

Spiritual Integration Paper

Debra King-Lukunku
MFT 709: MFT Enrichment
Professor Park
March 9, 2020

The Cambridge dictionary defines spirituality as, “The quality that involves deep feelings and beliefs of a religious nature, rather than the physical parts of life.” So, we know that many people express their spirituality through their religious traditions and values. Yet, others express it in ways that do not pertain to a specific religion. In whatever way people express their spirituality, the purpose of it is to help give meaning to their lives.

As a Marriage and Family Therapist in training, I know that I should not use my position to evangelize our clients. However, we can explore our client's spirituality with the purpose of aiding them to find solutions to their issues. While assessing the client, we can determine how their specific beliefs and practices may be contributing to their presenting problem and explore that with them. This paper will explore how I plan to integrate spirituality with parenting enrichment, sex education and marital enrichment.

Most parents whether religious or not want their children to exhibit good character and sound values so that they will become positive contributors to their society. When parents come to us for help in dealing with their children, spiritual values should be viewed as a potential resource in therapy rather than as something to be ignored. The following are some of the basic human values that most parents would like to see instilled in their children: faith, love, compassion, hope, tolerance, humility and integrity. In this regard, Cloud and Townsend's (1998) book *Boundaries with Kids* can be a valuable tool for therapists and parents to use. After defining and explaining the importance of boundaries, the authors present the ten boundary principles kids need to know. These principles are presented as laws which parents having problems with their children find appealing. However, as parents read through these principles, they begin to see how the

lack of these in their own lives has contributed to the problems in their own lives as well as with their children. These laws include the basic human values already mentioned. Viewing these principles from the parents' and children's spiritual perspectives can help them get in touch with their own ways of thinking, feeling and acting. This exploration can often help them see their spirituality be a part of the solutions they need.

For most parents, the discussion of sex education with their children is a sensitive task. It would be important to integrate spirituality into the discussions with parents in therapy asking for help in beginning sex education with their children or as a public high school biology teacher. Either way, I would start with exploring what are some basic values regarding sexuality. For the parent(s) in this situation, I would explore this from their cultural and religious backgrounds and try to discover what they were taught and what they believe now. From this, we would discuss what values regarding human sexuality they would want to teach their children and how they can begin to do this. I would encourage them to educate themselves with the knowledge they need to have these discussions because their children will appreciate and respect them if they do so continuously in ways that are truthful, tactful and age appropriate. If they want some practical tools to assist them in this regard, I would recommend the books we read in this course including *How & When to Tell Your Kids About Sex* by Stan & Brenna Jones, their book series *God's Design for Sex* and some others including secular ones in the Resource list I compiled for this class.

With my senior Biology students, I would also ask them what are the values regarding sexuality have they been taught by their parents, their cultures and religious backgrounds. Then, I would ask them which of these they believe and why. I would

suggest to them to consider sexuality is a gift that we all inherit or receive. In small group and then larger class discussions, they would reflect on the various positive and negative, short and long term consequences of using the gift responsibly or irresponsibly.

Integrating spirituality into marital therapy is possible by exploring a couple's beliefs and values regarding marriage and their origin. This can be done by having them complete a Spiritual Assessment form to learn what their spiritual resources are. If they are not willing to complete such, I can still explore with them, which of their beliefs and values have contributed in a healthy way to their relationship and which have not. I could ask questions like "When did you feel the most connected or loved by your partner and why? In the exploration of these questions, the couple can realize that the times of deep connection between themselves or feeling grateful for each other, is evidence of spirituality or moving in the direction of divine will. During times when things are the opposite, is sign of the opposite. These kinds of conversations can help the couple come to the understanding of true spirituality because when people are practicing this, they are calmer, happier, and more peaceful. If they are open to a resource that can help them deepen and enrich their relationship, I would recommend Cloud and Townsend's (1999) book *Boundaries in Marriage* and Emerson Eggerichs (2004) book *Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs*.