Reconciling Anxiety and Worry Through Spirituality

Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?” (Mt.6:27)

Introduction

• Introduce Self: Perfectionist re:worry.
• “If you had nothing to worry about, you’d worry about that!!”

Relevance of Topic:

• British study: Average Briton spends 46 minutes daily or 27 days yearly worrying
• U.S. anxiety disorders affect 19.1 million; women: 2X more likely to worry.

Goals of Presentation

• Background: Relationship between spirituality and mental/physical health
• How as Chaplains can help patient embrace their spirituality to improve their mental/physical outcomes.
• How we can help ourselves to utilize our spirituality to manage our worry & anxiety to become ordinary people (process)
Definition of Spirituality

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- Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning, purpose, and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred.

Characteristics of Spirituality

- 1. Found in all cultures, societies, and all individuals
- 2. Not bound by any rules; doesn’t follow any religion, nor adhere to set principles.
- 3. Deeply Personal – search for ultimate meaning and purpose in life. (inner voice) awakening the very spirit of being who you are; recognize what you are made of.

Characteristics of Spirituality (cont).

- 4. Finds expression in religion, or belief in God, Family, naturalism, rationalism, humanism, and the arts.
- 5. Spirituality is a factor that contributes to health in many persons.*** Goal of Presentation: to understand how a healthy spirituality improves patient’s medical outcomes.
Spirituality’s Impact

• Spirituality has a significant impact on people’s worldviews, their perception of and response to illness, hospitalization and recovery or possible death
• Patient: “I’m dying”. I spoke to dr.”I wouldn’t say that. There’s a lot of things I can try.” Patient died within 48 hours.
• Patient: “I’m going home;” coded next day.

Characteristics of American Culture (Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.)

• Value Mastery and control
• Cultivate Self-sufficiency, independence
• Contempt for needy and suffering
• Deny Human wholeness; create safe places for family/self, which separate us
• Life becomes difficult; we face anxiety and worry as we have lost control.

World Today (anxious)

• Difficulties due to weak Economy:
• Discouraging IRAs; Poor dividends
• Anxiety for future: for family/self
• Collapse of Housing Market
• Changes in Retirement Plans
• Jobs: Unemployment & Underemployment
• Fears: Nuclear war, terrorist threats, Unusual weather, tornadoes; tsunamis
God’s Love: Only thing we can keep forever

**Sense of Entitlement**
- Approach life with demands, rules regarding what we need to be peaceful and joyful
- Attached to ‘idols’
- Hardens our hearts
- Keeps us from appreciating gifts we’ve been given.

**Gratefulness**
- Eyes of Appreciation
- Opens us up to see God’s reflections in new ways
- Heart of sound health spiritual attitude
- Rich even when world considers poor.

Religion

**Definition**: belief in the worship of or obedience to a supernatural power considered to be divine or to have control over human destiny (Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1955).

Person’s spirituality leads to different expressions of same religion.

Religion & Compassion

**The Dalai Lama (1998)**

- Religion:
  - All realize the importance of compassion
  - All have capacity to increase and enhance compassion and harmony.
  - Qualities such as compassion and forgiveness are fundamental human qualities and are of great importance even without a religious belief.
  - Out of 5 billion only 1 billion follow a religion
Goal of all Religions

- Look within to find true Self
- Self is ultimately linked to Sacred
- The discovery of this relationship is supreme joy and greatest goal of human life.
- Centuries before Christ Mencius, Confucianism "Those who completely know their own nature, know heaven".

Different facets of Sacred

- "The kingdom of heaven is within you"-J
- "He is in all, and all is in Him." (Judaism)
- "In the depths of the soul, one sees the Divine, the One." (The Chinese Book of Changes).
- "The breath that does not repeat the name of God is wasted breath." (Kabir-Sufi mystic, sixteenth century).

MICU Patient

Religion Confused with Spirituality

- Chaplain: Good Morning. Introduce self. Would you like to have a religion listed.
- Patient: No, I have no Spirituality.
- Chaplain: Spirituality is what gives your life value. What makes you feel happy?
- Friend: He rescues dogs. He has 17.
- Chaplain: We discussed beauty of dogs; he had a beautiful spirituality.
Chaplains - Spiritual Care Providers

- Safe Listening Presence: patient/family share their hopes, their dreams, fears
- Compassionate Presence- offering support to patients/families in their physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering
- Attentive to both patient’s and family’s holistic needs: mind, body, spirit.

Why are Spirituality & Religion Important?

- Found substantial evidence to support idea that spiritual and religious beliefs are used to cope with illness and result in positive outcomes. 30-50% of people polled use religion to cope with stress.

Role of Religion in Coping

- Enables persons to integrate overwhelmingly negative and stressful experiences into their current world views so that the world remains safe and predictable.
- Failure to achieve integration can result in depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, or irritability.
Crossroads:
Newsletter of the Center for Spirituality, Theology & Health Volume 1 Issue 9 Mar 2012
Duke U. followed 210 men (1/3CHF, 1/3 Lung disease, 1/3Cancer)
• Results: greater spiritual well-being (meaning, peace, purpose in life, role of faith in life) was inversely associated with both anxiety and depression.
• Negative religious experiences: more anxiety and depression.

Negative Impact of Religion/Spirituality
Weaver and Koenig (2006):
• Negative Effects such as delays in seeking medical treatment, guilt, abuse by religious advocates and religious factors often being part of psychosis. Feeling criticized or ostracized by a religious community can also have a negative impact on health
• May impact End of Life Decisions.
  – “She will rise on the third day”.

Nightmare Spirituality
• Young teacher, age 34: Suffered major brain hemorrhage. Declared brain dead by ER doctor.
• Family pastor: “She’s not dead. She will rise again in 3 days.” Instructed family/friends not to listen to anything negative as it would block her resurrection.
• Result: Family didn’t receive support needed; emotionally stressed/angry.
Spiritual Struggle

- Recognized by a loss of meaning and purpose, despair, anger at God, grief or loss, hopelessness, feeling punished or abandoned by God, guilt or need for reconciliation.
- “Why Me?” “Why did God take my sister and leave me? (76 yr. Parkinson Disease)
- “What’s my life about” (63 yr. received devastating news – lung cancer).

Screening Issues for Spiritual Pain

- Level of stress or distress with diagnosis or prognosis
- Support in person’s life
- Person’s spiritual point of view
- Quality of religious involvement; none, occasional or regular
- Religious coping: negative/positive
- Feelings about faith community support

Spiritual Pain Present

- Disconnection from others; withdrawal
- Preoccupation with self
- Feeling outcast and alone; abandoned
- Expressing a loss of future
- Receive bad news; undesirable outcome
- No joy in anything
- Conflict between their beliefs and actual life events
Research: Spiritual Struggle

• 96 Medical Rehab patients with higher levels of religious struggle were less likely to recover independence. (Fitchett, 1999)

• 577 hospitalized medically-ill older patients found spiritual struggle was associated with poorer physical health, greater depressive symptoms and lower quality of life (Koenig, 1998)

Spiritual Struggle-

• Significant predictor of increased mortality
• 232 elderly cardiac surgery patients
• Risk Factors Study: Patients with greater isolation and who reported they received no strength or comfort from their faith had a threefold increase of post-operative morbity. (Oxman, 1995)

Relationship Btwn Spirituality & Body:

“Change your Brain Change your Life”

• Dr. Amen, MD (Psych) found reciprocal relationship between spirit/body
• Positive Spirituality- Healthy Mind & Body
• Embrace Negative Mindset – worry & anxiety – depression ~ suicide
• Worry & Anxiety: (Raise Blood Sugar & Blood Pressure, Heart attack, stroke)
• Meditation: lowers levels and risks.
Meditation Associated with Positive Changes in Mood & Anxiety (Amen)

- Medical study: 15 people, average age 62
- Daily Meditation: 12 min./8 weeks
- Neuropsychological tests measure of mood and anxiety before and after
- Results: Meditation training resulted in notable improvement in mood, anxiety, tension and fatigue with some parameters reaching statistical significance

Herbert Benson's Recommendations

Meditation - Helpful

- Summary: Meditation is effective therapy for any disease made worse by stress: Hypertension, Cardiac arrhythmias, chronic pain, anxiety, insomnia, mild to moderate depression, infertility, postoperative anxiety, premenstrual syndrome, migraine and cluster headaches, low self-esteem, symptoms of cancer and AIDS.

Transcendental Mediation – Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

- Spirituality – not meant to be separate from the body
- TM- quickly produced profound relaxation with changes in breathing, heartbeat and blood pressure
- TM Practitioners: Medical Assessment
  - Less 5 yrs – 5 yrs off physical age;
  - Over 5 yrs.- 12 years off physical age
More than 600 scientific studies verifying the wide-ranging benefits of the Transcendental Meditation technique have been conducted at 250 independent universities and medical schools in 33 countries during the past 40 years.

**TM Meditators**
- Visited dr. & entered hospitals ½ as often as control group; 50% less cancer
- 80% less heart disease
- Greatest improvement over age 65
- Proof: Spirituality not meant to be separate from the body;
- sickness and aging represent failure of body to join mind in fulfillment.

**Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism**
- All faiths have their own Sacred texts:
  - Upanishads, the Koran, the Hebrew Scriptures, the Bhagavad Gita, The Good News of the New Testament
- Transform us as we meditate on eternal wisdom: we aren’t alone. We find support, and help for our lives.
Sacred Texts (cont)

• Stillness of mind-(contemplation, meditation) allows person to connect with God & prepare to receive God
• Prayer-height, depth, length, breath of Spirit: “Do not be afraid- I am with you! I am your God-let nothing terrify you! I will make you strong and help you; I will protect you and save you” (Is.41:10).
• Bible – 800 Positive texts.

Sanskrit word - visvas

• Similar to English word – faith
• Translation “to breathe easily, have trust, be free from fear’
• Heart of spiritual life: Having a sense of freedom from brokenness, alienation, helplessness, anxiety, and feeling totally lost or adrift is a worthy, noble goal.

“Everyday Simplicity; A Practical Guide to Spiritual Growth

• Robert Wick’s Definition: Ordinary Person: Has the right perspective and possesses a spiritual attitude filled with appreciation for faithfulness, openness, gratitude, and the need to let go of needs, fears, and worries. “Freedom from attachment brings freedom from suffering” Buddha’s 3rd Noble Truth
Meditation

- Meditation comes from Latin verb: meditare to ponder or weigh.
- Meditation:
  - Creates quiet place removed from busyness
  - Offers opportunity to get in touch with self; what we feel, believe, and think.
  - Discover more about self
  - Get in touch with Lord and grow in relationship with Him. (Centering Prayer)

Centering Prayer
(Fourth Mansion of St. Theresa of Avila)

- Sit, relax, take 2/3 deep breaths
- Relax your body from head to toe; quiet self
- Listen: God invites us to listen. He will speak to us.
- Repeat mantra: Jesus Mercy
  OR
- “Be still and know that I am God” Ps.46:10
Overwhelmed Patient

- Setting: Initial visit to patient; a Methodist. Referred by nurse for anxiety
- Patient: Multiple issues:
  - Primary Caregiver for father (ATL/BIR);
  - only child; hospitalization couldn’t come at a worse time; diagnosis pending; financial issues; needed new car-funds unavailable; financial issues with father, who can’t drive; patient uninsured.

Embracing Spirituality

- Chaplain: “I truly don’t know where to start. One thing I do know is that Jesus goes before us each day providing what we need. Do you believe that?”
- Patient: “Yes, without Him I don’t know where I’d be”. Shared her faith journey; its importance in her life.
- Chaplain: May I say a prayer with you, and lead you in a Meditation?

Meditation With Patient

- (prayer) Lead patient in meditation.
- Instructions to Patient: Breath in and out slowly; Relax from top of head to toes (name body part) Directions: imagine looking at door; see Jesus; He walks towards you; He’s reaching out His hands; you know He wants your heart; you place it in His hands; He is smiling as He caresses it; Share with Him your worries.
Later Patient Visit

- Patient Returned 3 months later
- Patient reminded chaplain of visit and meditation.
- Patient thanked chaplain as meditation enabled her to gather her inner strength to deal with difficulties with her father, her illness, her finances.
- Her words “Thank you. Your visit made all the difference”.

Remember: You Become What You Think (Prov. 23:7)

- How to Embrace Spirituality of outwardly unreligious person to positively affect their thought and health??
- Social Worker said,
- “Meredith, You’ve got to help G return to independent living. She’s going to be discharged to assisted living.”
“As you think in your heart, so you are”.  
Proverbs 23:7

- Hospital Social worker recommended d/c to assisted living as G couldn’t transfer from bed to wheelchair;
- **Spirituality**: **Golden Rule**; 3 children
- **Shared**: NY; Ethnic: Jewish, widow; independent; educated;
- **Fear**: Didn’t want to financially burden children; couldn’t afford assisted living.

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**Encourage Belief in Herself**

- Accepted: Her Spirituality controls mind which controls body; Possible to use her stubbornness and determination
- Taught: Power of visual imaging: Review PT/See self successful, able to transfer Recommended: 3-4 times day;
- Body responded positively. Her belief in self led to her return to independent living.

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**Questions for Patient/Self Assessment**

- How do you see the world? How do you use this lense to help you? (process – spiritual, emotional, psychological, physical) What makes you happy?
- What would you change? What would you look like? How can you achieve this? Need to understand patient’s hopes, dreams, values, spirituality.
Part III: Help Our Anxiety

• Recommended Reading: *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*; Daniel Amen, M.D.  
  reciprocal relationship between spirit/body
• **Positive Spirituality**-Healthy Mind & Body
• **Embrace Negative Mindset**  – worry & anxiety—depression ~ suicide/ Worry & Anxiety; Raise Blood Sugar & Blood Pressure; Heart attack, stroke increase

Daniel Amen, M.D. Psychiatrist

• Nuclear scan that shows active area of brain function. Once the over-active or non-active area is assessed, treatment can be decided.
• Very successful treating depression, suicide ideation, Attention Deficit, Anxiety, Marital Counseling
• **Meditation**: lowers levels and risks.
ANTS
Automatic Negative Thoughts
• Brush them off; change your thoughts from negative pattern.
• Whenever you start worrying, tell yourself this is not a story I have to tell myself – no more tragic narratives.
• “Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Some people bear three – all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have.”Edward E. Hale

Dr. Amen’s Recommendations
• Train thoughts to be positive and hopeful or negative: talk back to negative thoughts/ challenge thought takes away power over you. Think of neg. thoughts like ants; need to be crushed or ruin self-esteem, relationships.
• Write negative thought then write rational response; takes away power.

Talk Back to ANTS
Talk back to following ants (red*):
1. always/never/no one/ everyone/ everything: usually wrong
2.* Focus on negative; ignore good.
3.* Fortune-telling: predict worst outcome helps bad things to happen.
4.* Mind-reading: causes trouble
Talk Back to ANTS (cont)
• 5. Thinking with your feelings: feelings aren't always about reality.
• 6. Labeling: Once label person/self as a jerk become unable to deal with them as individual
• 7. Guilt Feelings: should, ought, have to: replace with I want to; it would be helpful to.

Talk Back to Ants
• 8. * Personalize: My son had an accident. I should have taught him better. We’re not responsible for all negative behavior.

Kill The Ants
• Kill Ants: Thought left unchecked will cause depression of whole bodily system; perhaps effect your entire life. Take control by talking back to unpleasant thoughts. Find out what is truth/what is not
• Recognize ANT WRITE IT DOWN; TALK BACK!!
Aid for Deep Limbic System

1. Notice the Ants; Name Ant; Challenge negative thought. Write positive.
2. Learn to Recognize type & crush it.
3. Surround self with positive people
4. Protect Your Children with limbic bonding (feel loved/connected to parents)

Deep Limbic Suggestions

5. Build People Skills: Helps heal from depression as relationship skills develop
6. Touch those you love frequently - builds love. massage - beneficial
7. Develop a library of wonderful memories. Make a list of 10 most wonderful times of your life. Remember color, sounds, smells, word.

Deep Limbic Prescription

8. Aromatherapy: Smell activates nerves that go to deep limbic system.
9. Affirm those in our lives – love breeds love.
10 Exercise: more energy, metabolism increased, normal melatonin
11. Watch Your Nutrition:
Purpose of Our Lives

Persons who have returned from a near death experience believe "we are all here to grow in wisdom and learn how to love better. As we each do this, we slowly become a blessing to those around us and a light in the world" (a)

Example: Jesse - 15 yrs ago the doctors sent home as nothing more could be done. (b) (Remem:a-85; b- 215)

Personal Questions

• How can I pray for the grace to see life as a worthy quest rather than an exercise in discouragement?
• How does strong spiritual attitude set the stage for a simple strong prayer life?
• Am I present to God in my life? To people?
• What does my daily behavior say about the person I really am?

Suggested Readings

• Amen, Daniel, M.D. “Change Your Brain, Change Your Life”
• Delisi, O.C.S.O., Anthony. “Praying In The Cellar)
• Meyer, Joyce. “BattleField of the Mind”
• Walsh, M.D.,PhD. “Essential Spirituality;The 7 Central Practices to Awaken Heart and Mind”
Mt. 6:25-34

• “Therefore, I tell you **do not worry** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather food into barns and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?**” (Mt. 6:25-27)

Closing Prayer

• “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.” Lord, unite Your love with our worries and anxieties. Replace them with your peace and joy. Thank you, Jesus, for your faithful Love. Amen