Spirituality, Culture and Worldviews

In Mental Health Recovery
Objectives

- To give participants an understanding of the complexities of spirituality - meaning and language (beyond a basic definition for practice).
- To give participants the opportunity to explore their own worldview and how this relates to mental health recovery.
- To explore the relationship between spirituality and recovery.
- To provide an open framework for spiritual conversation within mental health practice settings that takes into consideration culture and worldview.
The Pre-reflective Therapist

- Narrative
- Psychiatry vs Church
- What does it mean to be human?
- Dissonance
Figure 1. The journey of reflection.
Self Reflection #1

- As a child or teenager, what was your experience with spirituality or religion?
- What beliefs have you acquired or were you exposed to later from the wider community?
- Is spirituality a helpful concept for you personally?
Definitional dilemma

- What is spirituality?
- Diversity of language:
  - Finding *universal* language – lowest common denominator, ? Understood
  - Using *particular* language – personalized but meaningful, difficult to access
Example of summative definition

“...pervasive life force, manifestation of a higher self, source of will and self-determination, and a sense of meaning, purpose and connectedness that people experience in the context of their environments”

CAOT (1997)
Does spirituality include religion?

Zinnbauer et al. (1997, 1999)
Hill et al. (2000)
Spirituality and mental health recovery

- Spiritual practices are resources for coping (Sullivan, 2009)

- Spiritual experience was shown as life enhancing (Jackson & Fulford, 2005)

- Spiritual beliefs are meaningful frameworks to understand experience (Corin, 2004; Heilman & Witztum, 2000)

- Spiritual communities provide places for belonging and social integration (Davidson, 2003)
Spirituality in mental health is Complex

- Spiritual beliefs are meaningful yet perhaps incompatible with medication (Borras et al., 2007)

- Spiritual practices are a resource but can also exacerbate internal conflict
  - (Miller and McCormack, 2006)
DSM inclusion of spirituality

- Lukoff, Lu and Turner’s (1992)
- Religious and spiritual issues kept distinct from psychopathology
- The V-code (DSM IV): This category can be used when the focus of clinical attention is a religious or spiritual problem
  - Example: distressing experiences that involve loss or questioning of faith or questioning of other spiritual values
Spirituality is personal...
It depends on how we see the world... or our WORLDVIEW...

- Framework or paradigm
- An individual’s sets of philosophies, beliefs and values
- Pair of glasses
Worldview

- “A total vision of life” (Josephson and Peteet, 2004)

- “A set of presuppositions which we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the make up of the world” (Sire, 2009)
3/6 Worldview Questions
(Based on Sire, 2009)

1. What is a human being?
   - A machine, consciousness, a person made in the image of god, a naked ape

2. What is real for me (primary reality)?
   - Is there a reality beyond the material?

3. Why do human beings suffer?
Different Ways of Seeing

Body

Mind

Spirit

Body

Mind
Vignette: The Muslim community and mental health services

- Spiritual explanatory models for mental illness:
  - Jinn (spirits that are unseen and dwell on earth and can possess people)
  - Jhado (black magic)

- “Treatment”:
  - Imam performs exorcism
  - Imam prays protective prayers
  - Drinking of Holy Water (pani pani)

- Care is provided by Muslim community
Self Reflection #2

- What is your personal explanation for the symptoms associated with “mental illness”?

- Is this explanation the same or different than your spiritual or religious community, if you identify with one?

- Who do you feel should be involved in the healing process for the symptoms associated with “mental illness”?

- What spiritual beliefs and practices do you believe could help alleviate these symptoms?
Social Work

- An Operational Framework
  - Spiritual perspectives
  - Spiritual drives
  - Spiritual experiences
  - Spiritual functions
  - Spiritual development
  - Spiritual expressions

Canda
(1999)
Implications for Mental Health practice

- Cautious use of Language
- Inclusion of worldview concepts
- Individual and collective considerations
- Further break spirituality into named parts
Further naming of spirituality for dialogue

- Spiritual and/or religious practices
- Spiritual and/or religious beliefs/meaning
- Spiritual and/or religious agency
- Spiritual and/or religious experiences
- Participation in spiritual and/or religious communities
Starting the conversation... VCMHS Spirituality Poster

- Meaning making
- Spiritual experiences
- Spiritual activities
- Community Engagement
Spirituality for wellness and recovery

**Meaning Making**
- How do you connect to the bigger picture?
- What ideas help you find hope?
- What makes life meaningful or significant for you?

**Spiritual Experience**
- How do you understand that experience?
- How do you make sense of unusual experiences?

**Religious Beliefs**
- Cultural values
- Presence
- Inner peace
- Conversion
- Kundalini Awakening
- Mystical Ancestors

**Worldview**
- Life philosophy
- Purpose
- Priestess
- Nun
- Elder
- Imam
- Pastor
- Yoga
- Synagogue
- Sweat Lodge
- Temple
- Art group
- Choir
- Church

**Community Engagement**
- Do you share activities with others that provide comfort for you?
- Where do you draw your support from?
- Do the communities you engage with support mental health recovery?

Exploring spirituality: Keep it safe... have an open mind... create listening space