we begin to do make time for leisure and time to be creative, in whatever that form may take for us, is that the integration of spirituality and psychotherapy become even stronger and more important. The ability to begin to slow down and make time for leisure and creativity is not an ability that is valued in our culture. There's a line from a song by Mary Chapin Carpenter called *The Long Way Home*, that is incredibly appropriate for this area. It goes like this:

**Or you could be the one who takes the long way home
Roll down your window, turn off your phone
See your life as a gift from the great unknown
And your task is to receive it
Tell your kid a story, hold your lover tight
Make a joyful noise, swim naked at night
Read a poem a day, call in well sometimes and
Laugh when they believe it*

●Committing to service. This refers to how we give back. It means giving back to relationships and to our relationship to the community. Service is an area that fosters gratitude which is an important component of spirituality and used in appropriate way, can be significantly helpful in working with clients around spiritual/life issues.

Those are some suggestions about how can we make spirituality real in every moment of our lives. The implications, very strong implications, for helping make the spiritual real in our everyday lives have significant impact on our work with clients as they do their own personal soul searching and for therapists who must be committed to doing their own soul searching.

As has been suggested earlier in this course, reading the literature in the area of spirituality related to or not related to psychotherapy is critical. Here are some suggested books you might want to think about reading and even suggesting to your clients. These are books you've probably already read, but are definitely worthy of re-reading. If you haven't read them yet, I highly, highly recommend them. They include *The Road Less Traveled* by Scott Peck, *Man's Search For Meaning* by Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search For Himself* by Rollo May, *A Path With Heart* by Jack Cornfield, *Spiritual Literacy: Reading The Sacred In Everyday Life* by Frederic Brusart, *Essential Spirituality* by Roger Walsh (This book in particular has some exercises in it that are just absolutely incredible) and *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Harold Kushner. As an aside, I think all of Harold Kushner's books are excellent introductions into intergrating spirituality and deep soul searching ,

also know as psychotherapy. Certainly books by Thomas Moore such as *Care of the Soul* and *Dark Nights of the Soul* (one of my personal favorites), by Thomas Merton, such the *The Seven Storey Mountain*, *I and Thou* by Martin Buber, *The Razor's Edge* by Somerset Maugham, *The Soul's Code* by James Hillman, and *The Courage to Be* by Paul Tillich, are just to name a few from among probably hundreds. These must be included as they too, are excellent introductions into intergrating spirituality and deep soul searching. All of these books are certainly important spiritual books that weave psychotherapy into them, although in very different ways. Interestingly many of the authors are or were practicing psychotherapists who made a courageous decision to integrate spirituality in their writings.

On a personal note, there is a book that has been profoundly life changing for me in a spiritual way and in many other ways as well. It is one of the most challenging (in a good way) books I've ever read and I highly recommend it. It's called *Living a Life That Matters*. It is a book that I have found myself reading on more than once occasion. In addition to it being a strong influence on me personally, I found that it can be a very helpful book to use with clients with whom we are working on spiritual issues and existential life crises.

I strongly suggest that you google books that integrate spirituality and psychotherapy. You may find yourself amazed at the sheer number of these books and at the research associated with them. You may also want to google "Best Spiritual Books." You will get an incredible number of choices about which website to go

to to find all different kinds of lists. What you may find interesting is how many of the same books appear on many different lists.

As we come to the end of this course, there are three quotes that I would like to share. The first quote is a quote from his holiness, the Dalai Lama. “We need good motivation. We need compassion without dogmatism, without complicated philosophy. We just need understanding that others are human brothers and sisters and we need to respect their human rights and their dignities. That we humans can help each other is one of our unique human capacities.” I believe that is exactly what good therapists do. We help our fellow human beings.

The second quote is by Albert Schweitzer. “ People can no longer live for themselves alone. We must realize that all life is valuable and that we are all united to all of life. From this knowledge comes our spiritual relationship to the universe.” Again, I believe that is exactly what good therapists do. We help our fellow human beings.

The quote that I’m going to close with is one that I have no idea where it came from or who the author is. If you’ve been to my workshops through the years, many of you have heard me mention my Aunt Helen. My Aunt Helen gave me this quote once at a time in my life that was not going very well and I have had it taped up above my desk for years. As I began getting everything prepared to write this article, I saw it and I thought this is the one I want to close with. Please keep in mind that the author used the word God; if that word just doesn’t work for you, I think it’s safe to substitute another word that does work for you. Here’s the quote:

“God is love and that love surrounds me.

In God’s love I safely dwell.

The love is above, beneath, around me.
God is love and all is well.”

Thank you so very much for choosing this course. In addition to providing you with CEU’s, I sincerely hope that you find the information helpful both professionally and personally.

References and Recommendations:

The Work of the Following People Significantly Influenced and Helped Formulate the Material Used in This Course:

Andrew Neuberger

William James

Carl Jung

Eckhart Tolle

Gerald Corey

Scott Peck

Viktor Frankl

Rollo May

Jack Cornfield

George Probst

Frederic Brusart

Roger Walsh

Harold Kushner

Thomas Moore

Thomas Merton

James Hillman

Susan Cain

*The lyrics used are from a song by Mary Chapin Carpenter called “The Long Way Home” and I hope she doesn’t sue me for using them without getting her permission first.

This course is over 10,000 words. Please excuse any typos I may not have caught when I proofed this.