HEALING SUFFERING
A Clinical Pastoral Response to Suffering

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May 17, 2014

Agenda
• First hour: Spirituality, Suffering and Healing
  – Lecture: Defining the Situation
  – Case Study: Metaphorical Listening
• Second Hour: The Clinical Process and Meaning Making
  – Lecture: Suffering and the Need for Meaning
  – Case Study: Treating Suffering Related to Meaning
• Third Hour: Beliefs, Values and Purpose
  – Lecture: Spiritual Goal Setting
  – Case Study: Treating Suffering Related to Purpose
• Fourth Hour: The Clinical Chaplain: Spiritual Specialist
  – Lecture: Spiritual Interventions
  – Case Study: Treating Suffering Related to Relationship

My Grandfather’s Blessing

Weaving Several Threads
• Clinical
• Pastoral
• Inspirational
• Practical
• Psychological
• Theological
• Personal
• Professional
• Catholic Perspective
Spirituality

- Spirituality is the unifying force or vital principle of a person that integrates all other dimensions of the human being.
- Spiritus is Latin for breath.
- Spirituality has the same root as words related to breathing (e.g.: respiration, inspiration and expiration.)

Definition of Spirituality

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

(Puchalski, C. Making Healthcare Whole, p. 25)
Definition of Spirituality

Spirituality is that which animates one’s being with meaning, purpose and relationship.

**Meaning:** The way one organizes knowledge and experience. Meaning’s ultimate goal is Wisdom.

**Purpose:** The goal of one’s life and the values one lives by.

**Relationship:** Connection to the Divine, to others and to self. Relationship is expressed through Compassion.

Characteristics of Spirituality

- Spirituality is shown through peace, joy, happiness, truth, honor, dignity, respect, responsibility, truth, kindness, patience, generosity, humility, appreciation, caring, service, healing, hope, endurance, resilience, resourcefulness and beliefs.

Whole Person Care

- Whole person care addresses:
  - Physical needs
  - Psychological needs
  - Spiritual needs
Medicine and Spirituality

**Focus of Medicine**: the physical dimension, ease physical pain, find a cure, specific measurements and tests

**Focus of Spirituality**: the spiritual dimension, ease spiritual distress, seek spiritual healing, deal with individual situations, level of mystery

Medical Model

**Strength of Medical model**:
- Evidence based: most current, relevant practice
- Combines research and practical experience
- Powerful pharmacologic and surgical interventions to cure illness

**Limitations of Medical model**:
- May not address the cause of the illness
- Focus on treatment rather than prevention
- May not account for patient values, social and environmental factor in disease.

Spirituality Model

**Strength of Spirituality model**:
- Beliefs effect compliance and outcomes
- Reduce depression and anxiety; increase hope and trust
- Faith activates natural systems of healing, i.e. placebo effect

**Limitations of Spirituality**:
- Very individualistic, not quantifiable or measurable
- Religious beliefs about judgment and punishment
- Spiritual values may differ from healthcare provider

The Spiritual Dimension

"I am not a mechanism, an assembly of various parts. And it is not because the mechanism is working wrongly, that I am ill. I am also ill because of wounds to the soul, to the deep emotional self..."

D.H. Lawrence
Addressing Spiritual Need

In healthcare setting, spiritual need is addressed in three ways:

– Spiritual Screening at time of admission
– Spiritual History
– Spiritual Assessment

Spiritual Screening

• Basic inquiry; quickest, meets requirements
• Denominational preference
• Importance of religion and spirituality in one’s coping with illness
• Chaplain visit?

Spiritual History

• Better level of assessment

• F.I.C.A. Model:
  – F – faith  What is your faith tradition?
  – I – important  How important is your faith to you?
  – C – church  What is your faith community?
  – A – address  Are there spiritual needs to address?

Dr. Christina Puchalski

Spiritual Assessment

• Deepest level of assessment
• In-depth conversation with a certified chaplain
• Seek to identify issues that are causing suffering (spiritual distress) for patient
• Apply a clinical method for assessment.
**Why Do Spiritual Assessment?**

- Many patients are religious and religious beliefs help them cope.
- Religious beliefs influence medical decisions especially when patient is seriously ill.
- Religious beliefs and activities are related to better health and quality of life.
- Many patients want their spiritual needs addressed.
- There is a long historical relationship between religion, medicine and healthcare.

_Harold Koenig, M.D._

**Spirituality and Religion**

- Spirituality is an innate, universal aspect of being human.
- Religion is one form of expressing spirituality; characterized by specific beliefs, practices and rituals common to a faith community and how it relates to the Divine.
- Chaplains navigate different religious traditions by finding the universal concepts found in all religions.

**Spirituality and Religion**

- Sacredness of creation
- Source of strength, meaning and coping
- Ultimate destination and way to reach it
- Positive relationship to physical health
- Motivation for change
- Connection to God
- Past, present and not yet

**Spirituality and Religion**

- Public Ministry:
  - Variety of expressions
  - Inclusive (non-judgmental)
  - Patient determines way to support
- Denominational Ministry:
  - Common practices
  - Common doctrine
  - Common form of prayer and support
**Spirituality and Science**

- Ancient psychology studied the mystery of the soul.
- Modern psychology studies the mind.
- Science is analytical, measurable, repeatable and verifiable.
- Spirituality is a different kind of knowledge: obvious and mysterious, universal and personal, natural and supernatural, easy and challenging.

**Spirituality and Science**

- The Age of Enlightenment separated science from religion.
- Religion seen as superstitious and non-rational.
- Science seeks proof. Religion based on faith.
- Atheists and agnostics want proof for God’s existence.
- Atheists have problems with organized religion but have a spirituality based on human values.

**The Elephant in the Room**

- We want to ignore it
- We want it to go away
- Yet, suffering is critical to the development of personal wisdom and compassion and the fulfillment of our human potential.

**Suffering and the Human Condition**

- Cassel defined suffering as a distressful state induced by the possibility of losing one’s sense of living as an integrated being.
- People in pain suffer when they feel out of control, when the pain is overwhelming, when the source of pain is unknown, when the meaning of the pain is dire or the pain is apparently without end.
- Illness = “dis-ease”; Suffering = “dis-integration”
Suffering and the Human Condition

• To understand suffering means to understand what it means to be human.
• Two essential characteristics of humanness:
  — Orientation to the transcendent
  — Being-in-relationship
• All suffering is an experience of finitude.
• Human beings are susceptible to suffering whenever they experience pain because pain has a way of focusing their attention on their vulnerability.

Suffering = Spiritual Distress

• Spiritual distress is a clinical term that refers to the disruption of the life principle that integrates and transcends one's biological and psychological nature.
• Spiritual maladies include fear, depression, loneliness, existential anxiety, guilt, anger, meaninglessness, loss and despair.

Suffering

• Different levels of suffering:
  — Physical
  — Moral
  — Psychological
  — Spiritual

Etymology: the word “patient” comes from the Latin *patiens* which means “one who suffers.”

Suffering

• Suffering is soul pain.
• Suffering is caused when a person’s sense of meaning, purpose or relationship is threatened or overwhelmed.
• Suffering is eased when beliefs and values are remembered and a new equilibrium is established.
**Aspects of Suffering**

- Suffering is:
  - Regret for the past
  - Fear of the future
  - Attachment to beliefs and refusal to grow
  - Belief in separateness not connectedness
  - Not knowing our true reality, our true nature
  - No one is saved except through suffering.
  - We are saved from suffering through suffering.

**Richard Rohr on Suffering:**

“Pain that is not transformed is always transmitted.”

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**Christian Views on Suffering**

- There are two sufferings: deserved suffering and innocent suffering.
- Suffering for the sake of justice or doing what is right.
- Image of Suffering Servant; suffering for atonement of evil and the benefit of others.
- Suffering can be redemptive.
- Atonement = “At-one-ment”
- God participates in our suffering.

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**Pain is an Opportunity**

- “If you get rid of the pain before you answer its questions, you get rid of the Self (psyche or the soul) along with it.”

  John Paul II, **Salvifici Doloris**

  Carl Jung
Chinese Crisis

• The Chinese word for “crisis” contains two symbols.
• The top symbol means “dangerous.”
• The bottom symbol means “opportunity.”

Cure and Healing

• Modern medicine has focused on cure where the physician’s role become “cure of disease.”
• To be healed means to regain wholeness in the physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual aspect of human experience.
• Healing is independent of illness, impairment, cure of disease or death.
• Healing is the personal experience of transcendence of suffering.

Suffering and Spiritual Growth

• Spiritual growth is the progeny of suffering and fosters reconciliation which help patients transcend suffering.

“Nothing is a faster teacher than suffering.”

Kubler-Ross

Origen’s Spiritual Knowledge

• Three levels of knowing:
  – Somatic level: literal, obvious level
  – Psychic level: analytical, allegorical level containing deeper spiritual truths
  – Pneumatic level: revelatory level of God’s plan for individuals and creation.
• Example: Cure of the Paralytic
An Exercise in Metaphorical Listening

Match the physical area that expresses the spiritual illness:
How might you ask the patient a question about this?

- Throat
- Heart
- Ears
- Lungs
- Back
- Shoulder
- Stomach
- Colon
- Neck
- Inflexibility
- Unable to express emotion
- Grief and loss
- Burdened
- Unable to digest new ideas
- Holding on to negativity
- Unable to take feedback
- Lack of support
- Lifelessness

THE CLINICAL PROCESS AND MEANING MAKING

Determining Spiritual Pain

The Parable of the Blind Men and the Elephant

Medical Clinical Method

- Three parts:
  - **Assessment**: Intake, patient history, present symptoms, testing to rule out serious illnesses, preliminary diagnosis.
  - **Goals for treatment**: regain health and proper bodily function, treat symptoms, manage pain.
  - **Interventions**: Apply best practice for treatment of illness, educate patient and family, provide physical and emotional support.
NANDA Diagnosis

- **Spiritual Distress:** “A disruption in the life principle that pervades a person’s entire being and that integrates and transcends one’s biological and psychological nature.”
- **At Risk for Spiritual Distress:** “At risk for an altered sense of harmonious connectedness with all of life and the universe in which dimensions that transcend and empower the self may be disrupted.
- **Opportunity for Enhanced Spiritual Well-Being:** Spiritual well-being is the process of an individual’s developing/unfolding of mystery through harmonious interconnectedness that springs from inner strengths.”

Spiritual Clinical Method

- **Spiritual issue:** Identify nature of suffering related to meaning, purpose or relationship.
- **Spiritual goal:** restore equilibrium, reduce suffering, find courage, peace and acceptance with situation.
- **Intervention:** Examine beliefs, offer support, facilitate spiritual healing and reconciliation.

The Clinical Pastoral Process

- Clinically, chaplains must be intentional in their interactions with patients through the consistent use of a process that structures the visit and provides a way to communicate this visit to the treatment team.
- Pastorally, chaplains must respond to patient in an appropriate spiritual way.
- Each patient interaction is unique but all interactions can be described by the same process.

It is a Process!
**How to Identify Suffering**

- Suffering is transmitted through the whole person (body, mind, spirit).
- What threatens the spirit, can be seen in the body and mind.
- Suffering is found in three areas:
  - Meaning or Understanding
  - Purpose, Beliefs and Values
  - Relationship to God, Others or Oneself

**Spiritual Issues**

- Grief
- Unresolved guilt
- Depression
- Unmet spiritual needs
- Fear
- Despair
- Powerlessness
- Anxiety
- Anger and blaming
- Denial
- Loss of independence
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Restlessness
- Betrayal
- Meaninglessness

**Suffering Is Complex**

**Gather Information**

- What emotion is being expressed?
- Is the suffering related to meaning, purpose or relationship?
- What are the person’s sources of support?
- Is there more than one area of suffering?
- Is the suffering related to the past, the present or the future?
More Information

• Identify the personal beliefs and values that are threatened.
• Identify the patient’s life experiences and coping skills that could be a source of strength.
• Identify where God is in the situation.

Indicators Of Suffering

• Verbal Cues:
  – It’s not fair.
  – Why me?
  – What did I do?
  – Why is God punishing me?
  – How long will this last?

• Spiritual Emotional Cues:
  – Fear
  – Shame
  – Anger
  – Regret
  – Betrayal

Sample Questions

• How are you coping?
• What is your source of support?
• What would bring you peace?
• Do you have family in the area?
• How has this illness impacted your priorities in life?
• Are you a member of a faith community? If so, do they know you are here?
• How is that working for you?
• What is my soul trying to teach me in this suffering?
• Are your spiritual beliefs adequate for this situation?

Labyrinth Process
Spiritual Distress Worksheet

- Use clinical method for structuring your patient interaction and charting it.
- **Area of Distress:** “Patient is experiencing suffering, challenge or peace, related to...”
- **Goal of treatment** (patient movement toward)
- **Interventions** used to achieve goal
- Description in the note section of form.

Suffering Related to Meaning

- Crisis situations bring one face to face with the ultimate issues of life:
  - One’s mortality and limitation.
  - The loss of personal freedom and control over environment.
  - The meaning of pain and suffering in the overall purpose of life.

Levels to Meaning Seeking

**Rational Knowledge:**
- Mind centered
- Physical
- Here and now
- Cause and effect
- Individual
- Security in understanding
- Dualistic view
- Human centered

**Wisdom:**
- Heart centered
- Non-tangible
- Transcendent
- Growth focus
- Part of the Whole
- Faith, hope and trust; vulnerability
- Unitive view
- Universal consciousness
Barriers to Meaning
“A paradox is something that initially appears to be inconsistent or contradictory, but might not be a contradiction at all inside a different frame or seen with a different eye. ... Most of the major teachings of the great religions do not demand blind faith as much as they demand new eyes.” Richard Rohr, The Naked Now

Spiritual Goal for Meaning
• Integrate the experience of one’s suffering into one’s understanding of reality.
• Change is a necessary part of growth.
• Change doesn’t occur without some suffering.
• Ultimate goal of meaning making is Wisdom.

“...The way to get meaning in your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you and devote yourself to something that gives you purpose and meaning.” Tuesdays with Morrie

Meaning and Mystery
• The Book of Job provides insight into the spiritual dimensions to suffering.
  – The model of reward and punishment doesn’t explain suffering.
  – One’s ego is intimately linked to finding meaning.
  – Suffering is humbling.
  – Response to lack of understanding needs to be staying true to one’s beliefs and values and relying on one’s relationship to God and others.

The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering
“To suffer means to become particularly susceptible, particularly open to the working of the salvific powers of God, offered to humanity in Christ.”
The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering

- Suffering is part of the human condition.
- Jesus’ example shows that suffering is the way to transcendence and redemption.
- Suffering provides the opportunity for spiritual growth.
- Suffering prompts an examination of one’s values and priorities.

The Paschal Process of Healing

1. The old way comes to an end. (death or loss)
2. There is a time of transition where there is grief and uncertainty about what is to come. At the same time, the seed of new life is beginning to grow. (suffering)
3. New and higher form of life begins. (healing)

This “Paschal” pattern of Jesus is his death, time in the tomb and resurrection.

Grief: Time in the Tomb

- Kubler-Ross’s model for people dealing with loss or the anticipation of loss.
  - Denial: “This can’t be happening.”
  - Anger: “Why me? It’s not fair.”
  - Bargaining: “I’ll do anything if only …”
  - Depression: “Why bother?”
  - Acceptance: “It’s going to be okay.”

The healer goes into the tomb with the one who grieves.

Case Study on Meaning

- Mr. Goddard, a 54 year old business executive with renal cell cancer who identifies himself as an agnostic, is admitted for chemotherapy. He appears to be anxious and ask, “What do you think happens to people when they die?”

- Use the Spiritual Distress Worksheet to describe this interaction.
Beliefs, Values and Purpose

Goals for treatment

Definition of Spirituality

_Spirituality_ is that which animates one’s being with meaning, purpose and relationship.

**Meaning:** The way one organizes knowledge and experience. Meaning’s ultimate goal is Wisdom.

**Purpose:** The goal of one’s life and the values one lives by.

**Relationship:** Connection to the Divine, to others and to self. Relationship is expressed through Compassion.

Suffering

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**Spiritual Goals**

*Healing is making peace with what is.*

*Suffering is being unable to make peace with what is.*

**Spiritual Goal**

- Goal is not our cultural goals of power, winning, money or achievements.
- Goal is peace, not happiness.
- Goal is not dependent on being cured.
- Goal is for movement toward what will bring peace. This is a process.
- Goal is to integrate what has happened into one’s spirituality.

**Spiritual Goal for Purpose**

- The ultimate goal of purpose is fulfillment.
- The goal is to be true to one’s values regardless of the outcome.
- There is a need to complete the goals for the appropriate stage of life.

*Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important.*

**Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development**

- **Stage 1:** (birth–2 yr.) Trust (safety, lovability, stability) vs. Mistrust (suspicion, frustration, withdrawal).
- **Stage 2:** (2-4 yr.) Autonomy (confidence, self-sufficiency) vs. Shame & Doubt (fear, overwhelmed).
- **Stage 3:** (4-5 yr.) Initiative (courage, independent) vs. Guilt (self-protective, reactive, fatalistic).
- **Stage 4:** (5-12 yr.) Industry (perseverance, need for praise) vs. Inferiority (lethargic, unmotivated).
Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development (cont.)

- **Stage 5:** (13-19 yr.) Identity (personal values) vs. Role Confusion (need to please others).
- **Stage 6:** (20-40 yr.) Intimacy (commitment, personal sacrifice) vs. Isolation (self-centered).
- **Stage 7:** (40-64 yr.) Generativity (concern for posterity) vs. Stagnation (lack of contribution).
- **Stage 8:** (65-death) Integrity (contentment) vs. Despair (depression).
- *Crisis creates impetus for growth to the next stage.*

Fowler’s Stages of Faith

- **Stage 0:** (0-2yr.) Primal-Undifferentiated. Foundation of faith is safety and trust.
- **Stage 1:** (3-7yr.) Intuitive-Projective. Characterized by imagination and taboos.
- **Stage 2:** (7-14 yr.) Mythic-Literal. Characterized by justice, reciprocity and anthropomorphism.
- **Stage 3:** (14-25 yr.) Synthetic-Conventional. Characterized by conformity, socialization and integration.

Fowler’s Stages of Faith (cont.)

- **Stage 4:** (25-40 yr.) Individuative-Reflective. Characterized by de-mythologizing and personal responsibility.
- **Stage 5:** (40-50 yr.) Conjunctive. Characterized by integration, multidimensional and interdependent truth, paradox and transcendence.
- **Stage 6:** (50-death) Universalizing Faith. Characterized by unitive view of reality, transcendence, universal love and justice.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- Original Five levels:
  - **Physiological level:** physical requirements for human survival
  - **Safety needs:** personal and economic safety; need strongest in children who are dependent and vulnerable
  - **Love and Belonging:** need for friendship, intimacy and family
  - **Esteem:** need to respected by others and self
  - **Self-actualization:** realizing one’s full potential; becoming the best version of yourself
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

- Additional level added later:
  - **Self-transcendence**: being part of something greater than oneself

- Critique:
  - Needs are not hierarchical; all are needed equally
  - Ethnocentric: based on needs in individualistic societies; collectivist societies place emphasis on acceptance and community over freedom and individuality.

Similarities and Differences

- **Similar**:
  - Progressive nature from awareness of self apart from others to sense of connection to everything
  - Stages build on each other; you can’t skip stages.
  - Age associated to stages is fairly consistent.
  - Mature from externally directed to internally directed.

- **Differences**:
  - All of Maslow’s levels are needed all the time
  - Erikson sees crisis as the basis for growth.
  - Developmental needs are at odds with cultural priorities.
  - Social dimension to faith development.

Victor Frankl

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Clash of Beliefs

- **American Culture**:
  - Pleasure (happiness)
  - Immediate gratification
  - Competition
  - Individualism
  - Freedom
  - Wealth
  - Power
  - Fear of aging, illness, death and suffering
  - Scientific knowledge
  - Reactive
  - Punitive justice

- **Spiritual Tradition**:
  - Peacefulness
  - Delayed gratification
  - Cooperation
  - Common good
  - Commitment
  - Non-attachment
  - Humility
  - Non-avoidance and connection
  - Heart knowledge
  - Patient
  - Forgiveness
**Possible Goals of Life**

- “Become the best version of yourself.” Matthew Kelly
- Self-actualization and self-transcendence. Maslow
- To grow in Wisdom and Compassion.
- Family and children.
- To know, love and serve God.
- “Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you may die.”

**Catechism of the Catholic Church**

“Man is by nature and vocation a religious being. Coming from God, going toward God, man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God.” (CCC: 44)

“When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete.” St. Augustine

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**Traditional Christian Teaching**

- “The goal of the virtuous life is to become like God.” St. Gregory of Nyssa
- “Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions and guide our conduct according to reason and faith.” Catechism of Catholic Church
- Conscience and morality are result of the practice of virtues.

**The Cardinal Virtues**

- **Prudence**: discerns true good in the situation and chooses the right means to achieve it.
- **Justice**: Upright conduct in one’s relationships with God and neighbors with concern for respect and the common good.
- **Fortitude**: courage and perseverance in the pursuit of the good.
- **Temperance**: balance the desire for pleasure with doing the honorable thing.
The Theological Virtues

- **Faith**: belief in God, in the truth of his revelation, and the positive witness and service to others.
- **Hope**: the desire for happiness and eternal reward.
- **Charity** (love): the greatest of the virtues; love of God and love of neighbor.

Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit

- **Gifts of the Holy Spirit**: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (humility).
- **Fruits of the Holy Spirit**: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity.

Legacy

I offer gentle understanding to myself.
I position myself in love, not fear.
I look behind me with forgiveness.
I look forward with festive anticipation.
I embrace this holy moment and assert, "Now. This moment is the moment to love, the moment to serve, the moment to seize the legacy instead of the small.
Now. Now I will live large, love boldly, reach to the edges of my unfurled heart and fully enrolled hope.

Mary Anne Radmacher

Clinical Goal

- **Preserve** beliefs and practices that have a beneficial effect on health.
- **Adapt** or adjust the beliefs that are neutral or indifferent.
- **Re-frame** those beliefs that have a potentially harmful effect on health.
Pastoral Goal

- Our goal is not to “fix it” or have an all the answers.
- By our caring presence, we allow the person to process his experience.
- Our goal is to help the person remember God’s faithfulness and to deepen that relationship.

Healing

- Spiritual healing involves compassion, touch and conversation.
- The soul longs for transcendent healing.
- Suffering is healed by compassionate love.
- Tolerance for uncertainty demands a basic level of trust.
- To have faith in God is to let go of control and trust God.

Case Study

- Lynne, a 43 year old Roman Catholic woman with recurrent breast cancer which has metastasized to the spine, is married, has a 11 year old son and lives in a upper-middle class suburb. She cries when she mentions missing being there as her son grows up. She alternates in thinking this illness is a “celestial crapshoot” and trying to find meaning in it.
Spiritual Interventions

The Clinical Chaplain as Spiritual Specialist

Responses to Suffering

- The spiritual caregiver can respond in three ways:
  1. Fix it. Do something for the patient to relieve the suffering.
  2. Caring presence. “Don’t just do something, sit there.”
  3. Actively support the patient’s process of making peace with the situation by asking open-ended questions.

Fullness of Life

- Absence of suffering does not equate to happiness, i.e.: the absence of symptoms doesn’t mean a cure.
- A spiritual pain scale would go from -5 to +5.
- Need to live as fully as possible within the present circumstances.

“... That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next.”  
Serenity Prayer
Clinical Interventions

• The process is to help patient remember and activate spiritual virtues.
• Helpful interventions move:
  – Fear to trust
  – Apathy to compassion
  – Loss of freedom to connection
  – Dread to courage
  – Helplessness to empowerment
  – Confusion to understanding to wisdom

Spiritual Interventions

• Elements of mystery and faith are found in spirituality. Where understanding ends, faith begins.
• Interventions lead a person to respond; they don’t tell what to do.
• Interventions are not easy or quick.
• Work to reduce the spiritual distress and increase what brings peace.

Wisdom and Compassion

• Wisdom tells us that for every choice we make there is an outcome. Because of this we can be supportive and refrain from judgment.
• Compassion teaches us that our actions have an effect on others. Because of this, do the things that bring us closer to God and others and don’t do the things that push us apart.
Reframing

• Shift the point of view and gain a new perspective on situation. Examples:
  – Shift from emphasis on the individual to seeing oneself as part of the whole.
  – Shift from “either/or” perspective to a “both/and” perspective.
  – Shift from external perspective to an internal one.
  – Shift from being a “giver” to being a “receiver.”
  – Shift from what I want to what God wants.

Reconnection to Spirituality

• Worksheet shows many spiritual values that a person needs to remember and reconnect to such as: trust, acceptance, faith, courage, hope, peace, gratitude, patience and integrity.

“Love comes to those who still hope even though they’ve been disappointed, to those who still believe even though they’ve been betrayed, to those who still love even though they’ve been hurt before.”

Anonymous

Interventional Process

• Be present.
• Listen actively for themes and emotions.
• Convey a caring and accepting attitude.
• Provide support, encouragement and respect
• Facilitate search for meaning and purpose
• Be sensitive to spiritual and religious differences
• Refer to professional when needed

Process of Treatment

• There is a process to treatment. The goal is not obtained immediately.
• The process (as in grieving) takes as long as it takes.
• The reduction of suffering is a short term goal.
• Final goal is the full possession of the opposite of the source of suffering, i.e. replace despair with hope.
Spiritual Interventions

- Identify fears (unknown future) and regrets (past)
- Reconnection with family, faith community and spiritual practices
- Remembering lessons from earlier life trials
- Grief support
- Quality of life discussion
- Legacy: how do you want to be remembered?
- Prayer

Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this
life and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.  

Amen.  
Reinhold Niebuhr

Healing and Relationship

- Relationship is multi-dimensional:
  - Relationship with God
  - Relationship to others
  - Relationship to self
  - Relationship to creation
- Healing involves movement from:
  - Alienation to connection
  - Legalism (do the right thing) to Compassion (do the loving thing).

Contract and Covenant

- With a contract, the terms and length are negotiated. The contract stipulates what happens if the terms are not followed. The law takes priority. A personal relationship between parties may develop over time.
- With a covenant, the relationship is primary. Terms of the covenant develop over time as a way to deepen relationship.
- Each perspective influences your image of God.
Judgment and Reconciliation

- Fear of judgment is a common cause of suffering.
- Conflicting images: Image of God as Judge and image of God as the Good Shepherd.
- Tension between Jesus and the Pharisees.
- Hell is isolation and alienation from God.
- Radical idea: Reconciliation restores justice and brings about the Kingdom of God.

Maturation Process

- Organized religion provides the foundation for spiritual development.
- This foundation provides the structure for the development of conscience, morality, community and worship.
- Spiritual growth continues as we deepen our connection to God.
- Transcendence of self happens through development of connectedness.

Justice and Forgiveness

- Suffering occurs when we insist on fairness.
- Forgiveness reminds us that we need to build on justice and heal relationship. Simply being right limits the nature of the loving relationship.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you.—Unknown

Spiritual Forgiveness

- There is a direct connection between the one who sins and the one who forgives.
  - The sinner needs to be forgiven to remove the burden of guilt.
  - The person who forgives must do so or risk hardening his own heart.
- Both need to engage in the process of forgiveness or risk being unable to resume a healthy emotional and spiritual life.
From Forgiveness to Love

“You have heard it said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father ...” Mt 5: 43-44

Love is the ultimate healer. Love of your enemy heals your heart first.

Healing at the End of Life

• The Four Things that Matter Most.
  – “Please forgive me.”
  – “I forgive you.”
  – “Thank you.”
  – “I love you.”

Good bye = God be with you. Ira Byock, MD

Suffering and Relationship

“Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him.” Catechism of the Catholic Church

Suffering as Healing

• Suffering has the potential to transform a person.
• It strips away all the non-essentials.
• Suffering allows one to develop humility, patience, faith, trust, courage, hope and gratitude.

“I found when I embraced the pain as tightly as I could, it became love.” Ron Kilmartin, 83 yr. old hospice patient.
Sacred Alchemy Of Suffering

The power of the sacred alchemy to transform even the blackest of calamity, in which there seems to be absolutely no redemption or saving grace, is attested by an unknown poet who wrote the following beautiful prayer, left by the body of a dead child at the Ravensbruck death camp:

O Lord,
Remember not only the men and women
Of good will, but also those of ill will.
But do not remember all the suffering they inflicted on us,
Remember the fruits we have bought, thanks to
This suffering – our comradeship,
Our loyalty, our humility, our courage,
Our generosity, the greatness of heart
Which has grown out of all this, and when
They come to judgment let all the fruits
Which we have borne be their forgiveness. (Author Unknown)

Worksheet Note Section

• Charting shares with the treatment team what happened in the pastoral visit.
• Charting the pastoral visit follows each section of the worksheet:
  – “The patient is experiencing spiritual distress related to fear at the end of life. My goal is to move patient from fear to trust. I did this by reframing his beliefs about God and judgment.”

Case Study

Diane is a 26-year-old fourth year medical student who is diagnosed with breast cancer. She and her fiancé agree to a bilateral radical mastectomy and chemotherapy. She tries to complete her studies while in treatment. She becomes depressed, anxious and isolated. She puts her wedding on hold and she can’t stop crying.

What are possible areas for spiritual distress?
What are possible goals for spiritual care?

“May you have the commitment to know what has hurt you,
to allow it to come close to you
and in the end
become one with you.”

Gaelic Blessing