



Spiritual-Care Groups in a Mental Health Setting

Spiritual Struggles Program Plan

Purpose

- The purpose of this group is to give clients permission to articulate, express, and discuss their experiences of spiritual struggles, to normalize and then integrate these struggles into one's life experience.

Literature Review and Evidence Base

- This plan uses the RCOPE as a measure of religious coping tools. It uses RCOPE and its designation of negative religious coping, spiritual discontent, demonic reappraisal, passive religious deferral, interpersonal religious discontent, reappraisal of God's powers, punishing God reappraisal, and pleading for direct intercession.
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- Lindgren, Karen N. and Robert D. Coursey. "Spirituality and Serious Mental Illness: A Two-Part Study" in *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal* (1995) Jan. Vol. 18 Issue 3:93ff.
- Oemig Dworsky, Carmen K., Kenneth I. Pargament, Serena Wong, and Julie J. Exline. "Suppressing Spiritual Struggles: The Role of Experiential Avoidance in Mental Health" in *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science* (2016) (5): 258-265.
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- Pargament, Kenneth I., Harold G. Koenig, and Lisa M. Perez. "The Many Methods of Religious Coping: Development and Initial Validation of the RCOPE" in *Journal of Clinical Psychology* (2000) Vol.56(4):519-543.
- Webb, Marcia, Anna M. Charbonneau, Russell A. McCann, and Kristin R. Gayle. "Struggling and Enduring with God, Religious Support, and Recovery from Severe Mental Illness" in *Journal of Clinical Psychology* (2011) Vol. 67(12):1161-1176.

Goals & Outcomes

Goal

- Using personal narratives, examples, illustrations, and spiritually directive questions, group members will explore spiritual struggles and be able to express spiritual doubt, questions, and conflicts in order to reduce the negative cultural stigmas surrounding spiritual struggles and to personalize and integrate one's own spirituality into a holistic experience of life. (These goals have been adapted from "Winding Road" in order to meet the needs of this curriculum.)



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Outcomes

- Clients will participate in a safe and respectful community of peers.
- Clients will recognize that spiritual struggles are a part of the human experience.
- Clients will learn ways to build resilience while experiencing spiritual struggles.
- Clients will demonstrate empathy, compassion, and acceptance of the spiritual struggles that others experience.
- Client participation will be recorded in the weekly group notes with regard to the client's treatment care plan.

Logistics

- This group meets once per week.
- Maximum number of group members is six.
- Chaplains or chaplain interns facilitate the group.
- Quiet room with tables and chairs.
- Room with a computer, monitor and Internet access. (Optional: Some weeks might have an optional video.)
- Group leaders must be familiar with the RCOPE as a measure of religious coping.
- Group leaders must have read the articles cited in the literature review.

Referral Criteria

- Clients must be willing to explore and share their own spiritual struggles.
- Clients must be willing to listen to the spiritual struggle narratives of others.
- Clients must be willing to engage in a group discussion.
- Clients must be able to participate in a group setting for 45 minutes.
- Stages of change: contemplation, preparation, action

Sequence of Program: See entire attached curriculum.

- Weeks 1-3 will focus on Interpersonal spiritual struggles, such as spiritual or religious conflicts in important relationships, such as family, friends, spiritual community.
- Weeks 4-6 will focus on Divine spiritual struggles, such as questions, conflict, disruption in one's relationship to the divine or sacred, such as anger, punished, abandoned by God.
- Weeks 7-9 will focus on Intrapersonal spiritual struggles, such as conflicts and questions surrounding one's own spiritual and religious beliefs, values, or actions, including doubt or guilt around inconsistencies around beliefs and practice.

Methods and Intervention Strategies

- Reading about the spiritual struggles of others (and/or viewing videos of people discussing their own spiritual struggles)
- Facilitating discussion of spiritual struggles through directive and open-ended questions
- Normalizing spiritual struggles by offering a non-anxious and non-judgmental setting in which to discuss them



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Identified Risks and Risk Management Plan

- Disagreements between clients are a potential risk. Group guidelines will be decided upon by the clients in the first class and then posted in future group meetings. Clients will be reminded of group guidelines. If clients refuse to adhere to the guidelines, they will be referred to the treatment mall staff for a more suitable location.
- Clients might not agree with the value of the concept of spiritual struggles. Clients will be reminded that they are free to disagree but to maintain a respectful attitude toward others who experience spiritual struggles different from themselves. Clients will be given the choice either to remain in the group or to choose another more suitable group.
- Clients will be monitored for safe use of equipment and supplies related to each activity.
- An inventory of supplies and safety inspection of the area will be completed before and after each group.

Program Evaluation

Implementation/Fidelity Measures

- This plan uses the RCOPE as a measure of religious coping tools. It integrates positive religious coping methods, such as Benevolent Religious Reappraisal, Collaborative Religious Coping, Active Religious Surrender, Seeking Spiritual Support, Religious Focus, Spiritual Connection, Seeking Support from Clergy or Members, Religious Helping, Seeking Religious Direction, Religious Conversion, and Religious Forgiving, through narrative.

Outcome Measures

- Client participation will be recorded in the weekly group notes with regard to the client's treatment care plan.
- Clients will fill out the Brief RCOPE in week one of the group's session and then again in the last week of the group's session.
- Clients will compare their results of the Brief RCOPE scores.

This curriculum has been reviewed and approved by members of the Spiritual Care Department.

This program plan was developed and written by Chaplain Lisa Barnes and Chaplain Nathan Blankenship (CPE resident).