



Religion and Counseling
**Religion and Spirituality in a
Counseling Setting**

Highlights from Chapter 16

- **Possible Relationships of Religion and Mental Disorder**
- **Be able to discuss at least one research study or theoretical approach that addresses each “possible relationship”**

Expert Opinion

- “. . . the majority of modern psychotherapists, also tend to believe that human disturbance is largely associated with and springs from absolutistic thinking—from dogmatism, inflexibility, and devout shoulds, oughts, and musts—and that extreme religiosity...is essentially emotional disturbance” (Ellis, 1980).
- “Many psychotherapists wish to respect, and draw upon, the spiritual resources in their clients’ lives and feel a need to increase their competency in religious and spiritual diversity.” (Richards & Bergin, 2000, p. 4)

Religion in the Therapy Room

- **Method 1: Traditional psychotherapy**
 - Therapy is (should be) value-free.
 - Therapists should not impose their values.
 - Discussing religion imposes values and should be avoided.
 - Dealing with religious/spiritual concerns:
 - At best, compartmentalized and referred out.
 - At worst, ignored, stigmatized, or made the focus of treatment.

Religion in the Therapy Room

- **Method 2: Religiously-integrated therapy**
 - Therapy is *never* value-free.
 - Therapists should integrate their own religious beliefs into their therapy.
 - Discussing religion is encouraged with informed consent at start of therapy.
 - Mostly Christian counseling, although some with Muslim and Buddhist perspectives.
 - Dealing with religious/spiritual concerns:
 - Appropriate, but often only from one perspective.

Religion in the Therapy Room

- **Method 3: Religious-accommodative therapy**
 - Therapy is *never* value-free.
 - Therapists need to know their own values and make them explicit.
 - Therapists need to be aware of the diversity of religion and spirituality.
 - **Dealing with religious/spiritual concerns:**
 - Appropriate and beneficial, but focused only on client's beliefs

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- **Role Plays**
 - **Volunteer?**

Recent Research

- **Effectiveness of Christian Counseling**
 - Wade, Worthington, & Vogel (2007)
- **Method**
- **Results**
 - Use of Religious Interventions
 - Effect of Matching and Use of Interventions
 - Closeness with Therapist
 - Self-rated Therapy Outcomes

Recent Research

- **Religion and Group Counseling**
 - **Cornish & Wade (2011)**
 - **Spiritual versus religious interventions**
 - **Spiritual more used**
 - **Spiritual rated as more appropriate**
 - **Examples**
 - **Highest rated: “Facilitating discussion about spirituality after a group member brings it up”**
 - **Lowest rated: “Leading in-session vocal prayer”**
 - **Predictors**
 - **Religious commitment**
 - **Spiritual transcendence**

Recent Research

- **Religion and Group Counseling**
 - **Post & Wade (2011)**
 - **Group Clients' Perspectives**
 - Are religious concerns appropriate for group?
 - 80% = YES
 - Discussion Topics
 - Confused on some moral questions (96%)
 - Differing from my family in religious beliefs (89%)
 - Having beliefs that differ from my church (83%)
 - Have conflicts about religion (80%)
 - Don't know what to believe about God (67%)
 - Science conflicting with religion (65%)

Recent Research

- **Religion and Group Counseling**
 - **Post & Wade (2011)**
 - **Specific Religious Interventions**
 - Most appropriate: “Facilitating discussion about spirituality” (89%)
 - Least appropriate: “Leading in-session vocal prayer” (11%)

Recent Research

- **Religion and Group Counseling**

- Are your group leaders willing to discuss these issues?

- Spirituality: 74% = YES
- Religion: 72% = YES

- Are your group members willing to discuss these issues?

- Spirituality: 59% = YES
- Religion: 39% = YES

- Would you like to discuss these issues with your group?

- Spirituality: 48% = YES
- Religion: 26% = YES

References

Bergin, A. E. (1980). Psychotherapy and religious values. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 48*, 95-105.

Ellis, A. (1980). Psychotherapy and atheistic values: A response to A. E. Bergin's "Psychotherapy and religious values." *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology, 48*, 635-639.



Griffith, J. L., & Griffith, M. E. (2002). *Encountering the sacred in psychotherapy*. New York: Guilford Press.

Richards, P. S., & Bergin, A. E. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of psychotherapy and religious diversity*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Sperry, L. & Shafranske, E.P. (Eds.). (2005). *Spiritually oriented psychotherapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Wade, N.G., Worthington, E.L., Jr., & Vogel, D.L. (2007). Effectiveness of religiously-tailored interventions in Christian therapy. *Psychotherapy Research*.

Activity

- **Use the handouts to guide your discussion of a counseling-oriented situation involving religion and spirituality.**