

Developing Faith-Based Programs

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Introduction

There has been a great deal of discussion lately about faith-based programs, as though this is a new concept. It is not. For centuries, every racial and cultural group has provided services to its people that were faith-based. Some groups even labeled these services by this name. This NBAC model for establishing faith-based programs is really a synthesis of those things that have characterized many, if not most, faith-based programs in the past. It is also intended to enlarge what can and, perhaps, should be included in faith-based programs and is not a response to the current political interest in faith-based programs. It is hoped that the information in this document is useful by those persons who may or may not have government funding, and for everyone who seeks not to politicize their faith-based programs.

We broadly define a faith-based program as a spiritually grounded service, that may or may not be religious. It seeks to prevent or treat a host of physical, mental, and societal ills. Toward achieving this goal, we recommend that faith-based programs incorporate spirituality with best practice models, those that have been subjected to research scrutiny or a preponderance of observable evidence that proves specific problems will successfully yield to well-known prevention and treatment strategies.

The President of the United States appointed John Dilulio to head the newly established White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, in 2001. Mr. Dilulio, in focusing on Churches as the major conduit of government resources to establish faith-based programs said: "Churches do a great deal of good for considerably less resource investment than we pay via other institutional means" (M. Falco, Counselor, Oct. 2001, p.56). While this is true in many situations, it is also true that most not-for-profit health and social service agencies have learned, by necessity, to do plenty with few resources.

We strongly support churches as places for faith-based programs in addition to agencies where substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, cancer, violence, stress/distress and other health and social services are provided. We believe many churches can learn a great deal from agencies about the causes of illnesses, along with the prevention and treatment models that work well with individuals, families, and communities. Many agencies have done this work for more than 100 years. Certainly, these agencies can benefit from church wisdom about their century - old uses of faith-healing, spiritual treatment, the healing power of prayer, the unconditional love of a Higher Power and unquestioned faith in that Higher Power's ability to heal and to solve problems. Hence, we believe a partnership of a co-learning network between Churches and social service agencies is one way to insure optimal prevention and treatment for many people entrusted to their care. Likewise, we believe finding a way to ensure that people who have bio-psychosocial illnesses and seek faith-based treatment should be told that their illness may also need conventional treatment as the primary or adjunct source of care. In such instances the important factor is not to omit that which has a track record of effectiveness, relative to a problem that has four prongs: physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

Again, none of the above precludes faith-based programs, according to NBAC, from being grounded in spirituality regardless of the program design and place of implementation. In reality, wherever people are helped to deal with issues and problems that adversely affect their lives and interrupt their maximum functioning can be the home of faith-based programs.

Effective faith-based prevention and intervention programs are guided by policies that are grounded in spirituality. Both the program design and places of implementation can be as varied as any agency that deals with substance abusing individuals and families, people living with AIDS, domestic and school violence and held in churches, hospitals, sectarian and non-sectarian agencies.

Program and Provider Mandates

The program implementers must have faith in the program's ability to achieve its goals, zealously willing to follow its policies when they work and to advocate change when they do not. They must unconditionally love each individual in the client population for which the program is developed. Unconditional love must be more than a platitudinous statement. It must demonstrate caring that does not limit the number of times you stand-by someone who fails repeatedly. Moreover, it demands that a forgiving spirit is seen and felt by the individual being helped and seen as faith in her or his ability to overcome whatever obstacles stand between defeat and success, recovery and illness, life and death.

As a program and provider mandate, there should be a clearly articulated faith in a Higher Power. Each program participant may identify her or his Higher Power differently. Everyone who works in the program must possess an attitude of compassion, genuine empathy that embraces those who suffer, a personality of being approachable, and a demeanor which telecasts caring and concern for those who have lost hope and feel neglected by society. For many program participants, the future holds no promise, no meaning. Among them are the poor, the homeless, AIDS effected and affected, the drug addicted, the uneducated, those without health and economic safety nets. Others are spiritually bankrupt, thus emotionally diseased and in disharmony with self and others. They are prone to addictions, suicide and underachievement in all areas.

Faith-based service delivery relies on the strength of the relationship between an appropriately qualified service provider and the individual(s) who needs the service. The service provider cannot be impersonal, thereby viewing the client/patient solely as having a problem for which a solution is sought. Instead, the client/patient must first be seen as a person in search of wholeness. To successfully help someone complete a drug treatment program

and to acquire a fully furnished apartment but stop short of helping her or him to get children out of foster care, is to leave the person, in reality, incomplete. Total healing cannot take place when areas of one's life are not "well." Nonetheless, in faith-based treatment, wellness may be redefined. For example, someone living with AIDS may die but die with a sense of wholeness, "deliverance" and peace – provided the helper is a source of strength, spiritual solace and has helped the dying person to accept death and an undying relationship with her or his God.

From the program's business plan to its annual report, there should be explicit clarity that everything will be or has been done to enhance the person's quality of life. Nothing less is acceptable. This requires total attention to the person rather than segmented attention to the person's problem or illness. This approach rejects total focus on "case-managing the problem." Instead, it requires care management services that will enrich a person's quality of life, including their spiritual wholeness, and become best known as care management.

No policy or activity should place barriers in the way of anyone's ability to use the service, thus there must be respect for cultural and religious diversity, ancestrally followed beliefs about health and healing, and client's/patient's practices and rituals for which professionals have no experience or understanding. This approach supports the belief that we can accept other's "truth" when we "lean not to our own understanding."

Many faith-based programs will serve persons who are disenfranchised from mainstream services. Most have illnesses for which conventional care has not worked. Some are in denial about their situation or illness, and others do not accept the fact that they can contract a disease or personal suffering due to behavioral consequences. For them, a faith-based program may provide education to teach them about possible negative situational and health outcomes related to lack of knowledge. This approach embraces the belief that "people should not perish due to lack of knowledge."

Foundational Principles

Faith, Hope, Mystery and Prayer

Both clients/patients and professionals should embrace the program's principles of: **Faith, Hope, Mystery and Prayer.**

These principles form the foundational support of spiritually oriented programs, including those defined as faith-based. They will help program implementers to remain in touch with what is unique about faith-based programs that do not characterize other programs not in this category.

Program policies should be informed by these principles, thus developed in a spiritual context that may or may not include religion and may or may not be operated by a religious organization. If these are not the principles that a faith-based agency's board of directors want included in their program, they should identify others that, for them, capture the essence of faith-based and/or spiritual policies and practices. And these should be clearly stated.

The policy makers in any faith-based initiative may choose faith and prayer and not hope and mystery. Miracle could be substituted for mystery or spirituality can be an alternative. The choice of foundational principles is left up to the agency and/or program.

Just calling a program faith-based is not enough. Careful attention should be given to the inclusion of principles that distinguish faith-based programs from other programs, thereby making it possible for clients/patients to know the difference. If the program is also religious in nature, the staff should know of referral resources for those who will not be comfortable in a religiously oriented program.

A program's principles can serve as a public testimony about its practice, mission, and goals. For us **Faith, Hope, Mystery** and **Prayer** as defined below, does that.

Faith is power and it empowers people to act without fear of failure. It is a belief in the possibility of miracles, a source in which people place their ultimate trust believing their faith is capable of producing results that their secular efforts have not yielded. It is the intangible source of spiritual strength, which challenges the invisible ailment of fear and leads to the belief in things not seen, and knowing that the God of one's acceptance is capable of making them appear.

Hope is fueled by faith and sustains the belief that where there is life there is hope. When the outcome is not what was hoped-for, accept it and give it meaning. For example, "I hoped-for luck to become wealthy but found a job instead." Having hope calls into action ones faith that there will be calm after the storm; when things are untenable, believe the darkest hour is just before day break.

Mystery is interchangeable with spirituality and embodies the message that we should not lean only to our own understanding of what is real, true or correct. And to make peace with this point of view is to realize the potential beauty and healing power of divine intervention and to accept that *not* knowing the why of something does not render it valueless or untrue. It is accepting the fact that some things will happen in life that surpasses all understanding.

Prayer is the essence of communicating with a Higher Power who is capable of turning our fears into faith. Many people believe prayer has the power to heal. It is the way they seek counsel with the one who gives meaning and structure to their life, and sustains their hope. Through praying they are often able to accept the mystery in their life without believing the unknown is mysterious. It gives one vision to see beyond fear and hind-sight to remember to be grateful when prayers are answered. By praying, people make requests and give thanks to the source of the respondent, be it God, a Higher Power, the deceased, the ocean, the land. Prayer, which is often made manifest through meditation, silence, or words, cannot be off-limits in faith-based programs. It may be done in response to client/patient request, or policies may dictate how prayer is folded into the service delivery plan.

Core Values

Love, Relationship, and Kindness

Similar to building a house, a foundation is necessary when a faith-based program is built. But a foundation alone does not end up as a program. Core values are needed to complete and sustain the purpose for building the program.

A program's core values should describe the attitudes and behaviors of the people who work in the "house built by faith". We believe the essential core values are love, relationship, and kindness. We view them as indispensable values to integrate and cement all parts of a faith-based program.

Practitioners should demonstrate unconditional love for and establish a socially and spiritually supportive relationship with the people they serve. They should also have an unconditionally loving relationship with the God of their understanding. This relationship may be explained to their clients/patients as the source who gives them wisdom, direction, and strength. The practitioners may further indicate how they will use this source to keep themselves spiritually fortified and professionally competent. As the practitioners embrace the core values, an emotional infrastructure, supported by faith and operated in trust, is established between the practitioners and their clients/patients.

The third core value of kindness or compassion will embellish program success and consumer satisfaction. Because kindness, like love and relationship, can be felt and measured by the people served. Moreover, it doesn't matter how sick, young or old people are, they can recognize indifference, maltreatment, and meanness. They further recognize that kindness is as much medicine as it is manners.

Each one of the core values of love, relationship and kindness are necessary in order for workers to build on the foundational principles of faith, hope, mystery, and prayer.

While these core values are desirable in any professional and client/patient relationship, we believe they should be mandatory in a faith-based program. In many instances, faith-based programs will come to symbolize a "safe haven"; a place where people can shed their "masks". Also, it is a place of last hope. They are likely to believe the people they talk with have some special or unique qualities. They cannot be disappointed by finding the place where they went for a solution further added to their burden.

Faith-based practitioners, regardless of who they are (clergy persons, substance abuse counselors, social workers, nurses, HIV/AIDS counselors, or violence interventionists) cannot be detached or appear distant from the people they serve. In order to maintain their specialness and spiritualness, they must operate in oneness with their clients/patients.

The Religious Community and Faith-Based Programs

In most instances, faith-based programs have not been limited to particular religious denominations or doctrines. Few doctrines have precluded churches, synagogues, mosques or any other house of worship or faith community from operating such programs. Many people are motivated by religious principles that are part of the way they live their daily lives. For example, they believe and act on the principles that they should – care for ones brothers and sisters, take care of the least of us, treat people as they want to be treated, be their brother's keeper, or be God's instrument on earth.

Therefore, it should not be difficult to find staff with beliefs that are compatible with the mission and goals of faith-based programs. Churches, synagogues, and other places of religious worship have a long history of providing faith-based services. Religious institutions may also be ideal places from which to draw service providers to work in non-denominational, spiritually rich faith-based programs. Many in a church congregation are

also professionally trained social workers, counselors, nurses, etc. In fact, faith communities have been frequently tapped to lend their expertise and service delivery mandate to people not readily helped by institutionalized social and human service programs. And most churches have a long history of operating the business of the church. Therefore, some churches are uniquely qualified to run clinically competent faith-based programs, and to uphold business standards that ensure a professionally well operated agency and service ministry.

Community agencies have long employed people who are part of churches and subscribe to religious principles and spiritual living. They have been restrained in using spiritually based, faith oriented methods of prevention and treatment. For many of them it will be a welcomed enhancement to the work they do, if they can add faith focused approaches to their service delivery.

Sustaining Compassion in Faith-Based Programs

Great emotional investment is made by professionals in relationship oriented, compassion driven, caring services. They are likely to need regularly scheduled revitalization self-help retreats. In order for them to constantly give of themselves – to treat every client/patient, including many who seek faith-based services as a last resort, as though the person is a parent, sister, brother, or grandparents – they will need to prevent compassion fatigue.

The more “debits” there are of compassion without avenues for compassion renewal, the more workers are left without a bank of emotional resources to sustain their interest in clients/patients. This leads to compassion fatigue, a sort of caring-overload. Hence, there should be established ways to overcome compassion fatigue (one model was developed by Brisbane, F.L. (1990). Please call (631) 444-2139 if interested in the model).

If workers in faith-based programs do not know how to intervene in the downward spiral from compassion fervor to compassion fatigue, they lose their value to clients/patients in need of a relationship with someone who is compassionately fortified to help them. When the workers’ compassion is gone, they cannot help any better, in a faith-based program, than workers in social service agencies who do not claim to be spiritually motivated nor grounded in faith. Hence, they find it extremely difficult to work tirelessly with clients until a “satisfactory” solution is reached.

Constant attention to clients/patients who find themselves enmeshed in circumstances that destroy their life’s balance can, if permitted, turn the worker into a detached helper. They become persons who are mechanistic and less and less able, on their own, to re-fuel an empty compassion tank. Their secular feelings begin to take over and they often become totally detached from the client/patient relationship and begin to view seeing those person’s seeking help as a “must endure” encounter.

In order to keep this occurrence from becoming a reality, a program policy should make provisions for regular spiritual “retreats” for workers. These should be in the form of daily emotional release time, a time when a worker can take a time-out to meditate, pray or respond in other ways to her or his need for self-revitalization. These mini-retreats keep the worker in touch with her or his personal need for “taking care of oneself,” in order to effectively help others.

Faith Based Programs in Non-Faith-Based Agencies

Ideally, a faith-based program located in an agency, hospital, organization or other setting, should define the atmosphere of the total agency. Instead of the program being an appendage to the other activities at the agency, it should define what cannot take place there even if it is not possible to determine what can. For example: the faith-based program may not have the prerogative to decide that music can be piped into the waiting room but it may be successful in helping to determine the type of music played, if music is part of the agency. Likewise, an agency with faith-based drug treatment may receive money from the beverage industry, but the faith-based component may be instrumental in getting the agency not to receive money from the liquor industry. This is done in the interest of creating an appropriate environment for program operation. Again, ideally, the program location should become a healing incubator, void of distractions that may disturb the clients'/patients' ability to have a spiritual experience.

Most importantly, a faith-based program is more than just another program with the only difference of being attached to or operated by the faith community. Regardless to who operates the program, the program implementers should have and rely on their faith that there is a Higher Power and explicitly state this as a source of their strength and ability to help clients/patients. Whenever religion is referred to, as in this document, it should mean, but not limited to, rituals, an external source of worshiping, fairness and morality as group or self-defined. Additionally, there is the need to be mindful that there are great religious traditions among Americans. And for many of them, their religion and adherence to denominational principles and behavior often forms and/or influences their belief system and the way they live their life. For some people, particularly among African Americans, they may not distinguish religion from spirituality but may be helped to distinguish spirituality from denominational religion.

A Faith-Spiritual Intake History

We recommend that faith-based programs do a faith-spiritual intake history on each client/patient. It is important to know how each individual has used and continues to rely on faith, hope, mystery (spiritual), and prayer to deal with life stresses, disappointments, and unexpected consequences – negative or positive. How strong is their faith? What are examples? How do they define spiritual health? What are examples? Have they heard the phrase “stepping out on faith?” What does it mean to them? Give examples of times they have “stepped out on faith.” Do they pray? When was the last time? About what and/or for what? Can they give examples of knowing their prayers were answered? When their prayers are not answered what do they think is the reason? Do they think praying could help with the problem or illness they now have? Can they describe a time when they had strong inner feelings that they knew were spiritual?

The above line of questions suggest that faith-based programs be modeled on our earlier explication of faith-based programs using faith, hope, mystery and prayer. All of the information received from clients/patients plus information shared with them can take place in the faith-spiritual intake history session. The information can be used to determine the strengths clients/patients bring into treatment.

Religion vs. Spirituality and Spiritual Experiences

It cannot be overemphasized that many clients/patients, particularly African Americans, will not distinguish between religion and spirituality. Therefore, it is important that professionals in the program are not confused by the two. This does not mean that the client may not discuss her or his religion and refer to biblical stories and scriptures as sources of help. But the workers and agency have an obligation to constantly express that the program is not religious in the sense that it embraces a particular religious doctrine or denomination. If not, some people may feel offended if a particular religious doctrine goes against their beliefs. This is less of a problem or may not be a problem at all if every one who uses the program clearly embraces the religious institution/church doctrine and rituals. Otherwise, the program is likely to become identified in the minds of those who come or others who refuse to come – as being affiliated with and supportive of a narrow religious point of view. Hence, it is important to decide and/or make a policy which requires whenever the word God is used by the workers, they should say, “God as you understand God to be” or use “Higher Power” or “Higher Source,” etc. Discuss if prayers should be ecumenical when done by a worker although no such requirement should be placed on clients/patients. In essence, whatever the decision, it will show that the agency and workers have respect for religious diversity. At the same time, someone who does not subscribe to formal religion can use a faith-based program without feeling her or his view is not being respected.

It is, perhaps, helpful to discuss the meaning of having spiritual experiences as a way of demonstrating their uniqueness when distinguishing religion from spirituality. Three examples of spiritual experiences are listed below ...

- 1) Becoming consumed with thoughts of wonderment, disbelief/belief, and appreciation about a feeling you are having which extends your mind beyond the boundaries of your body. You begin to feel selfless and absorbed in the moment and having a sense of oneness with your Higher Power.
- 2) Reaching the top of a steep mountain and feeling you are in touching distance of the sky. You feel the sensation of the wind swirling around you while feeling you can reach out and capture the sky in the palm of your hand and hold it forever. For some people, based on their belief system, they may feel great peace and oneness with the clouds and think of being in the same space with their God.
- 3) Standing on a rim of the Grand Canyon, looking down into the great big hole where the distance seems to reach infinity. In the midst of the beauty and mystery of the Grand Canyon, where nowhere else on earth is this sight duplicated, you feel dwarfed by its size while having unidentified feelings that bring you both fear and peace. Your mere presence of being in the same space, which the Grand Canyon occupies, gives you great appreciation for the fact that you are witnessing a mystery and a miracle. You have no need to understand how the Grand Canyon got to be the way it is. You just accept that it is. You simply enjoy the moment because of your faith in the unlimited power of your Higher Power and/or unseen spiritual forces.

In essence, a spiritual experience describes people who have feelings about something or someone that is powerful-and-present. It directs their inner-spirit to accept their Higher Power who possesses knowledge and truth, gives them the ability to construct things, have talents, and help people in ways that may not be understandable to man/woman. Many people believe their Higher Power, the one who made the Grand Canyon and the other “wonders of the world,” can also make their problems go away and build a life of wholeness for them.

Spiritual Words of Inspiration & Introspection

These inspirational messages, quotes, poems will stimulate discussion in individual and group sessions. Each may bring forth different views from each participant and may be the catalyst for getting in touch with problems that quickly become “unearthed” after reading one or more messages. The use of spiritual-stimulants, such as scriptures, phrases, etc. have proven effective in producing a healing environment.

A Prayer for Inner Peace

Dear Lord,

Replace the tension within me with relaxation; Replace the turbulence within me with a sacred calm; Replace the anxiety within me with a quiet confidence; Replace the fear within me with a strong faith; Straighten my crookedness, fill my emptiness; Dull the edge of my pride; Sharpen the edge of my humility; Let me see myself as Thou seest me; That I may see thee as Thou hast promised.

— Love Unlimited, Ventura, Ca

The words you speak in your spiritual treatment must be rooted in conviction, a state of consciousness that Grayson calls conviction.

The religious world calls it faith, and it CAN move mountains ...

It has to do with your spiritual “knowing” .

— Grayson, Stuart(1997). *Spiritual healing*, pp. 232-233

New York: Simon & Schuster

How to Get What You Want

(5 A's in Prayers . . .)

Acknowledge the source – “God”.

Atonement with “God”.

Affirm what you want. “Know that you already have it.”

Appreciate – give thanks.

Acceptance – Let go and let God.

– Love Unlimited, Ventura, CA

Kindness is more medicine than manners.

– Hazel N. Dukes

I view the past as God's means of transportation that carried me to the present.

I glimpse the future as God's mystery novel to be enjoyed.

I stay in the now by refraining to turn to the last page to see how it ends.

– Love Unlimited, Ventura, CA

A good ear is better than a busy tongue.

– Frances L. Brisbane

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.

Nothing can be done without hope or confidence.

– Helen Keller

Faith is the only known cure for fear.

– Lena K. Sadler

No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it.

– Albert Einstein

It is through our wounded areas that God enters.

– Love Unlimited, Ventura, CA

Folks who don't know God get by on their nerve;
those who know Him get by on their faith.

– Elder Michaux,

Oct. 1988, Happy News, Vol. Lv. #12

Let us endeavor to so live that when we come to die,
even the undertaker will be sorry.

– Mark Twain

You can't always keep trouble from coming,
But you needn't give it a chair to sit on!

– Love Unlimited, Ventura, CA

God made the world round so we would never be
able to see too far down the road.

– Isak Dinesen

Keep faith as a constant companion. When fear knocks at your door,
send faith to answer it.

– Ralph Beebe

Do the thing you fear, and the death of fear is certain.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

No-Dependants Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change –
Courage to change the person I can –
And wisdom to know that is me.

– Love Unlimited, Ventura, CA

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

– Proverbs 15:1

Do not permit fear to overpower your faith;
God gave us a spirit of faith, not fear.

– Frances L. Brisbane

Healing

Healing comes in our relationships when we release our individual desires, give our pride to God, throw our selfish "rights" in the trash, and humbly reach out to the other and extend the Unconditional Love of God.

— Love Unlimited, Ventura, CA

Serenity is an inside Job.

— Love Unlimited, Ventura, CA

*My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands;
For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. Let not
mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, write them on
the tablet of your heart. And so find favor and high esteem in the sight of
God and man.*

— Proverbs 3:1-4

Your spirit cannot be alive when all your hope is gone.

— Frances L. Brisbane

The twenty-first century will be religious or will not be at all.

— Andre' Malraux

A Prayer

*Let us give thanks to our Higher Power or the God of our individual
acceptance for His grace and His patience with all of us. Keep us humble,
keep us focused in your will. Never let our problems define or demean us.*

*Constantly remind us that when we think we've had everything that we
have not had tomorrow. If we receive it is all up to you. But for now we
want to thank you for today, a day we have not seen before. A day that
will be cancelled one minute past midnight but for now its ours to
make the best of its beauty and its possibilities.*

*And as you guide us through life help us to remember it's not a rehearsal.
Help us to look beyond the hills, to climb over obstacles, knowing the
future belongs to those who see beauty in their struggles. It's not
arriving at the destination but enjoying the journey.*

*Keep us mindful that no matter where our station is in life, we can help
somebody. When we cease to make a contribution to our fellowperson we
begin to die. When we give to someone less fortunate than ourselves — and
each of us is a little better off than someone else — we are doubly rewarded.
I know this to be unequivocally true, because the more I give the more I
receive. It is truly a blessing in giving gifts and receiving generosity.*

*Therefore, I hope, as we live each day, we will contribute our all to it.
We will make it count, so we'll have few or no regrets.*

*God, I want to personally thank you for the miracle I am. Realizing I am
a miracle fills me with happiness. Seeing all these miracles before me
confirms that you are an awesome God. Amen*

— Frances L. Brisbane

*Just as there is learned helplessness there is also learned optimism.
You determine which one you will learn.*

— C. Vincent Bakeman

*Realize you are the first person in your own life and act accordingly.
Then, you will appropriately respond to all others who need
your love and support.*

— Frances L. Brisbane

SECTION THREE

Forgiveness

It is important to discuss forgiveness as part of anger management, especially when the subject of anger comes up in spiritually based treatment. Because there are many references in the bible about forgiveness and one's need to quickly forgive, many people do not understand that you can forgive and not continue to let someone hurt or abuse you.

In domestic violence situations many professionals who are members of the clergy or use spiritual or religious models of treatment, talk more about the harmed person's need to forgive than the hurt the person has endured. Therefore, it is important to understand that forgiveness is one part of the healing process and not the sum total of what is needed to begin the healing process. In fact, in many instances it may not be the first step in the process, but come after anger and a host of other feelings/emotions have been discharged. Certainly, people must have an opportunity to talk about their hurt and the feelings aroused by it before their healing can begin to take place.

The following material will be helpful in working with the client populations described above as well as many others.

Forgiveness is Not

- Forgetting
- Condemning
- Making perpetrator feel sad, sorry; showing one's moral goodness
- Conditional (Initiating an apology with the expectation that your conditions will be met).
- Condoning and Blaming the Victim (you really wouldn't feel bad if you were not so thin – skinned).
- Accepting unacceptable behavior
- Healing, it is the act that may initiate the process for healing to begin. The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget.

Thomas Szasz

Six Steps To Forgiveness and Healing

All people have been hurt in some way. The hurt ranges from a lie or betrayal by a loved one to child abuse. It is how you handle hurt that makes the difference in your life. No matter what the event, you do not have to continue carrying around the pain for the rest of your life.

Healing the emotional wound requires forgiving, and as counselors Sid and Suzanne Simon described it, forgiveness has 6 stages: denial, self-blame, recognizing victimization, indignation, recognizing survival, and integration.

Stage 1 - Denial

Denial may take many forms. Some people remember only parts of the event; others minimize its trauma. Repressing the memory and telling yourself all is well is another form of denial. Incest victims may tell yourself that you just dreamed the incidents to avoid feeling like damaged goods. Denial is broken initially by recognizing who has caused the hurt.

Stage 2 - Self-Blame

When denial in any form gives way to awareness, self-blame often follows. You may now acknowledge the trauma but believe it was your fault or that somehow you could have prevented it. "If only I had done something differently, it would not have happened."

Stage 3 - Recognizing victimization

In this stage, you realize that you were not at fault. Now you, the victim, can assign responsibility to the perpetrator and begin to grieve. This is an important stage because it means you are aware of what happened – someone hurt you. However, beware of becoming stuck in this stage. When people get stuck in this stage, they will blame, and may use their victimization to gain attention. They may use the victimization posture to lower the world's expectations of them.

According to the Simons, there are three kinds of victims: "Whiners" express self-pity and feeling misunderstood. "Self-indulgers" tend to believe they are especially entitled due to their losses. "Meaners" abuse others and may rape, batter or emotionally abuse others.

Stage 4 - Indignation

You now focus your anger on the perpetrator(s) identified in Stage 3. It is coupled with determination that you will not allow additional harm to yourself. The anger, the Simons say, is secondary to fear, hurt, sadness, guilt and frustration.

Stage 5 - Recognizing survival

In this stage, you recognize with pride that you have survived the anger and the pain. You – not the person who hurt you – own your own life and have choices. You need no longer wallow in self-pity or blame. You did your best.

Stage 6 - Integration

In this stage, you can put the trauma into the larger perspective of your whole life. It can be understood as only a part of the self. You may need to examine how holding on to the trauma helps you or hinders you. Does it hurt your relationships or help them? Do you feel better about yourself by holding on to that anger? After asking yourself these questions, you will need to let it go.

The Psychotherapy Letter

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When You Forgive the Same Act Twice or More Times, Areas of Concern May be -

Will the perpetrator feel free to repeat the act but be more cautious in permitting it to come to light?

- If you have this concern, how should you respond to it?

Should I forgive but not have a reconciliation?

- What would you base this on?
- How would this work for you personally?

Should I just give myself the gift of forgiveness and not express forgiveness to the person?

- What strengths would you need to make that decision?
- Is not forgiving the person a barrier to forgiving yourself?

If I recognize a person's anger and defensiveness are keeping her or him from apologizing for hurting me, should I help the person to see the need to apologize because it helps both of us to heal?

- Is this important (or true) for you considering the fact that the perpetrator has committed the same act several times?

Will my accepting an apology for the second or third time stir up more anger than healing in me?

Does the act of unforgiveness (social and intimate withdrawal, producing guilt, retribution, telling others about perpetrator's behavior) serve any positive consequences in a relationship?

- If so how? Is it of time – limited value?
 - Will it produce better behavior and accountability for actions?
- When you have been hurt repeatedly, does forgiveness require total abandonment of the will to trust the perpetrator?
- If so, should the perpetrator be told this? If told, will the person believe she or he has been forgiven?

Claims of Personal Results Associated with Forgiveness

- Reduction of stress and health problems triggered by stress that turns into distress, namely: elevated blood pressure, cardiovascular problems, headaches, depression, homicidal thoughts, end of life illnesses, sleep deprivation.
- Letting go of bitter and vengeful attitudes/feelings, and whole body feels light, buoyant, and mind feels open and clear.
- Giving up resentments, and focusing on loving oneself rather than disliking others.
- Enhanced ability to function and to do routine things, such as driving, childcare, on-the-job tasks, without a diminished capacity and behavior that mimics drunkenness or daydreaming.
- Truly accepting the belief that God loves and blesses the person who forgives. (Forgiveness is part of the Christian tradition and carries no conditions with it. Like Christianity, Buddhism and Islam encourage forgiveness regardless of whether the perpetrator apologizes or shows contrition).
- Relationship problems can begin to be solved and anger management can become effective when self-forgiveness becomes a priority.
- Stopping self-punishment – thereby freeing up energy consumed in anger.
- It permits healing to begin.

Beliefs That Shape Christians' Responses to Anger

Most Christians have been taught that anger serves no good purpose. However, it is important to distinguish toxic anger from anger which is simply a feeling that informs how you should behave in order to protect yourself from evil and abusive forces. The following scriptures, however, tend to caution against anger in general.

A SOFT answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.
– Proverbs 15:1

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.
– Proverbs 16:32

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.
– Ephesians 4:31

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.
– Ephesians 4:32

An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression.
– Proverbs 29:22

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret – it only causes harm.
– Psalm 37:8

Song – I hold my peace and Let the Lord Fight My Battle.

SECTION FOUR

A Spiritual Quest to Overcome Stress

Because we live in a stress-filled world, we are constantly struggling with situations that cause imbalance in our lives. Many times, the same problems that confront our clients/patients also cause us to be in disharmony with our families, co-workers, and friends. The problems of the world are less and less those things that are so distant from us that they are only momentary concerns. They are, indeed, becoming ever-present in our lives. We easily become stressed as a matter of navigating through the “normal” activities of our day because normal is being re-defined. Since September 11th, Tragic Tuesday, 2001, normal living in the U.S. may take on a different characterization. Many things that were once routine may cause us distress, thereby affecting both, our emotional and physical health.

In view of the above, the thirteen points below may prove useful for professionals and their clients/patients. They can serve as a foundation for discussing stress and a spiritually-endowed way for overcoming it, before it develops into “deadly” distress.

1. Don't take yourself too seriously. Not even your greatness, brilliance, wealth or arrogance will keep you from dying one day. You will not be remembered because you were you, but only by the things you did for others.
2. Don't think you alone are able to control everything, including yourself and other people. Stop often to reflect on and realize how you have been unable to order your own life from sun up to sun down on many days. Yet, TODAY is the only certainty for which you have an opportunity of trying to influence an outcome.
3. Take care of yourself FIRST. Anything you do to make another person happy or comfortable find a way to do the same thing for yourself.
4. Do not hold on to resentments. Do whatever is necessary to do to rid yourself of toxic anger because it will destroy your “insides” and do nothing to the external targets of your resentments.
5. Acquire some child-like qualities. Laugh a lot, do playful things, don't take things so seriously by analyzing others' actions to the point of being so guarded that you cannot enjoy social relationships.
6. Be grateful to God or your Higher Power for waking up, and believe “if I'm alive, I may have an opportunity to overcome anything.”
7. Don't be around friends or relatives who complain all the time. Don't permit them to drain your energy and put bad vibes in your universe.
8. When you have done all that you can about a problem, get out of the way. Give your Higher Power an opportunity to solve it. Remember, you must ask Him to put His power to work for you.
9. Don't think everything will be all right instantly when your problem is solved. Someone may forgive you or you may forgive someone, but forgiving is only the beginning of a process. People need time to heal. Don't ever try to force the relationship into being what it was previously until healing has taken place. Also recognize that when someone forgives,

although it may be totally genuine, they may not wish to resume the same level of the relationship as before the difficulty, which later brought an apology.

10. Don't beat up yourself when you have 2, 3, 7 bad days or months. At these times refrain from looking at "how well" everyone is doing but you. You can't tell how well they are doing by looking at what they have. Snap-out of it when you decide to have a pity-party. Instead, look at all your "bad luck" as "life unfolding". Life is not a dress rehearsal. It's the real performance. And like any "play" your bad times will end.
11. At the time(s) you are feeling most depressed, down, burdened, get out-of-self and do something for someone else. It can be as little as giving a compliment. You can also give someone a card with an inspirational message and feel good by their reactions.
12. When you are feeling overwhelmed, unloved, unimportant, find a song, movie, book or attend a religious service that will "make" you cry. Crying can be a therapeutic catalyst to "wash away" deep and depressing feelings until you are able to talk with a professional about them.
13. Don't constantly read or watch disturbing news which frightens you and plunges you into a mental state of helplessness, especially when you have no way of becoming part of the solution. During these times of repetition of overwhelming news, go on a "news fast" or a "TV fast".

May Peace be with you!

SECTION FIVE

Using a Spiritual Prescription for Prevention and Treatment of Alcohol and Other Drug Addictions

The use of spiritual power has helped many people to overcome illnesses or problems. Instead of dwelling on what's wrong, focus on the spirit force in your life, the power of faith and spiritual medicine. It will liberate you and provide you with the strength to slay-the-dragon of addiction. To be sure, alcohol and other addictive drugs can cause mammoth problems in one's life. Alcoholism and drug addiction are serious bio-psychosocial illnesses. They should be treated as such. In the process, the following prescription of spiritual inclusion will best prevent these illnesses while serving as an adjunct in the treatment of them. The following is a prescription to start you on your way.

You should by-pass the drug store and go to a higher source of power to have this prescription of 20 ingredients filled.

1. Each morning when you get up take a deep breath, turn your attention to the God you serve and say – "Nothing is going to happen today that God and I together can't handle"
2. "When you go to bed at night turn all your problems over to God ... He's up all night any way" (Love Unlimited). Believe he is working on a cure for AIDS, alcoholism, asthma, and anorexia, and your trials and tribulations, while you toss, turn and dream.

Love Unlimited Ventura, CA

3. Set a goal for each day. Plan to accomplish something as you go through the day and remember – Life like sobriety must be lived one day at a time ... Sometimes one minute at a time.

4. Live by the **P** steps to achievement –

Plan Purposefully

Prepare Prayerfully

Proceed Positively

Pursue Persistently

Love Unlimited Ventura, CA

5. Take a risk each day and do something for yourself; something that you may secretly believe is NOT possible to achieve. Because – “You cannot discover new oceans until you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.”

Love Unlimited

Stated another way – you can't go to second base if you keep your foot on first.

6. Work at acquiring a new sense of “Somebodiness”. It will give you the courage to stop people from:

- *Stepping on your dreams*
- *Walking on your hopes*

7. Realize you have power. You are not a rodent crawling near someone's foot, waiting to be stepped on. When you give your power to others, you empower them to depower you.

8. Read something positive about yourself everyday and in the process learn how to interpret the bad press that's out there. Somewhere in the negative IS the positive.

For example:

- If: 1/3 women of color between 13-17 are having babies,
2/3 are not

- If: 1/4 Black men can't read above a 9th grade level, 3/4 can
- If: 12% of African American families live below the poverty level, 88% do not

9. Women, shake-off the time-worn adage that “Women can't be trusted” or “I'd rather work for a man than a woman”. Instead, go out of your way to be supportive of women – your boss, your supervisors, your friends. Affirm the women in your life regularly.

10. Remember the formula for failure is trying to please everybody but yourself.

- Simply say “NO” when you really mean NO. No does not require an explanation and it should not produce guilt. *NO IS A COMPLETE SENTENCE.*

11. Listen to your emotional-tolerance level. It will help you find the gear to reverse going crazy, telling people off. Words spoken in anger cannot be taken back; they can cut like a knife. Remember, toxic anger is one letter short of Danger. Don't permit your emotions to place you in the danger zone.

12. Remember it is impossible to love anybody more than you love yourself. Besides, there is never a need to place the love you have for yourself in competition with the love you have for your spouse, lover, mate or children. Love can flourish in many departments in your life. You have enough God-given love to never run short of the ability to share it.

13. Work at NOT holding resentments. When you resent somebody you are locking the door to your soul, thereby keeping the spirit of God from entering your life. God does not wish to dwell in an evil temple of resentments. Besides, when you resent someone you are giving that person rent-free space in your head. Instead, give resentments an eviction notice.

14. Realize that the results of our struggle can lead us to the realization that Spiritual collectivity grows

- *Our Attitude*
- *Our Fortitude*
- *Our Gratitude*

With this precious power we will come to accept that today is the day that we must invest in. Because “Yesterday is a cancelled check; tomorrow is a promissory note, today is the only cash we have – so we must spend it wisely” (Kay Lyons).

15. Permit God’s great power, His mercifulness and His grace to give us the courage to love our children enough to make them behave. Don’t permit them to use our illness as a reason to disrespect us. We must also teach our children the Nelson Mandela brand of personhood and racial pride and the resulting reward of liberation. Realizing that:

Mandela went from Prison to President –

Surely, we can teach our kids how to go from sun up to sun down without being truant from school, committing a crime or shooting another brother or sister.

16. Remain mindful that it is how we live our life that is the blueprint for how our kids think life should be lived.

“So, if you think you’re going in the wrong direction remember God allows U-Turns” (*Love Unlimited*). Turn around, straighten up. Become your child’s role model.

17. “Live as though today is your last day on earth, one day you will be right” (*Love Unlimited*). Search yourself, do an inventory everyday of how many people you helped or how many people you knowingly hurt for no reason at all, and sometimes to advance yourself at the personal, professional, and spiritual well-being of others. Apologize to those you have hurt or offended. When others have hurt you, turn it over to God. Once you turn it over rest in the knowledge that he will take care of it.

18. Make your motto – “God treat me today exactly how I treated others Yesterday” (*Love Unlimited*)
If you or I died tomorrow or in the next 2 minutes do you think people will say:

“Oh! My God. he’s gone”

Or instead will they say:

“Thank God he’s gone”

19. Remember not to be like some folks who take up religion as insurance against going to hell, then, are unwilling to pay the premium.

20. Stand tall and look ever to the God that gives structure and meaning to your life. He has promised to see us through ...

- *Through the Storm*
- *Through the Rain*
- *Through Good Times*
- *Through Bad Times.*

My God has been faithful to His word. He has made it possible for me to do more than survive. Every time I go down on my knees I come up victorious. I’m certain your God can do the same for you.

He has given us a legacy to uphold. Out of our past, dark as the pain that traumatized our ancestors, we can proudly say: We gained tremendous resiliency. Today, if we embrace spirituality and anyone knocks us down we simply get up.

- *If they put a mountain in our way we climb it*
- *If they laugh at us we keep on smiling*
- *If they talk about us we keep on praying*
- *If they dig a hole for us, they usually fall in*
- *If they try to bury our aspirations, our reputation, and our spirit, we just keep rising. We rise again and again.*

As we rise, we must also reach up to the standard set by our ancestors – Harriett Tubman, Golda Meir, George Washington, Booker T. Washington, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Sojourner Truth, your grandmother, my grandmother, your grandfather, my

grandfather, your mother, my mother, our aunts, our uncles, our godmothers, our godfathers. What we do in life and with our lives is either making them proud or pissing them off.

There are also many young people around us who have achieved greatness. And all of them and the ones of you who have overcome the dragon-of-addiction, have also achieved greatness. There are far too many people who are not here because they could not or would not slay "the dragon" while still suffering spiritual bankruptcy. Some are dead, others are still sick.

Continue to drink this prescription of HOPE. It is capable of re-fueling your spiritual tank with power.

As you grow more self-fulfilled you will become more spiritually endowed. Your spirituality will lift your hopes and place you in unison with a noble purpose in life. You'll begin to walk differently, strut proudly, and experience a soul-stirring peace. It will place you in unity with the God of your understanding. It will make you look in the mirror and say, "I love that person who is looking back at me".

For further information on:

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Faith, Hope, Mystery and Prayer