



INTERACTION

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Address	1-2
Certification Survey	2
2019 Conference	3
Ethics Corner	6-7
Graduate Student Submissions	7
New Member Spotlight	8
Spirituality in the Field	8
Spiritual & Religious Values Column	9-10
Submission Requests	11



President's Address Dr. Leila Roach

Greetings ASERVIC Friends,

Welcome to the Spring 2019 edition of interaction, the official newsletter of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling. Spring is full of transformations as temperatures begin to warm, animals emerge from hibernation, flowers burst into gorgeous blooms, and our surroundings gradually reveal a lush green landscape. It is also a time of unpredictable and often violent weather that sparks tornados and flooding, reminding us of the mysterious and unpredictable nature of life.

Spring is also considered a time of renewal and celebration. Sadly this spring, there have been unprecedented attacks on Christians around the world including the burning of 3 black churches in a Louisiana parish and the multiple bombings on Easter Sunday of churches and hotels across Sri Lanka. Prior to that were the mass shootings in two mosques in Christchurch New Zealand, and the mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill, PA. These tragic events are a reminder of the immense amount of work to be done to build bridges and create stronger bonds of humanity among all of us. In order to do that, we need your help... your ideas on addressing these issues and your involvement in ASERVIC. Elections are coming up so please contact us if you're interested in running for a board position or getting involved in a committee.

The 2019 Conference- Healing and Connection in Colorado- is fast approaching. Drs. Stephanie Dailey and Carmen Gill are working hard on final preparations along with their team and it promises to be an incredible event. We hope you will join us at the Cheyenne Mountain Colorado Springs Resort on July 6 - 7 for two days of learning and connection with your colleagues. In addition to a number of enlightening educational sessions and keynote speaker Diane Poole Heller, the conference is also an opportunity for us to have conversations about the recent attacks in our religious communities and to explore opportunities to play a larger role in building relationships and expanding conversations. And, our 2020 conference in Columbus, Ohio is already well along in the planning process under the leadership of Drs. Victoria Giegerich, Andrew Wood, and Claudia Sadler-Gerhardt.

President

Leila Roach

Past-President

Claudia Sadler-Gerhardt

President-Elect

L. Marinn Pierce

Treasurer

Amanda Giordano

Secretary

Isabel A. Thompson

Interaction Editor

Heidi L. Henry

Assistant Editor

Joy M. Mwendwa

President's Address continued on next page

President's Address Continued

This year we have partnered with other divisions of ACA to promote unified support and to collaborate on a webinar series and joint presentations at ACA. Our strategic planning committee has been active and we continue to refine the direction of ASERVIC and our strategic partnerships. Dr. Joffrey Suprina is leading an ad hoc committee to develop a spirituality certification process and Dr. Jesse Fox is continuing his work on the Spiritual Competencies Task Force to provide support and guidance for a network of collaborators to develop research projects related to the spiritual competencies. We are also developing methods to enhance communication with our membership. You will be hearing more about these initiatives in the coming year.

As my year as president draws to a close, there are a number of people who I would like to thank for their service on the ASERVIC Board. Dr. Claudia Sadler-Gerhardt, our Past President, cherished friend and mentor, will be ending her term of service. Her wisdom and guidance have been invaluable to me and to our organization. She will continue to stay involved through her service on the 2020 Conference committee. Dr. Craig Cashwell is ending his term as the editor of *Counseling and Values*. We are deeply grateful for his work on the journal and in the many capacities he has, and continues to serve, ASERVIC. Dr. Isabel Thompson is completing her term as secretary, and Dr. Anita Neuer Colburn and Dr. Richard Watts are ending their terms on the ASERVIC Board. They have served ASERVIC well over the years in many capacities and continue their involvement through committee work, presentations at ACA and ASERVIC conferences, and sharing their wisdom and love with all of us. And, finally, I would like to thank my graduate student representative, Michael Verona, for his invaluable support to me in my role as president and for his significant contributions to ASERVIC on both the state and national level. Please join me in thanking all of them for their impressive leadership and service!

I would also like to welcome our new leaders and board members who will be joining our current leadership in July. Marinn Pierce will be serving as President and I look forward to her informed and thoughtful leadership. Ryan Foster is transitioning from board member to President-elect and has a long history of service to ASERVIC. Abigail Conley will begin her term as the editor of *Counseling and Values*, and we look forward to her leadership in this capacity. Ana Reyes will be serving as secretary, and Deborah Haskins, Clay Rowell and Janeé Avent Harris will be serving as board members. Please join me in welcoming all of them. You will hear much more about them in our Summer newsletter.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your president this year. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve such a fantastic and diverse membership, as well as to work with such wonderful and dedicated board and committee members. Many people say that ASERVIC is like a family- you all are my family- I am humbled and deeply grateful for our association and look forward to many amazing and productive years ahead.

With gratitude,
Leila

Spirituality Certification Survey

ASERVIC is exploring offering voluntary certifications for mental health professionals related to integrating spirituality into counseling practice and supervision as a way to bridge a gap in our increasingly diverse faith-based communities. The certifications will be based on fulfilling the ASERVIC competencies with the intent to provide the best possible care to clients we encounter daily. Currently, we are considering three levels:

- **Certified Spiritual Counseling Professional (CSCP)*
- **Certified Spiritual Counseling Clinician (CSCC)*
- **Certified Spiritual Clinician and Supervisor (CSCS)*

Your participation in completing a brief survey is of great value in gaining feedback to help achieve this goal. The survey is voluntary and should take **no more than 5-7 minutes to complete**.

Please click or cut-and-paste the link below to complete the survey:

https://troy.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6X0uBXmsS9v7Lox

2019 Conference
HEALING AND CONNECTION IN COLORADO



July 6-7, 2019

Cheyenne Mountain Colorado Springs Resort

Nestled in the beautiful mountains of Colorado, the conference setting and activities include time and space for contemplation and relaxation, including Alluvia Spa and Wellness Retreat.

Conference and Hotel Registration: <http://www.aservic.org/conferences/2019-aservic-conference/>

For more information, email aservicconference@gmail.com

Featuring Keynote Speaker Diane Poole Heller, PhD

*Significance of Early Attachment Wounds and How to Heal Them:
Attachment and Trauma Strategies*

2019 ASERVIC CONFERENCE

July 6 - 7, 2019

[Cheyenne Mountain Resort](#)

Guest Speaker: Diane Poole Heller

[Click here for more information.](#)

SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD

Jama Davis

Over 35 years ago when I began my educational journey to become a professional counselor, I was unaware of all that I did not know. Though I was a person of deep Christian faith, I found myself unaware of the impact my own faith and spirituality would have on the counseling process. Couple that with the influence of the religious faith and spirituality of my clients and I realized there was so much to learn about the integration of religious faith and spirituality in counseling. Now, looking back as a long term practitioner and a counselor educator, I pause to reflect on how my understanding of faith and spirituality in counseling developed.

My journey began when I attended a faith based undergraduate institution. While religious faith

was discussed in many classes, I did not have a good understanding of the true impact that faith and also spirituality held in the counseling process. During this pursuit of degrees in psychology and business, I held foundational religious beliefs that were known but not truly personalized. I had knowledge of faith but had not taken ownership of my personal faith and what I believed. It was not until I experienced my own crisis of faith and I had to delve deeper into what I truly believed and how my beliefs impact all

areas of my life that I began to take ownership of my Christian faith. My personal history of trauma stood before me and I had to reconcile my faith and the goodness of God in an authentic way. My knowledge about God was challenged with whether I believed in God's love for me in the midst of the trauma. This led to deep searching and questioning and ultimately finding my answers in the Bible.

After working for a year in the business field, I transitioned to a CACREP accredited graduate program at a state university in hopes that my faith would be challenged in ways that would lead to me gaining a deeper understanding of my own belief system and the spirituality of others. I intentionally sought to be in a graduate program where there were various backgrounds and beliefs in an effort to challenge myself to deepen my own faith (Association for Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling [ASERVIC], 2009, Competency 3). Even

with this intentional transition in my graduate education, I still did not fully understand the importance of how faith and spirituality would connect into my future work with clients. I was met with some wonderful professors, two in particular, who recognized my struggle yet clear desire to learn more about how religious beliefs and spirituality influence the counseling process. One professor invited me into his office and openly discussed his faith background which was similar to mine. He openly shared his journey as a professional counselor and how he ethically approached integration of faith in his counseling work. He invited ongoing questions throughout my time in the program and remained open to conversation. Another professor, who recognized



my struggle with some of what was being shared by other students, asked me to stay after class. She acknowledged her recognition of my struggle with some of what was being shared by other students. She spoke value into my approach in the midst of my struggle and acknowledged that I was being respectful of the differences that were present. Her encouragement released me to engage in dialogue with my fellow students at a deeper level where we spoke honestly about our differences and also identified similarities. Though I did

not always agree with my peers, I learned to value individuals and respect differences in a new way. I was also blessed with a community mental health site supervisor who invited me into learning how to ethically integrate religious faith and spirituality into counseling. This supervisor thoroughly explained the Informed Consent process as it relates to the religion and spirituality of clients and how to approach this in an ethical manner during assessment. He recognized my fear of being unethical in my approach and invited me to relax and realize the importance of religion and spirituality in each person's life and how it should not be exempt from the counseling process. Each of these educators noticed my desire, yet apprehension, to approach religion and spirituality in an ethical manner. With boldness and humility, they encouraged me to expand my learning of how to approach integration ethically and to understand myself better in order to serve clients well.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD CONTINUED

During internship, I spent time examining my worldview and beliefs along with those of my clients and began to understand more fully how each impacted the counseling process. What I realized later was the ethical approach my mentors took as they understood the importance of counselors having an awareness of their personal values (ACA Code of Ethics, 2014, A.4.b.). I recall more than one weekly supervision meeting where my site supervisor asked questions to help me understand the value of my beliefs and how they were not detrimental to a counseling process and could not be set aside. My religious beliefs are a part of me and bring value to the counseling process. The insight I gained as I was encouraged to take a deeper look at myself was invaluable. At the time, I recognized some value in this process of self-discovery and learning about the integration process, but over time I have gained an enormous amount of respect for these mentors in this formative time of my professional journey. Each of these mentors identified an area of struggle and stepped into that area with me, allowing me to process and learn how my worldview impacts my engagement with clients.

As a current supervisor, I incorporate this approach into the work with my supervisees. I want them to understand their worldview and how it impacts their religious beliefs and spirituality which in turn informs their approach to working with clients of all backgrounds. The ACA Code of Ethics (2014) calls for all counselors to “respect the diversity of clients” (A.4.b.). This includes respecting the religious views and values of clients and understanding that the similarities and differences with the counselor do not have to be detrimental to the process. In my early counseling, this was a growing process for me. My lack of knowledge and fear of making a mistake hindered my growth. My understanding of other faith systems was limited and in reality I did not really understand how limited it was at the time. One thing about being limited is that it can be similar to wearing blinders without the awareness the blinders are in place. As a counselor I learned the importance of ongoing learning and having a willingness to ask questions. When my clients of religious and spirituality traditions different than my own entered my office, I had work to do. This work included a thorough spiritual assessment (ASERVIC, 2009, Competency 10) along with researching faith and culture. I approached this with a willingness to be appropriately transparent and ask questions of my clients when I did not understand something regarding their spiritual value system and how it influenced their presenting concern. Asking questions is a way to convey value and honor to clients and let them know of your efforts to provide professional, ethical, and empathetic care for them. I ask intentional questions out of a true

desire to learn and gain understanding. With each question I asked my clients, I received a gracious response and one of thankfulness for my desire to expand my understanding and professional competency. As a counselor educator and supervisor, I understand the importance of helping students recognize their ethical responsibilities, including the development of an informed consent (ACA, 2014, F.1.c.). Additionally students need to be aware of their personal responsibility of knowing themselves well and be able to recognize how their faith enters the counseling room with them and the importance of being attentive to the faith and spirituality of others (ACA, 2014). Counselor educators have the ethical responsibility to ensure supervisees are taught ethics and are aware of their ethical responsibilities in all areas including respect for diversity of clients (ACA, 2014, F.7.e.). This includes developing a clear understanding of any biases and stereotypes that may be present including how to assess potential countertransference (Hull, Suarez & Hartman, 2015). The ASERVIC Competencies (2009) bring clarity in the teaching and application process. Hull et al. (2015) made strong connections in guiding counselor educators and supervisors providing additional clarity utilizing supervisory tools to enhance the teaching and learning process. The tools I find very helpful to use with my supervisees mirror what my early supervisors did with me. I work with supervisees to develop a strong network of spiritual leaders to facilitate networking opportunities and assist them as they expand their personal understanding of their religious and spiritual history (Hull et al., 2015). Having a network of spiritual leaders can be beneficial in client care by providing the supervisee with opportunities for consultation and referrals as appropriate. Personal growth is essential for ongoing professional development for all counselors. Working with supervisees to complete a personal spiritual assessment broadens understanding of how they function in the counseling setting working with diverse clients. My professors and supervisors shared insight with me that remains valuable today. I continue to be grateful for the challenges given and encouragement provided and how that continues to impact my approach with supervisees.

References

- American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA code of ethics*. Alexandria, VA: Author
- Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling. (2009). *Spiritual and religious competencies*. Retrieved from <http://www.aservic.org/resources/spiritual-competencies/>
- Hull, C.E., Suarez, E.C. & Hartman, D. (2016). Developing spiritual competencies in counseling: A guide for supervisors. *Counseling and Values*, 61, 111-126. doi:10.1002/cvj.12029

For the Counselor: The Ethics of Forgiveness in Practice

John J. S. Harrichand

The College at Brockport State University of New York

Differing viewpoints exist in the area of forgiveness research and practice. Supporters argue for the use of forgiveness, stressing only when a victim of hurt (trauma, abuse, pain) forgives their perpetrator are they able to experience genuine healing. However, opponents argue that forgiveness is not a necessary prerequisite for genuine healing to occur. The use of forgiveness is further complicated for the Christian counselor seeking to integrate theology and psychology in counseling practice. The following article provides some guidelines for counselors to ethically integrate forgiveness in counseling.

The working definition of forgiveness comes from Worthington Jr. and Wade (1999):

[F]orgiveness is a victim's internal choice (either unconscious or deliberate) to relinquish unforgiveness [a cold emotion involving resentment, bitterness, and perhaps hatred, along with the motivated avoidance of, or retaliation against a transgressor] and to seek reconciliation with the offender if safe, prudent, and possible to do so (p. 386).

The concept of God or Higher Power seems to play a major role in the process of forgiveness, as such, it is important to explore theology's perspective on the topic.

Christian Theology's Perspective on Forgiveness

When Christ walked the earth over 2000 years ago, he instructed his followers on how to pray; known today as the Lord's Prayer, it includes the phrase "forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt 6:12; New International Version). This verse is of significant importance to all humanity, particularly Christians. Our forgiveness is predicated on having the capacity to forgive others, including our perpetrators, who have hurt us; for "without this interpersonal [act of forgiving] on the human level, neither can we be [forgiven, and] reconciled with God [or Higher Power]" (Blomberg, 1992; p. 120).

Forgiveness when viewed through a theological lens by the victim of hurt, leads him/her to recognize forgiveness as an act of God/Higher Power. It is not something the victim can give of his/her own free will, but it is something they can receive. Thus, it is only when the victim discovers that they have been forgiven that they are able to impart forgiveness to their offender(s) (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992).

Ethical Considerations

According to the American Counseling Association's (2014) *Code of Ethics*, counselors are encouraged to "practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience" (C.2.a, p. 8). The ACA (2014) also requires members to only address problems that they have

received appropriate education, training, and supervised experience (C.2.b), and stay informed with new developments in the field of counseling (C.2.f). Before a counselor engages in forgiveness interventions in therapy, he/she should determine if they are competent, possessing the appropriate training and skill development necessary to work ethically. Furthermore, ACA (2014) instructs counselors to be "aware of- and avoid imposing- their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors ... [and] respect the diversity of clients" (A.4.b, p. 5). It is unethical for a (Christian/faith based) counselor to impose his/her religious views on clients or force clients to adopt his/her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Clinical Guidelines for Counselors

For religious counselors working with religious clients on the topic of forgiveness, Kim and Enright (2014) state that the counselor needs to: 1) understand the client's view of self/subjective forgiveness; 2) educate/teach what forgiveness does and does not encompass, addressing myths; 3) respectfully address and if necessary challenge criticisms of self/subjective forgiveness with clients; and 4) clarify the relationship between divine forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and relational forgiveness.

Counselors employing forgiveness interventions with religious and/or non-religious clients are given guidelines by West (2001) to recognize that forgiveness is: 1) a key component in most, if not all religions (cultural and religious sensitivity must be practiced); 2) a powerful intervention when used appropriately in therapy, meeting the needs of the client; premature attempts to initiate or push forgiveness when the client is not ready are unethical and will prove to be more harmful than helpful; 3) not necessarily a one-time event, rather it is a process that might need to be returned to at various stages/moments in the client's life as new information is explored and old information is reassessed; 4) dependent on timing and should always be tentatively initiated by inviting the client to consider the offer of forgiveness and have the client provide his/her consent before progressing; 5) seen as a possibility in the life of the client, only after he/she first addresses issues related to resentment, anger, hurt, and fear; 6) not synonymous with reconciliation, rather they are distinct processes with forgiveness allowing the possibility, in some circumstance for reconciliation to take place; 7) likely to involve empathy from the client/victim for his/her offender; and 8) ultimately to benefit the client: victim and/or offender seeking to forgive self, victim seeking to forgive others, and/or the offender seeking forgiveness.

ETHICS CORNER CONTINUED

In sum, counselors regardless of their religious and/or spiritual affiliation are instructed by the ACA (2014) *Code of Ethics* not to impose our values on clients and should seek appropriate training and supervision before engaging in evidence-based and/or empirically-supported practices like forgiveness.

References

- American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA code of ethics*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Blomberg, C. L. (1992). Matthew. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *The new American commentary: An exegetical and theological exposition of Holy Scripture NIV text*, (Vol. 22; pp. 120-121). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.
- Kim, J. J., & Enright, R. D. (2014). A theological and psychological defense of self-forgiveness: Implications for counseling. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 42(3), 260-268. doi:10.1177/009164711404200303
- Kurtz, E., & Ketcham, K. (1992). *The spirituality of imperfection: Storytelling and the search for meaning* (pp. 213-225). New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- West, W. (2001). Issues relating to the use of forgiveness in counselling and psychotherapy. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 29(4), 415-423. doi:10.1080/03069880120085000
- Worthington Jr., E. L., & Wade, N. G. (1999). The psychology of unforgiveness and forgiveness and implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18(4), 385-418. doi:10.1521/jscp.1999.18.4.385

John J. S. Harrichand, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, CCC is a member of the ASERVIC Ethics Committee. He is an Assistant Professor of Counselor Education at The College at Brockport State University of New York. E-mail: jharrichand@brockport.edu

Are you a graduate student interested in publishing?

ASERVIC is beginning a brand new section of our newsletter dedicated to graduate student contributions. We will be accepting submissions for review from Master's and doctoral students for publication in our upcoming newsletters. Publications must be related to the overall mission of ASERVIC: "Our mission is to help counselors, supervisors, counselor educators, and counseling students competently integrate spiritual, ethic, and religious values into our work with clients." This is an excellent opportunity for graduate students who are seeking to enhance their professional writing skills. You do not need to be a member of ASERVIC. We hope through interacting with our organization, you will become familiar with the work of ASERVIC and consider becoming involved. All submissions will go through a peer-review process.

We welcome submissions that are brief academic articles related to the ASERVIC mission. We are also interested in personal reflections and commentaries that are supported with academic references.

Guidelines:

- All submissions must adhere to the APA 6th edition format
- All submissions must be related to the ASERVIC mission
- Submissions are to be approximately 500 to 750 words and double-spaced
- The first author must be a Master's or doctoral student
- Include the author name(s), name of institution(s), and photo(s) in .jpg, .tif or .gif format.

Initial drafts are due by July 1, 2019 and can be emailed to counseling@heidihenry.com

New Member Spotlight

Connie Elkins, LPC, NCC

What drew you to membership in ASERVIC?

I am a member of ASERVIC because I believe that competent integration of spirituality and religion into the counseling process can be very beneficial to clients. ASERVIC provides the leadership in exploration and training of these integrations. As a seasoned counselor but new counselor educator, I want to actively participate in a community that values spiritual needs with tolerance, inclusion, and support. The divisiveness spurred by differing perspectives has historically created pain, and ASERVIC appears to be creating a format for greater understanding and unity. I want to be a part of this.



How did you get here? What is your spiritual story?

Like most people in my region of the country, I was raised with conservative Christian beliefs and strong Christian values. Part of my spiritual journey includes learning to value the convictions and perceptions of others and seeing humanity as a united force- we are all in this experience of life together. I work at an agency that markets itself as Christian Counselors who adhere to the ACA Codes of Ethics. At this agency I have experienced success in treatment through inclusion of religious, ethical, and spiritual concerns. As a supervisor I have encouraged trainees to explore their perspectives and facilitate that same exploration with clients, if clients express a desire for this.

How do you see yourself working with ASERVIC?

I will find ways to be of service as I continue to familiarize myself with the culture and needs of ASERVIC. I am interested in using ASERVIC's resources in teaching and supervision. My research interests include studying perceptions, attitudes, and actions of current mental health providers around integrating spirituality and religion in treatment. Contributing to the journal or newsletter is my ultimate goal.

Did you know that we're on Facebook?



Follow ASERVIC on the popular social media site. Simply log into your account and search for ASERVIC, or connect [here!](#)



Spiritual and Religious Values Committee Column

Counseling Individuals through a Crisis of Faith

Dr. Cyndi Matthews, LPC-S, NCC

Dr. Samuel Shannon, MFT

Tamala discovered that several points of religious doctrine she had always believed to be true were disputed by historical and scientific evidence. Ricky, a devout follower of his faith, was informed his father was diagnosed with cancer. As a result, Ricky started to doubt his faith in God. While these examples are fictional, situations like this might lead to a “crisis of faith” or a faith transition for individuals as they grapple with religious and/or spiritual beliefs and practices. Counseling can help those in a faith crisis come to terms with feelings of confusion and angst. Valuing and validating this spiritual/religious confusion can help clients address and work through these very real crises and life transitions.

The Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) competencies (2009), endorsed by the American Counseling Association (ACA), maintains that client beliefs about religion/spirituality are “central to [their] worldview and can influence psychosocial functioning (Standard 2)” and that counselors need to respond to their clients with “acceptance and sensitivity (Standard 7).” A crisis of faith might be a crisis of spiritual beliefs/practices, of religious beliefs or practices, or of both (Standard 1). A faith crisis may or may not involve a change in beliefs and practices, and also may include an existential crisis with clients questioning their existence and purpose in life.

A recent Pew Research study reported that 22% of Americans described their religious faith as “unaffiliated” which includes none, atheist, and agnostic (Pew Research, 2018). This statistic is higher than past reports and indicates a major shift in religious practices of the US population. Some of these individuals may have experienced a crisis of faith during their personal religious shifts.

What Leads to a Crisis of Faith for our Clients?

A crisis of faith experience will vary per individual. Fowler (1981) stated that dissonance about faith could be a normal stage in experienced post 20’s. Life-changing events such as potential or experienced loss of a loved one, job loss, relationship dissolution, or financial/natural disasters might lead to questioning religious and/or spiritual beliefs. Another reason might be finding information contradicting former beliefs, such as historical/scientific evidence counter to religious doctrines or tenants. Others may question the social policies or values their church may have such as attitudes and policies toward LGBTQ+, women, or other minorities. Another reason for a crisis of faith can occur when someone finds their leader’s or congregant’s

actions in disharmony with church teachings.

What is a Crisis of Faith Like for Clients?

A crisis of faith can be emotionally painful and confusing. Clients may describe feeling alone, scared, misunderstood, hurt, judged, confused, angry, conflicted, isolated, alienated, embarrassed, traumatized, terrified, duped, sad, and depressed. These powerful and often conflicting emotions can be difficult for clients to work through. In addition, a crisis of faith may be connected to either a potential or an actual loss of resources, as clients may distance themselves from their support groups, or feel they cannot express concerns to their support groups for fear of rejection from their religious support group. A third factor to consider is that a crisis of faith may be connected to some outside event or trauma, such as the death of a loved one or loss of a job. An additional trauma could compound with the issues arising from the crisis of faith. Some individuals may describe going through a crisis of faith like going through stages of grief: shock and numbness, yearning and searching, despair and disorganization, and then reorganization and recovery (Bowlby, 1961; Kubler-Ross, 1969). Clients experiencing these powerful feelings and experiences can benefit from compassionate and non-judgmental counseling.

What Should Counselors NOT Do?

The ACA Code of Ethics (2014) specifically states that counselors need to avoid imposing their own values on their clients (Code A.4.b). Counselors need to ensure that they are not avoiding the topic of spirituality and religiosity. However, in an effort to be comforting, a counselor may potentially disrupt or invalidate the confusing faith crisis of some clients. It is essential that counselors allow clients to work through their own crisis in their own timeframe. Some strategies that may NOT be helpful to clients include assuring that a crisis will pass, suggesting the client emulate the characteristics of some popular or religious figure that had a similar experience, testifying to clients about the counselor’s own beliefs/truths, or inviting clients to engage in practices or a group that aligns with the counselor’s beliefs. Counselors need to be aware of their own personal religious and spiritual beliefs (ASERVIC Competency #3) and avoid counseling clients based on their own religious beliefs (ACA Code A.4.b). Another possible pitfall counselors need to avoid is encouraging spiritual bypassing, that is encouraging clients to misuse spiritual tools in order to avoid dealing with psychological, behavioral, and relational issues such as anxiety, depression, fear, shame, etc. (Cashwell, 2011).

Spiritual and Religious Values Committee Column

continued

What Can Counselors Do to Help Individuals Work Through a Crisis of Faith?

First and foremost counselors need to normalize and validate client concerns, take a non-judgmental stance, and actively listen to client concerns. Counselors can help clients explore non-counseling and counseling possibilities of working through the faith crisis, such as talking directly to religious leaders, talking through doctrines with clients, or helping clients investigate alternative religious practices or spiritual beliefs. Counselors can help clients learn to trust themselves in determining what works best for them. Helping clients understand their own grieving process and giving space to work through the grief of their faith crisis, along with other traumas or loss clients may be experiencing, could be helpful for clients. For instance, continuing the earlier example, Tamala worked through many doctrines taught to her throughout her life and decided her church did not reflect her beliefs. Tamala's counselor utilized the stages of grief as a guide to working through the shock, bargaining behaviors, anger, and depression that Tamala experienced through her changing belief structure. The counselor helped her transition to a new reality including connecting with support groups and individuals, working through creating new interaction patterns with family members, and finding a new meaning of faith and spirituality.

Each client is different as they explore their

own crisis of faith. Counselors need to understand that clients may not end up in the same religious or spiritual place where they started. Clients may find new spiritual beliefs, may seek out new religious practices, may deepen connection with current beliefs and practices, or they may find they no longer have faith in a higher power. There are many potential paths that come from a crisis of faith that can lead to spiritual and/or religious changes. A counselor can help clients explore paths and determine what option is most authentic to their experience. It is not our role as counselors to decide what road our clients take on their journey – it is only our role to support them on their path, whatever road that may be.

References

- American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA Code of Ethics*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Association for Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling. (2009). *Spiritual competencies: Competencies for addressing spiritual and religious issues in counseling*. Retrieved from <http://www.aservic.org/>
- Bowlby, J. (1961). Processes of mourning. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 42, 317-339.
- Cashwell, C. S., Glossoff, H. L., & Hammonds, C. (2011). Spiritual Bypass: A Preliminary Investigation. *Counseling and Values*, 54, 162-174.
- Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith*. Harper & Row.
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Pew Research Study (2018). *Religious landscape study*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

Come chat with us on **ASERVIC CONNECT**

If you are a current member of ASERVIC or a current state division member of ASERVIC you should have access to ASERVIC Connect through ACA Connect. To find ASERVIC Connect and make sure you have access, go to ACA's website to locate ACA Connect and the ASERVIC Community:

- 1) <http://community.counseling.org/home>
- 2) **Select Communities**
- 3) **Select My Communities**
(you may be promoted to login to ACA)
- 4) **Find the ASERVIC Community**

If you cannot find ASERVIC under your communities, be sure that you are a current member.

Questions can be directed to: **Isabel Thompson, ASERVIC Secretary**
ithompson@nova.edu



Submission Request

SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD

Do you have ideas or a story to share regarding your practice of spirituality in the field? If so, please submit to the next edition of the *Interaction*.

The Innovation Committee would like to formally invite current ASERVIC members to consider sharing their “Spirituality in the Field” experiences for publication in an upcoming ASERVIC newsletter.

Inquiries and submissions for this special section of the newsletter can be sent to **LYNN BOHECKER (lbohecker@liberty.edu)**

- ◇ Articles include an opening paragraph introducing the author to the readers.
- ◇ Articles include a second paragraph describing how the author incorporates one or multiple Spiritual Competencies in practice.
- ◇ Articles include a concluding paragraph or list of resources (books, trainings, websites/blogs, inspirational quote, etc.) related to the practices and competencies addressed in the article.
- ◇ A professional picture of the author is attached (in .jpeg format) with the article.



**Interested in submitting an article
for the Summer issue of the
Interaction?**

**The deadline is
FRIDAY, July 12, 2019**

Please refer to ASERVIC.org for guidelines for publication or for more information, or email Heidi Henry, *Interaction* Editor, at counseling@heidihenry.com