Reflecting on Spirituality Blog

Nichole Vollertsen

Department of Counseling, Wake Forest University

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Dr. David Johnson

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Religion and spirituality have played a complex role in my life. When I was younger, my father tried to force religion upon me, which caused me to struggle with my own spirituality for several years. As a result, I became resistant to religion and needed time to explore my beliefs independently. As I grew older, I developed a better understanding of what religion and spirituality meant to me personally. This experience taught me that spirituality and religion can be deeply meaningful but are also highly individual experiences (Cashwell, 2011).

As a future counselor, this background has helped me appreciate the importance of respecting clients' beliefs and values. Because I know what it feels like to have beliefs imposed on me, I am mindful of avoiding value imposition in counseling. The ASERVIC competencies emphasize counselor self-awareness and respect for diverse spiritual and religious perspectives (Cashwell & Watts, 2010). My experiences have increased my sensitivity to the fact that religion can be a source of both strength and distress depending on the individual.

I believe this perspective will allow me to comfortably leave religion out of counseling when clients do not identify it as important, while also making it easy to incorporate spiritual or religious discussions when they are meaningful to a client's therapeutic journey. I would assess clients' beliefs, sources of meaning, and coping strategies and allow their worldview to guide the counseling process. Counselors should address spiritual and religious concerns in ways that support clients' growth and well-being while respecting their unique beliefs and experiences (Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2000).

Resources

Cashwell, C. S., & Watts, R. E. (2010). The new ASERVIC competencies for addressing spiritual and religious issues in counseling. *Counseling and Values, 55,* 2–5.

Cashwell, C. (2011). *Integrating spirituality and religion into counseling: A guide to competent practice* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Zinnbauer, B. J., & Pargament, K. I. (2000). Working with the sacred: Four approaches to religious and spiritual issues in counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 78*(2), 162–171. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb02574.x