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Kollel Yom Rishon

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**Judaism's Encounter
with Other Cultures:**

In Honor of the 25th Yahrtzeit of
Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung z"l

*Spirituality, Psychology
and Well Being:
Jewish Understandings*

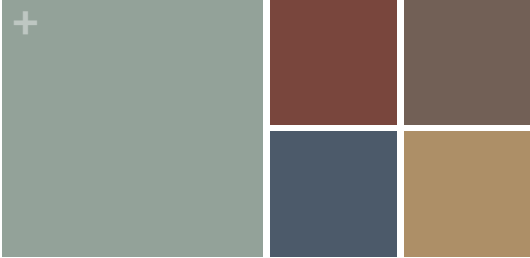
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Education and Administration

כה' כסלו תשע"ג • December 9, 2012



Spirituality & Psychology
Jewish Understandings and
Considerations
 Rona Milch Novick, PhD
 Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and
 Administration
 Kollet Yom Rishon, Yeshiva University, December 2012

+ Spirituality?

- Derived from the Latin word *spiritus*– which means the breath of life
- Refers to a way of being that includes capacity of humans to see beyond themselves, to become more than they are, to see mystery and wonder in the world, and to experience private and collective moments of awe, wonder, and transcendence.
- Spirituality is universal
 - All cultures have a concept of a transcendent, sacred and divine force
 - All religions seek to help people grapple with core existential concerns such as finding purpose and meaning

+ Historically . . .

"Freud's psychoanalysis understood religion as the relationship to the monotheistic God of the culture, a Father figure. According to Freud, the child's resolution of the Oedipus complex brought about the exaltation of the paternal imago into a protective God. He deemed such a maneuver universal and saw those who clung to religious beliefs as immature individuals in need of divine protection against the uncertainty of life. Mature psychoanalysts and analyzed people were to live only on the sustenance offered by knowledge of themselves and acceptance of unavoidable frustrations. Their god was to be Logos, "human reason" and not a purported divinity in the sky."

-Rizzuto, 2005

+ We've Come A Long Way

**Religion
as sign
of pathology**

**To be analyzed,
challenge,
eradicated**

↔

**Religion as
component
of cultural identity**

**To be explored,
celebrated,
utilized**

+ Important Distinction

- Religiosity = allegiance to the beliefs and practices of institutional, organized religion
- Spirituality = beliefs, experiences and practices involving the individual's relationship with a higher being or the universe

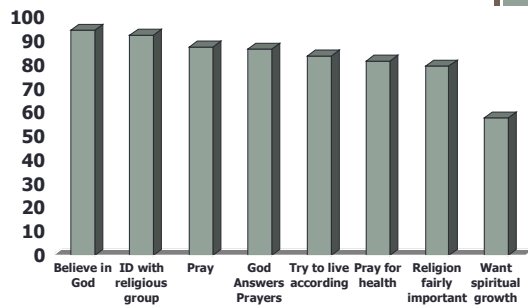
■ Rose, Westefeld & Ansley, 2008

+ What Consumers Want

- Research suggests over 75% of clients would want religion/spirituality to be part of their therapy
- Why do vast majority not raise it in their therapy?
 - Religion not necessarily part of regular discourse
 - Secular and sacred not always integrated
 - Therapists rarely invite clients to speak about it as they do their culture, history and ethnicity
 - Only 48-65% of therapists identify religion as important to them – compared with over 89% of clients

+ How Spiritual Are Clients

(Assorted US polls summarized by Eck, 2002)



+ Studying What People Want (Rose, Westefeld & Ansley, 2008)

- 9 sites (university counseling, training clinic, woman's center, Lutheran social service center, 2 CMHC's, 1 private practice)
- 64 women, 10 men, largely white sample
- 90% reported some religious affiliation

+ Findings

- Clients believed discussing religious concerns in counseling was appropriate
- Had preference for including both religious and spiritual issues
- Level of past spiritual experience had some predictive value

+ Field of Mental Health Increasingly Recognizes Value of Spirituality?

- Increases in
 - Books published by APA on spirituality and religion
 - APA approved religiously oriented doctoral programs
 - Participation of therapists in organizations that meld religion and therapy
 - Collaboration between psychologists and religious leaders

+

"There has also been an increasing recognition that the values and practices of religious clients, their ethno-religiosity, deserve the same level of respect and sensitivity as any other ethno-cultural aspect of a client's life."

-Eck, 2002

- Managed care companies allow patients to express preference for therapists of their faith

+ Is Spirituality Good for You?

- Religion or spirituality may be more powerful as coping resource that buffers impact of disease in patients who are ill than as a resistance resource in healthy
- Supports spiritual counselors as an important part of the medical team
- Value of spiritual counseling at times of sickness and loss - provides emotional and instrumental support and comfort.
- Recovery literature uncovered a potentially health-limiting effect of religion or spirituality. Religious people upset by belief that God has abandoned them or dependent on their faith, rather than medical treatment may inadvertently subvert the success of their recovery.

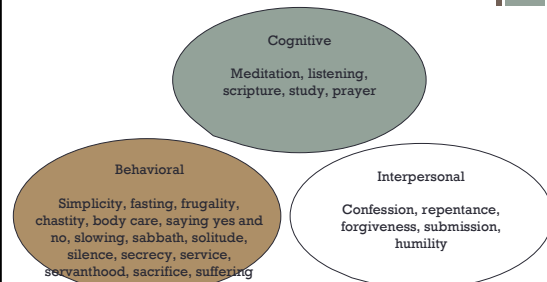
■ Powell, Shahabi & Thoresen, 2003

Spirituality and Health

Powell et al, 2003

Hypothesis	Mediated Model	Independ Model
Church/service attendance protects against death.	Persuas	Persuas
Religion/spirituality protects against CV disease	Some	Some
Religion/spirituality protects against cancer death	Inadeq	Inadeq
Deeply religious people protected against death	Fail	Fail
Religion/spirituality protects against disability	Inadeq	Inadeq
Religion/spirituality protects against cancer prog.	Fail	Fail
People who use religion to cope live longer	Inadeq	Inadeq
Religion/spirituality improves recovery-acute illness	Fail	Fail
Religion/spirituality impedes recovery-acute illness	Some	Some
Being prayed for improves recovery-acute illness	Some	Some

+ Spiritual Disciplines in Therapy (Ecks)



+ Need for Careful Research

- In chronic pain, petitionary prayer decreases level of functioning; contemplative prayer style improves coping (McCullough & Larson, 1999)
- Research has focused on Christian religion primarily
- Research has often used non-clinical samples

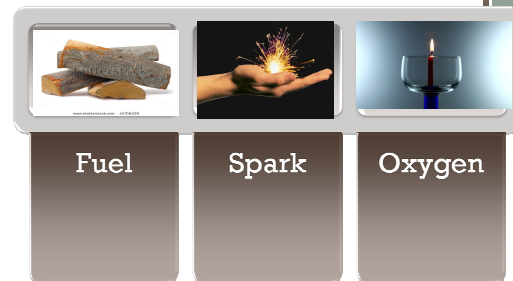
Much of the time most people adequately ward off realities of meaninglessness and randomness, whether they worship at the shrine of Vishnu, pray to Allah, say Our Father or the Shema, keep kosher or a vegan diet, or practice celibacy. Through these and other rituals of being human, they generally find ways to make meaning of their lives in the face of that essential meaninglessness and inject a framework of order onto chaos . . .

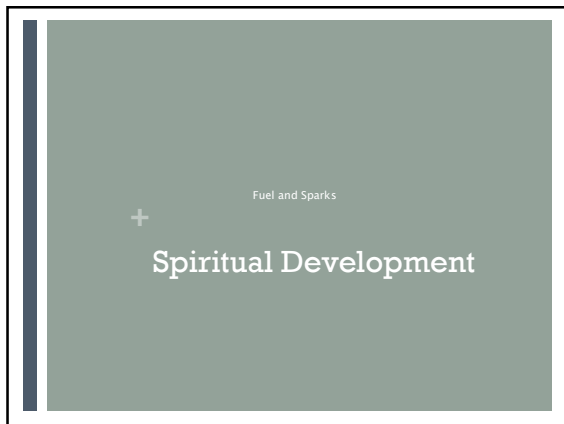
Trauma deals blows to people's meaning-making processes because it tears them away from the comfort of their meaning-making systems, plunges them into chaos and unpredictability in ways that cannot be denied or ignored, interferes with the practices that embody their systems of belief, and demonstrates the ineffectiveness of their prayers, spells, and charms. . . .

Trauma is the great equalizer, the great destroyer of dreams and of beliefs that are the stuff of religious faith and spiritual practice. -Brown

+ If Spirituality is Good . . .
How Do We Enhance It?

+ Essential Ingredients





+ Developmental Thinking

- Some theories that children are innately spiritual (come pre-loaded with fuel!)
- General finding that there is a decline in religious commitment during middle adolescence
- Late adolescence as period of development where there is unique openness to role models and mentors
- Late life often prompts religious questioning and exploration

+ Developmental Forces Underlying Adolescent Spirituality

- **Formal Operations:** new ability to think on abstract level fuels drive to discover own essential truths
- **Drive for Independence:** religion as ultimate symbol of authority can serve as important battleground in drive to become individual
- **Peer Acceptance:** the need to fit in one of strongest drives during this phase

Goldmintz, Religious Development in Adolescence, Tradition, Winter, 2003 50-68

+ Gender

- Females are generally more religious and spiritual than males
- Perhaps the "feminine" characteristics of many religions– gentleness, conformity, submissiveness and nurturance are more female friendly than values associated with male gender socialization– (e.g. aggressiveness, competitiveness)

+ National Study of Youth and Religion – 2005, N = 3,370

- Religion significant presence in life of most U.S. teens
- Vast majority are not alienated or rebellious when it comes to religious involvement
- Most follow in their parents' footsteps
- Most feel quite positive about religion
 - see numerous advantages that religion offers individuals and society
 - In spite of importance of religion in their lives– for most their religion is quite unfocused, implicit in the background, "just part of the furniture"

+ Most Adolescents Subscribe to "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism"

- The following, described by the survey authors as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" seems to be replacing substantive religious faith traditions
 1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth
 2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other as taught in the Bible and by most world religions
 3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself
 4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem
 5. Good people go to heaven when they die

+ Parents As Spiritual Influence

- Single most important social influence on religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents
- Although typical adolescent is not reflective or appreciative of this fact– the best social predictor of what the religious and spiritual life of an adolescent will look like is what the religious and spiritual lives of their parents look like

+ Mothers Vs. Fathers

- Mothers play a central role in shaping their children's religious affiliation and their patterns of religious involvement
- Fathers play a significant role in structuring their sons' religious beliefs and patterns of religious involvement while mothers play a central role in how their sons apply the principles of religion in everyday life

+ Considering Fuel

+ Chozeh of Lublin on Multiple Pathways to Spirituality

- It is impossible to tell people what way they should take. For one way to serve God is through learning, another through prayer, another through fasting and still another through eating. Everyone should carefully observe what way his heart draws him to, and then choose his way with all his strength

Buber, 1961, 313, Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters

+ Pathways to Spirituality (Kessler)

- Deep connection – Relationships
- Silence and stillness
- Meaning and purpose
- Joy
- Transcendence

Kessler, Rachael, The Soul of Education

+ Traditional Pathways

- Learning
- Chesed
- Prayer
- First Mishna in Pirkei Avot – al shloshe devarim . . .

+ Jewish Pathways

א,ב,ג שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלושה דברים העולם א,ב,ג שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלושה דברים על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות החסדים העולם עומד--

■-Pirkei Avot: 1:2

■It is precisely this notion of balance that Judaism is distinguished from the other world religions. These other systems of belief seem to have concentrated on only one of the three basic concepts out of all proportion to the others. Christianity, with its emphasis on self-abnegating love, seems, in a certain sense, to have adopted g'milath hasadim. Islam with its emphasis on frequent prayer, seems to have adopted avodah. And then Buddhism seems to suffer from over-emphasis upon man's mystical relationship with the all-embracing One to the point of losing his own individuality. Only in Judaism is the total man engaged and developed in a realistic, comprehensive and balanced program. – Bunim, Ethics from Sinai (on Perek 1, Mishna 2)



Considering Spark

+ The Spiritual Spark of Making Kedushah

■ The purpose of Judaism is to take the mundane and sanctify it. We must take the food from heaven and process it into a relationship with God. This is our role on earth. The best example of this lesson is Shabbat, when God ceased creating, as it were, and made the seventh day holy. That was the lesson of the manna: food can be used in the service of God, or, that this entire world may be used as a catalyst to allow us to relate to God.- Rabbi Ari Kahn on Parashat Beshallah

+ Rabbi Jonathan Sacks on Sparks

Faith is more like music than like science.

Science analyzes, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. God is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of God's song. Faith teaches us to hear the music beneath the noise.



Considering Oxygen

+ Crashing Through the Woods vs. Nurturing Meaningful Tefila

If we want to support each other's inner lives, we must remember a simple truth, the human soul does not want to be fixed, it wants simply to be seen and heard.

If we want to see and hear a person's soul, there is another truth we must remember: the soul is like a wild animal- tough, resilient, and yet shy. When we go crashing through the woods shouting for it to come out so we can help it, the soul will stay in hiding. But if we are willing to sit quietly and wait for a while, the soul may show itself

Palmer, P. (1998) The Courage to Teach, Jossey Bass

+ Quieting the Mind Before Tefila

- “How does one concentrate and what constitutes proper intentions? One should empty his heart of all foreign thoughts and view himself as if standing in front of the Shechinah. Therefore, one must settle in a little before the tefila in order to enable his heart to concentrate and thereafter pray in peace and supplication
- Rambam, Hilchos Tefilah, 4:16

Kleinman, Praying with Fire, 167

+ Silence as Oxygen

- Shimon his son says All my life I have grown up amongst sages and have found nothing better for the physical welfare of man than silence. Study is not the most important thing but practice, and too much talk brings sin. Pirkei Avot, 1:17
- Bunim on Mislei 19:2 – Nor is it good to be without knowledge of the soul, suggests that everyone should be aware of what allows the soul to thrive. “Silence is such a condition. When the body is quiescent, when your ears get a vacation and your eyes relax and your tongue lies still, then can your soul speak up. In the distracting din of ceaseless chatter, the “thin silent voice” of divinity is drowned out. - Ethics from Sinai

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Summary - Conclusion

+ Building Pathways to Spirituality

- Deep connection – to which role models and to the Divine
- Silence and stillness – how do we promote mindfulness, create space for our spiritual lives
- Meaning and purpose –do we ask big questions, seek important answers
- Joy – how do we experience and model this
- Transcendence – are we open to awe–some moments

Kessler, Rachael, The Soul of Education