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# Standing on Sacred Ground Integrating Spirituality and Mental Health

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Rabbi Elisa Goldberg



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# Some Definitions of Spirituality....

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“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”  
- *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

“Spirituality is life lived in the continuous presence of the divine.” - *Abraham Heschel*

“A simple definition of spirituality the search for meaning - for yourself, yet beyond yourself. It may be described as a process of reaching in, reaching out, and reaching up.”  
- *Stephanie Dickstein*

“Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion. Practicing spirituality brings a sense of perspective, meaning and purpose to our lives.”  
- *Brene Brown*



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# At the end of this course, you will be able to...

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- 1) Understand the diverse nature of spiritual experience and spiritual development; including the difference between spirituality and religion
- 2) Identify the key ways spirituality/faith support and/or hinder the recovery process
- 3) Utilize basic spirituality assessment tools and treatment skills to particular therapeutic contexts
- 4) Develop capacity for reflective practice to manage religious countertransference



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# Overview of Sessions

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Week #1 - Basic Definitions of Spirituality and self-reflection – knowing ourselves, leads to greater understanding and transparency with clients

Week #2 - Deepening Understanding of how spirituality works – spiritual types, spiritual development, transference/counter-transference

Week #3 – When spirituality causes suffering, spiritual assessment and other tools

# Standing on Sacred Ground

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“God called to Moses out of the midst of the bush.... Do not come near, take off your sandals, for the place on which you stand - it is holy ground.”

Exodus 3: 4-5



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# Spirituality – A Working Definition

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Spirituality is an essential part of human experience that represents the part of us which seeks transcendent experiences, and recognizes that a force exists beyond the material world.

Spirituality:

- encourages hope and purpose,
- can foster positive emotions, and coping skills,
- and recovery in the face of behavioral health challenges.

Spirituality and religion are not the same although many important spiritual resources come from religious practices.

# Spirituality or Religion?

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## Spirituality

- Universal
- Awareness of relationship with all of creation
- Sense of purpose and meaning
- Leads to development of a personal value system
- Universal
- Unique to each individual
- Can evolve throughout one's lifetime

## Religion

- Organized tenets and doctrines
- Culturally embedded
- Communally practiced
- Material expression
- Sense of historical continuity
- Enacted through rituals
- Chosen vs. universal



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# What American Believe

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89 % Believe in God or a universal spirit

70-85% Pray regularly for good or better health

22% of people identify as unaffiliated

*From the 2013 Pew Study on Religion  
in America*



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# Why Address Spirituality?

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- ✧ While the vast majority of people with behavioral health challenges report spiritual needs, most of those needs go unmet
- ✧ Few programs/clinicians are equipped to address spiritual/religious issues with clients
- ✧ Religion and spirituality influence an individual's ability to cope with their behavioral health challenges



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# Spirituality Helps

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1. Promotes a positive world view
2. Helps to make sense of difficult situations
3. Gives purpose and meaning
4. Discourages maladaptive coping
5. Enhances social support
6. Promotes other-directedness
7. Helps to release the need for control
8. Provides and encourages forgiveness
9. Encourages thankfulness
10. Provides hope



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*From Faith and Mental Health,  
by Dr. Harold Koenig*

# Small Group Discussion

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What does spirituality mean to you?



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# Personal Reflection

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Think of a moment in your life that you would describe as:

*A powerful experience*

*A moment of transcendence*

*A time of connection to a higher power*

*Choose three adjectives to describe your experience*



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# To think about until we meet again....

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1. Add your definition of spirituality to our group google doc here - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-IAYWp2waGRIMYPD4IqFb8h46vFXWP42AbU9XqEJq58/edit?usp=sharing>
2. Discuss your definition of spirituality with someone else in your life
3. Reflect on what we discussed today. How does it align with what you already doing in your work? Based on what you learned today, what might you do differently?



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# Closing Reflection

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## **The Physician's Daily Prayer**

*Attributed to Maimonides/ Translation and Adaptation by Rabbi Simcha Weintraub*

Almighty God –

You have created the human body with infinite wisdom.

In Your eternal providence,

You have chosen me

to watch over the life and health of Your creatures.

I am now about to apply myself to the duties of my profession.

Support me in these great labors that they may benefit humankind.

For without Your help, not even the least thing will succeed.

*(continued....)*



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# Closing Reflection

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Inspire me with love for my art and for Your creatures.  
Do not allow thirst for profit, ambition for renown and admiration  
to interfere with my profession.  
For these are the enemies of truth and can lead me astray  
in the great task of attending to the welfare of Your creatures.

Preserve the strength of my body and soul  
that they may ever be ready to help  
rich and poor, good and bad, enemy as well as friend.  
In the sufferer let me see only the human being.

*(continued....)*

# Closing Reflection

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Enlighten my mind that it may recognize what presents itself  
and that it may comprehend what is absent or hidden.  
Let it not fail to see what is visible  
but do not permit it to arrogate to itself  
the power to see what cannot be seen  
for delicate and indefinite are the bounds  
of the great art of caring for the lives and health of Your creatures.

May no strange thoughts divert my attention at the bedside of the sick  
or disturb my mind in its silent labors.  
Grant that my patients may have confidence in me and in my art  
and follow my directions and my counsel.  
When those who are wiser than I wish to instruct me  
let my soul gratefully follow their guidance  
for vast is the extent of our art.

*(continued....)*



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# Closing Reflection

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Imbue my soul with gentleness and calmness.  
Let me be contented in everything  
except the great science of my profession.  
Never allow the thought to arise in me  
that I have attained sufficient knowledge  
but vouchsafe to give me the strength and the ambition  
to extend my knowledge.

The art is great,  
but the mind of a person is ever-expanding.  
I now rise to my calling.



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