

second edition

Integrating
Spirituality
and Religion
Into Counseling
a guide to competent practice

edited by

Craig S. Cashwell and J. Scott Young



American Counseling Association

5999 Stevenson Avenue

Alexandria, VA 22304

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Integrating Spirituality and Religion Into Counseling

a guide to competent practice

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dedication

This book is dedicated to L. DiAnne Borders. Where would we be without you?

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foreword

There was a time when the realm of spirituality and religion was clearly separate from the counseling process. Indeed, many practitioners were hesitant to broach the topic of their clients' religious or spiritual concerns, lest they be seen as inappropriately mixing counseling with spiritual-religious matters, which were viewed as the domain of the clergy, not of the counselor. With the development of the central importance of the multicultural dimensions in counseling, religion and spirituality were given increased attention as a requisite for more deeply understanding a client's cultural background. Awareness of and willingness to explore spiritual and religious matters in the practice of counseling and in counselor education programs is growing. A client's spiritual journey is now considered part of the multicultural and diversity movement. From a holistic perspective, attention needs to be given to matters of body, mind, and spirit. Many writers have contended that spiritual and religious matters are therapeutically relevant, ethically appropriate, and potentially significant topics for the practice of counseling with diverse client populations in a variety of settings.

Within the past decade or so, the number of books and articles in professional journals on the roles of religion and spirituality in the practice of counseling and psychotherapy has vastly increased. One of these books is the first edition of *Integrating Spirituality and Religion Into Counseling*. My coauthors and I frequently cite this book in our textbooks as a significant contribution to the counseling literature. In workshops that I present, I typically mention Drs. Craig Cashwell and Scott Young's edited book as one that counselors will find valuable if they are interested in the subject of the role of spirituality and religion in counseling. The book is easy to read and interesting and offers much food for thought. The authors' writing is informed by research and current literature, by their practical experience in the field, and by their teaching experience. The second edition of this book is a comprehensive revision of what was already an excellent resource for practitioners desiring a guide to the competent and ethical practice of integrating spirituality and religion into the counseling process. This revised work will be most useful

for both counseling students and counseling practitioners. Drs. Cashwell and Young, along with those who contributed separate chapters to this work, clearly demonstrate a keen and in-depth grasp of the ethical and clinical aspects of integrating spirituality and religion into both assessment and treatment. The writing style is clear, direct, personal, interesting, informative, and challenging.

The authors make a clear distinction between spiritual–religious counseling and integrating spirituality–religion into the practice of counseling. The aim of the book is to inform practitioners of the value of integrating spirituality and religion into the practice of counseling, if this is part of the client’s agenda rather than the counselor’s. The point is made that to ignore a client’s spiritual and religious perspective is culturally insensitive and may also be unethical. The authors develop the theme, supported by research evidence, that both spirituality and religion can positively affect a person’s general wellness and can serve a key role in providing support as people face existential crises. This volume is a valuable resource for counselors and will assist them in discerning between a healthy spiritual and religious life and an unhealthy one.

Because spiritual and religious values can play a major part in human life, these values should be seen as a potential resource in counseling. However, Drs. Cashwell and Young make it abundantly clear that counselors’ imposing their religious or spiritual values on clients, whether directly or indirectly, is inappropriate and unethical. The contributors stress how essential it is for practitioners to raise general questions during the intake session about a client’s interest in exploring spiritual and religious concerns and also to include questions about a client’s spiritual and religious background during the assessment process. This information is essential to the counselor in getting a sense of how people’s spiritual and religious beliefs, values, and practices might be related to their presenting problem and can also provide direction to clients in constructing solutions for their lives.

I appreciate the authors’ cautioning counseling practitioners to monitor the possible ways in which their personal values might influence the interventions they choose in their professional work. Ethically, it is important that counselors engage in self-monitoring so they can detect even subtle ways they can influence clients’ decisions or introduce their own value agenda instead of assisting their clients in clarifying and formulating their own value system. Counselors need to keep in mind that the client should determine what specific values to retain, replace, or modify. Although I support the concept of exploring spiritual and religious values in the counseling process, I am concerned about the overzealous counselor who sees it as his or her mission to teach appropriate values to clients and to steer clients toward adopting his or her worldview. Counseling is not about counselors making decisions for clients or teaching them how to conduct their lives. A respectful stance honors the client’s worldview and works within this framework in a collaborative fashion to achieve the client’s goals.

A central question explored in the book *Integrating Spirituality and Religion Into Counseling* is, What is involved in the competent and ethical integration of spirituality and religion into the counseling process? This second

edition features a newly contributed chapter on the revised Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling that were adopted by the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) in 2009. These competencies are tools designed to help a counselor establish and maintain effective relationships with clients, even when clients hold beliefs that are contrary to the counselor's values. The contributors of this chapter expand on the message that just as counselors need to address issues of race, ethnicity, and culture that may be affecting the client's life, so must they address spiritual and religious concerns if the client deems such concerns important. The purpose of the competencies is to enable counselors to develop a framework that allows them to understand and work effectively with clients' spiritual and religious lives. This chapter on ASERVIC's spiritual competencies deals with the implications of these competencies for ethical and effective practice. Underscored is the importance of counselors knowing their own spiritual and religious values and actively examining them. The point is made that counselors need to understand and appreciate their own spiritual journey if they hope to assist clients in understanding their spiritual journey. If counselors have clarity on their own values, and are able to bracket them off in their relationships with clients, they are less likely to steer clients toward adopting their values and beliefs. The counselor's task is to offer an invitation to clients to address whatever concerns are central in their lives, which is done by providing a nonjudgmental and accepting climate.

Also new to this second edition is a separate chapter on mindfulness, which provides a review of what mindfulness is, describes ways in which mindfulness can be of value to both clients and counselors, offers information on how to integrate mindfulness in counseling, and identifies practices for cultivating mindfulness. There is a great deal of interest at professional conferences in the subject of mindfulness practice in counselor training—as a clinical intervention, as a common factor in the therapeutic relationship, and as an approach to self-care for practitioners. I was pleased to see this contributed chapter because I am convinced that through mindfulness practices counselors can center themselves in the midst of a flurry of activity in their personal and professional lives. Becoming mindful is an excellent route to being present in one's dialogues with clients. Research has suggested that counselor mindfulness is related to increased counselor presence, empathy, self-awareness, and self-care. This chapter provides an interesting treatment of topics such as the empirical support for mindfulness, how mindfulness training can be used as a clinical intervention, how mindfulness is associated with well-being, how mindfulness training can help cultivate spiritual experience, and the use of mindfulness in counseling.

A strength of this book is the diversity of perspectives that various contributors offer in chapters on vital topics such as culture and worldview, counselor self-awareness, understanding spiritual and religious domains through assessment, diagnosis and treatment, ritual, spirituality in a 12-step program, prayer, and working with the divine feminine. These and other contributed chapters provide a comprehensive understanding of ways to ethically and competently

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address clients' spiritual and religious concerns in the counseling process. I am convinced that this book will continue to be a valuable guide to the competent practice of addressing spiritual and religious issues in counseling.

—**Gerald Corey, EdD**
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preface

Since the original publication of *Integrating Spirituality and Religion Into Counseling: A Guide to Competent Practice*, the work in this counseling specialty has evolved rapidly and with great enthusiasm. Researchers, educators, and practitioners have all contributed to the development of the conversation. At the same time, an ongoing need exists for guidelines so that clinical work is both ethically grounded and supported by scientific discovery. The original Competencies for Addressing Spirituality and Religion in Counseling, developed in the Summit on Spirituality and endorsed by the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC), have undergone research scrutiny and practical “field testing.” Recently, research efforts led to a reconfiguration of the original nine competencies discussed in the first edition. The factor analysis by researchers Robertson and Young (see Chapter 2) describes six core competencies, providing empirical support for the scientifically curious and pragmatic guidance for the practicing counselor.

Many counselors and clients report that practicing with openness toward the spiritual domain is consistent with their personal values. These individuals hold the belief that coping with the challenges faced on the road to wholeness requires taking the spiritual aspects of the human condition seriously. Unfortunately, some traditions hold that the spiritual life will alleviate pain. Our approach, and that taken by chapter authors, is that the spiritual life ultimately helps us “lean in” to the painful places in our lives and embrace all of whom we are. This book is written for people who share the conviction that the basis of sustained fulfillment is a spiritual framework on which to rest. Readers should leave their study of this work with a clearer perspective on how to provide counseling in a manner consistent with a client’s spiritual beliefs and practices. Therefore, this book is intended to guide the reader to a deeper grasp of competent, spiritually integrated counseling work.

Approach and Organization of the Book

The book is designed as an introductory text for counselors in training and practicing clinicians and assumes no prior knowledge. The revision to the

original version was undertaken to incorporate developments in research and in the larger national conversation relative to spirituality and religion in counseling. An ongoing question we have encountered when presenting and researching in this area is “What techniques and interventions can I use?” To this end, from the outset our intention was that this edition would possess a “how-to” feel with a focus on counseling practice. The question “What does one do when sitting across from a client?” remained central to our conceptualization of this work. A book that guides practice was our goal.

Chapter authors were challenged to provide a similar structure in their writing. Therefore, each chapter has a parallel organization, beginning with a discussion of one or more competencies, a discussion of clinical application, and a case illustration of the concepts discussed. After the two introductory chapters that set the context for the book, Chapters 3 to 8 discuss the six competencies at length. Each chapter provides an in-depth description of the competency or competencies, asking readers to consider for themselves what competent clinical application looks like. Given the variations in practice settings, this question often has no “right” answer. Rather, the challenge is to practice with integrity, with purpose, and with compassion.

A substantial addition to this edition is a new section on clinical settings, populations, and techniques. In Chapters 9 to 13, authors discuss spirituality in addictions counseling, mindfulness, prayer, ritual, and the divine feminine. The reader should gain from this portion of the book greater insight into both the nuance of application and the need for continual personal learning. Unlike counseling skills that are easily trainable (e.g., reflection, paraphrase, open questions), techniques aiming to broaden clients’ spiritual capacity demand real work on the part of the counselor, requiring more than simple understanding—rather, comprehension from the inside out. As Napoleon Hill said, “Education comes from within; you get it by struggle and effort and thought.” We hope you enjoy the struggle. . . . It is the way forward.

acknowledgments

Any edited text represents the combined efforts of many people. We are very grateful to the chapter authors who worked tirelessly to share the vision of this body of work. Additionally, several of our students, including Nicole Tate, Cheryl Fulton, and Jamie Crockett, made important editorial contributions to this work. We have been supported and encouraged in our efforts by our first-ever spirituality research team (Metoka Welch, Amanda Giordano, Ben Willis, Jamie Crockett, Cheryl Fulton, Nicole Tate, and Laura Wyatt), a group of talented students who have collectively and individually broadened our ideas. Finally, we would be remiss if we did not thank our amazing families, ever a source of encouragement, love, and support. To that end, Craig thanks Tammy and Samantha, and Scott thanks Sara, Savannah, and Sophie. What a blessing to share this journey with you.

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Craig S. Cashwell, PhD, LPC, NCC, is professor in the Department of Counseling and Educational Development at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). He is the author of more than 90 publications and has received research awards from the American Counseling Association, Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, and the Mississippi Counseling Association. In the 2003–2004 academic year, Craig received the UNCG School of Education Award for Teaching Excellence. In 2009, he received the Mary Thomas Burke Mentoring Award, given by the North Carolina Counseling Association.

Craig has received several recognitions from the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC), including the Meritorious Service Award and, in 2010, the Lifetime Service Award. His current scholarly interests are the integration of spiritual practices in addiction counseling. He maintains a part-time private practice specializing in couples counseling and addiction counseling. Craig received his degrees from the University of North Carolina (BA) and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (MEd, PhD). Craig lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, with his wife Dr. Tammy Cashwell and daughter Samantha.



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Scott is coeditor of the text *Counseling Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Single-Subject Design*. He has published numerous articles on the interface

About the Editors

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