



# INTERACTION

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## President's Address Dr. Ryan Foster

Warmest Greetings, ASERVIC Friends,

Welcome to the Winter 2021 edition of Interaction, the official newsletter of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling, a division of the American Counseling Association. In past newsletters, I have attempted to connect with you with a sense of immediacy. For my column in this issue, I want to look to the future.



We have a few things coming up that I think will be excellent opportunities for our membership. First, of course, will be the 2021 ACA Conference, presented virtually over a one month period. ASERVIC is sponsoring two presentations and we aim to have some kind of networking presence there as well.

Following the ACA Conference, on April 30, 2021, ASERVIC will be co-sponsoring a symposium with the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS): Providing Care for Those Touched by Near-Death and Related Experiences: Ethical Best Practices. The purpose of this symposium is learn how to ethically approach caring for people who have had near-death experiences. We will be offering CEs for this all-day event. Stay tuned for further information via our social media and other electronic communication channels.

This summer, we will be holding an ASERVIC Virtual Town Hall. Although we don't have exact details yet, this is sure to get us connected in a safe way and hopefully will energize you and help you to feel part of the important mission and vision of our organization.

Finally, calls for elections will be forthcoming as well so if you are interested in being nominated for president-elect or a Board position, please email me at [president@aservic.org](mailto:president@aservic.org).

I know it's been a trying time for you and your clients and students in so many ways. I thank you for being part of ASERVIC and please reach out if ever you'd like to dialogue.

My best,  
*Ryan*



# New Member Spotlight



## What drew you to membership in ASERVIC?

Though I have been in the counseling profession for many years, I recently discovered the ASERVIC membership just a little over a year ago. In learning more about the group, I have really appreciated the focus on incorporating people's religious and spiritual beliefs in counseling.

In my experience many counselors avoid this topic for fear of violating ethical practices, and I want to participate with others who see the significance of religion/spirituality in mental health.

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

I identify as Christian, and my faith has always been important to me. It shapes my values/ beliefs, and ultimately my desire to be a professional counselor. I believe that we all have a personal spiritual story to tell, and I will focus on the story as it relates to my role as a professional counselor.

Throughout my practice, I have desired to both understand my own beliefs and find ways to incorporate the religious/spiritual beliefs of the clients I serve. In listening to people's stories, I have seen how protective these beliefs can be when it comes to mental health.

This has strengthened my own values as a Christian. Watching my clients wrestle and engage their religious and spiritual beliefs has highlighted my personal need to do the same and to utilize my faith as a protective measure.

## How do you see yourself working with ASERVIC?

I hope to utilize the resources as a member of ASERVIC both in my practice, but also in my dissertation. I am currently a PhD. student in Counselor Education and Supervision and hope to do my dissertation on the topic of religious and spiritual integration in counselor education.

I am also excited about learning more about the work that ASERVIC is doing in the profession.



# Counselor Awareness Acuity



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The competencies for spiritual and religious values in counseling are highlighted through series dedicated to providing a refresher review, section by section.

The first part of the series in discussed the Culture and Worldview competencies section in the last summer's edition.

Counselor Awareness is the next section that will be reviewed. It states:

- The professional counselor actively explores his or her own attitudes, beliefs, and values about spirituality and/or religion.
- The professional counselor continuously evaluates the influence of his or her own spiritual and/or religious beliefs and values on the client and the counseling process.
- The professional counselor can identify the limits of his or her understanding of the client's spiritual and/or religious perspective and is acquainted with religious and spiritual resources and leaders who can be avenues for consultation and to whom the counselor can refer.

Active exploration implies that the counselor seeks to know and identify his own “attitudes, beliefs and values concerning spirituality and/or religion”. With an increased knowledge base of what you hold as part of the “personal” you, the counselor can precede to assess how these attitudes, beliefs and values impact your professional life which the client and the delicate counseling process that requires intentionality and the utmost respect. The counselor must differentiate his attitudes, beliefs, and values from the client. Differences are expected, however, during times of higher levels of divergence between client and counselor values often results in conflict. If this values conflict continues, it can become a hinderance to the counselor, if there is a lack of awareness or an inability to bracket them. Ethical bracketing, according to Kocet and Herlihy (2014) is the “the intentional separating of a counselor's personal values from his or her professional values or the intentional setting aside of the counselor's personal values in order to provide ethical and appropriate counseling to all clients, especially those whose worldviews, values, belief systems, and decisions differ significantly from those of the counselor.” Counselors are expected to be aware of their own attitudes, beliefs, and values and to “avoid imposing values that are inconsistent with counseling goals” (Standard A.4.b.) The ACA’s Code of Ethics reflect our profession's collective values and moral principles (Francis & Dugger, 2014). Certainly, the establishment of a code of ethics, communicates a normative orientation and therefore sets the expectation that the counselor resolves conflicts as they emerge. Knowledge of the available next steps is not only ethical but can result in counselor professional and personal growth.

Our values as counselors shine through for better or for worse. Our spiritual and religious values in counseling are tied into the work we do every day in our profession. Consideration to how we use our religious and spiritual values in counseling is certainly a prerequisite. How does this influence our level of tolerance or acceptance? As counselors, we can face a spiritual bypass where by “one's spirituality, spiritual beliefs, spiritual practices, and spiritual life can contribute to avoidance of experiencing the emotional pain of working through the consequence of decisions and/or psychological issues” (Clarke et al., 2013). The potential for our spiritual and religious values to influence how we view our client's values, and their choices and decisions is highly inevitable as our values color our perception. Inadvertently, we may assign our values to their decisions and risk going down the path of assigning value to those decisions. What lens do we see their choices through? Victimhood, resilience or both? Do we consider clients as perpetrators or product of their environment or somewhere in between? As counselors, we can have flexible or rigid thinking and can be tempted to fall into simplistic judgment of others or place clients into categories more often then not, when the client's life choices strike a note with our own values. Choices in life matter, choices in the lives of our clients have the potential to challenge in places where we lacked awareness or uncertainty how to handle this conflict. Stances on social justice, politics, the economy, race, gender, abortion, sexual orientation, are among some of the topics that can present internal conflict for the counselor. We wrestle with these conflicts in silence.

It is beneficial and necessary to actively consider a multitude of options. One option is to broach the conflict with another professional counselor colleague much like “iron sharpens iron,” which is almost universally seen as positive due to people posing questions, encouraging, coaching, and challenging each other on difficult topics.

Another option is to seek out clinical supervision that permits further processing and discussion. There is also the possibility for a consultation as states in the C.2.e. Consultations on Ethical Obligations which writes that “Counselors take reasonable steps to consult with other counselors, the ACA Ethics and Professional Standards Department, or related professionals when they have questions regarding their ethical obligations or professional practice.”

It is also advisable to consult religious and spiritual resources and leaders in addressing gaps of knowledge and conflict. These discussions may generate access to the sharing of literary resources of books and articles, and possible trainings on the topics. These must be pursued, as we actively explore and challenge our attitudes, beliefs, and values while in pursuit of being an effective counseling professional.



“iron sharpens iron”

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# *More than a Mat.*

## **Infusing Counseling with Spirituality through Yoga**



### **Yoga in Counseling**

Many counselors recommend yoga as a form of self-care due to its overall wellness benefits. One may initially think of a sweaty mat or a Saturday morning workout, but the practice of yoga has its roots in the ancient Indian religious text of the Rig Veda (Joshi, 1965) and possibly originated 5000 years ago (France et al., 2013). Its Sanskrit meaning is rooted in the idea of harnessing together one's body, mind, and spirit for optimum use (Feuerstein, 1997) and its underpinnings maintain that humans are encapsulated by subtle energy that can get stuck or blocked (Lee, 2016). Through the use of hand gestures, breathing, meditation, and postures (LePage & LePage, 2015), yoga can alleviate this blocked energy, bring enlightenment, and reunite the parts of individuals with the universe (Feuerstein, 1997).

Many religions have adapted or reinterpreted yoga and its bodily movements to connect with the divine, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism (Caplan et al., 2013). Chinese yogis may incorporate Taoist philosophy or traditional Chinese medicine, while Buddhist yogis may practice visualization to connect individuals to their true nature (France et al., 2013). This amalgamation of yoga and faith also extends to Christians, being mindful of biblical passages on strengthening mind and body (Becker, 2010), and Judaism with the creation of Torah yoga or Kabbalah yoga (Morris, 2010). While these yoga forms diverge to varying degrees, Toew (2009) noted, "the ultimate aim of Yoga is reconnection with the Transcendental Self, which is synonymous with the universe rather than any particular deity, god, or goddess" (p. 3).

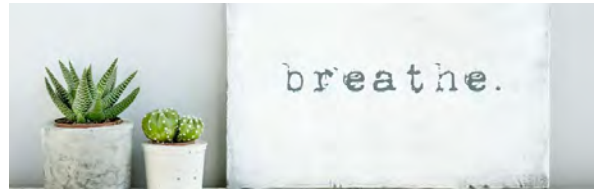
### **Yoga within Professional Counseling**

The involvement of individuals of different religious backgrounds with yoga links it to the ASERVIC mission statement, which addresses the necessary integration of spiritual or religious values into the work of counselors. As counselors discover the valued religious beliefs or practices of a client, such as faith-informed yoga, this can then be incorporated into treatment (Miller, 2003). This work is also congruent with the ASERVIC Competencies, as a client's worldview and culture, development, assessment, as well as diagnosis and treatment, are taken into consideration (ASERVIC, n.d). Yoga can thus be considered a viable treatment option for religious clients from these professional perspectives.

Counselors should further consider integrating yoga with religious and spiritual clients, as the philosophy of yoga aligns with larger emphases in counseling. Yoga considers individuals holistically, encouraging humans to find and maintain balance (Feuerstein, 1997). Segal and colleagues (2002) described yoga as mindfulness-based, thus connecting it with the counseling hallmark of wellness (Chi Sigma Iota, 2019). While yoga can be restorative and preventative (Brownstein, n.d.), integrating yoga with clients of various faith backgrounds can be strongly connected to the counseling profession.

### Yoga as a Counseling Intervention

Yoga is often integrated into counseling through breathing exercises, mindfulness techniques, or postures (Caplan et al., 2013). While useful in connecting clients to their bodies, these only draw upon a small portion of yoga. Yoga has eight limbs, or core components, that can “lead to a union with the true self” when practiced with dedication (France et al., 2013, p. 313). These limbs include poses, breathing, awareness, concentration, living soulfully, wise living, and a higher consciousness. It can be beneficial for counselors to utilize all these limbs to assist religious and spiritual clients. In doing so, counselors can emphasize adaptability and acceptance (Cook-Cottone, 2015), increase awareness and attention span (Sethi et al., 2003), build a sense of security (Nagendra, 2013), as well as reduce symptoms of complex trauma (Emerson, 2015), anxiety (Kaley-Isley et al., 2010; Milligan, 2006), aggression (Saraf, 2016), and depression (Kumar et al., 2019). For many clients who may find it difficult to cognitively process their behaviors and life events, it can be very beneficial to physically process situations from a yogic perspective (Gerberg & Brown, 2011).



Professional implications of yoga begin with counselors inquiring about the client’s cultural and spiritual background to holistically understand the client’s worldview (Harris et al., 2016). If applicable, a counselor can introduce yoga, provide psycho education, and note how it can be accessible from various religious and spiritual perspectives. Counselors should inform clients about specific interventions that would be used and gain consent. If counselors use a yoga pose in session, they should research the intended qualities of the pose, have the client breathe deeply while in it, and process the experience with the client verbally or via journaling to emphasize reflective thinking (Miller, 2014). More specific interventions could include the use of an “energy grid” to assist clients in creating a more balanced schedule based upon what might serve them best (Khalsa et al., 2017) or the use of a mudra, a gesture of the hands, face, or body that promotes wellbeing, to help clients settle into their experience and notice what their body might be trying to tell them (LePage & LePage, 2014).

### Conclusion

While yoga may carry a perception by some that it is only a weekend leisure activity, it can be a viable option for clients of various religious and spiritual backgrounds. The philosophy of yoga is very rich and vital for some clients, maintaining the integration of the holistic individual with a focus on a ground-up perspective (body to cognitive) versus top-down (cognitive talk therapy; France et al., 2013). While yoga can be connected to the larger professional identity of counseling, it can also be connected directly to ASERVIC and this division’s mandate to serve clients from a religious and spiritually-informed perspectives.



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# Nourishing the Soul Through Humanistic Counseling

The souls of human beings can be nourished in myriad ways, depending upon individuals' subjective experience. Nurturance of the soul may emerge as a genuine, holistic, and deep universe by way of transcendence and meaning to something greater than the self (Bruce, 2007). Ottens and Klein (2005) attributed spiritual growth partly to the depth of experiences and through the vessel of relationships, both of which have the opportunity to manifest within the therapeutic alliance. The very nature of counseling provides a conducive environment to engage in growth for the mind, body, and soul.

Humanism offers a favorable theoretical foundation to conduct soul work in counseling. Prioritizing the innate potentiality within human beings, humanistic ideology promotes strength, wellness, and wholeness in every person (Hansen et al., 2014). Likewise, humanism values the subjectivity of experience that assists in exploring clients' unique spiritual paths. Spirituality can be personal and intimate (Garner et al., 2017). Due to the profound nature of spirituality in some clients' lives, it is invaluable to address soulful experiences in humanistic counseling. Examining the clients' subjective worldview from a humanistic lens provides space for counselors to walk alongside clients in discovering and voicing their spiritual needs.

Klepper and Bruce (2013) described soul work as the process of deep personal experiences striving to transform into being. This effort is a means toward spiritual meaning and growth, as well as self-actualization. Soulful learning can take place in countless ways; however, Horton-Parker and Fawcett (2010) proposed experiential practices, followed by self-reflection, as the most advantageous. Soul work can be conceptualized as the activities or practices in which one's spirituality is potentially evoked. Some examples of these activities may include visualization, somatic movement, dream work, and more.

Whereas some soulful techniques can be implemented as a therapeutic intervention in session, others may be assigned outside of the counseling room. Examples of these spiritual interventions, techniques, or assignments may include bibliotherapy, journaling, yoga, art, and mindfulness.

Complimentary to these options, many soul-nourishing practices can also transpire through participation in the therapeutic alliance.

A few examples include relationship building, meaning making, closeness, and self-discovery. Klepper and Bruce (2013) found in their study that intentional activities, such as quality time, meditation, and reflection contributed to participants' spiritual journey leading to individual growth and a sense of connectedness with others. Whether it is soul work done in the form of interventions or within counseling itself, a sense of spirituality or deep connectedness can be harnessed to foster spiritual growth.

Engaging in soul work can incorporate simple daily practices or occasional rituals and traditions. The counseling literature has offered a plethora of interventions to promote spiritual connectedness, including narratives, spiritual genograms, creative expressions, and spiritual customs (Briggs & Dixon, 2013). Several of these suggestions may be common counseling interventions with a spiritual emphasis to target pathways to the soul.

Soul-filling activities could also include music, poetry, nature, prayer, meditation, forgiveness, and service as potential interventions to cultivate spirituality in clients' lives (Elkins, 1995; Matise et al., 2018). Although a practice may lack meaning and depth to one individual, the same activity may reveal life purpose to another.

So, what nourishes your soul?



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## Expanding Awareness:

## Offering Religious Studies Courses to Counselors-in-Training

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### The Lack of Religious Training and Course Offerings

There is a lack of variety in course offerings dedicated to the study of world religions for counseling students. According to Leighton (2016), a big part of the problem has to do with the “failure of educators to take advantage of what is already present in a curriculum to translate a clinically grounded understanding of the world’s religious traditions”. Currently, counseling programs do offer diversity and cultural training, but these trainings are fairly limited when it comes to actual coverage of world religions.

Other research implicates that there is a lack of information and a lack of personal interest or relevance when it comes to integrating religion and spirituality into counselor education (Adams, Puig, Baggs, & Wolf, 2015). In relation to the perceived failure to take advantage of what is already present in the counselor education curriculum (Leighton, 2016), studies show that counselor educators may not be knowledgeable enough when it comes to religion and spirituality (Adams et al., 2015).

### How to Combat the Lack of Training and Course Offerings

Leighton (2016) states that the answer to remedy the lack of religious studies in counselor education is to not only have faculty and staff that are actually trained and educated in religious studies, but to also have an “open and tolerant classroom equipped with the awareness that, for millions, faith plays an integral part in the value and meaning of daily life”. Other suggestions for combating the lack of training and course offerings include “continuing education, heightened awareness of self and others, and curriculum specific recommendations” (Adams et al., 2015).

Continuing education will ultimately promote dialogue about the topics of religion and spirituality and their place in counseling; and will also hopefully encourage faculty to push for the creation of more creative and effective strategies for integrating religion into counselor education (Adams et al., 2015).

Heightened awareness of self and others is an integral part of counselor education (Pieterse, Lee, Ritmeester, & Collins, 2013). Once again, the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) not only discusses cultural sensitivity, but it also discusses the importance of counselors being aware of their own cultural beliefs and belief systems (including religion and spirituality), and not imposing those beliefs on their clients. To increase awareness of self and others as a counselor or counselor educator, there are a variety of ways to educate one’s self, including: “more continuing education, professional development workshops, and also supervision” (Adams, et al., 2015).

Curriculum specific recommendations are related to program evaluation and program creation. As defined by Astramovich (2016), “the process of counseling program evaluation generally includes needs assessments, program development and delivery, outcomes assessment, and accountability and advocacy with stakeholders”. By actively evaluating current counseling training programs and assessing for the possibility of implementing or incorporating world religions and spirituality into sed programs, a broader, more inclusive counselor training will be the product. Effective program evaluation will also lead to the creation of brand new counselor training programs and curricula, which can also lead to more inclusion when it comes to the incorporation and study of world religions and spirituality in counselor education.

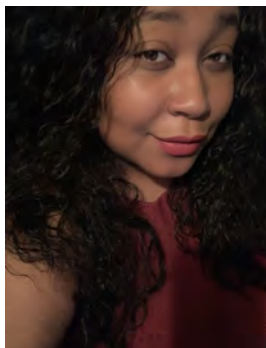




## Conclusions

Overall, previous research shows that there is an overall lack of knowledge and understanding when it comes to the difference between religion and spirituality (Adams et al., 2015). With a lack of understanding, in this context, comes a lack of action. Research also shows that there is a lack of religious and spiritual comprehension and integration when it comes to initial counselor training and education (Leighton, 2016). However, educators can make the effort to become more knowledgeable about different world religions, different spiritualities, and different cultures by engaging in continuing education, professional development conferences, and even supervision (Adams et al., 2015).

All counselors should have a well-rounded understanding of world religions and how they affect a person's perceptions, morals, and overall core beliefs as an integral component of their multicultural counseling competencies (Hage et al., 2006). It is the ethical responsibility of all counselors to avoid imposing their own values on their clients, to do no harm, and to maintain competence in the skills they utilize (ACA, 2014). It is also stated in the ACA Code of Ethics (2014), that counselors should ultimately be open to new procedures, and remain informed regarding best practices for working with diverse populations.




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## Transformative Words: The Use of Poetry with Clients to Promote Spiritual Wellness

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, the tenacious resolve of counselors practicing in the United States (and abroad) has proven to be very powerful. In addition to navigating the pandemic, counselors have experienced an enkindling within the racial equity movement and a particularly vitriolic period of political unrest. Naturally, these sociopolitical and cultural issues continue to drive conversations among their colleagues as well as the therapeutic discourses with their clients. All the while, the collective spiritual wellness among counselors, clients, and the broader community is continuously challenged by the impact of the physical distancing mitigation measures employed to curtail the spread of COVID-19. Many individuals are combatting isolation and yearning to find purpose – to make meaning of the events of the day and the greater cultural climate. The resulting loneliness and stress can cause disempowerment in various wellness domains, particularly spiritual well-being (Saltzman et al., 2020; Yasaransi, 2020).

It is imperative for counselors, supervisors, counselor educators, and counseling students to explore techniques and interventions that promote spiritual wellness for themselves and the clients they serve. Fostering spirituality can be a form of self-care and serve as a protective factor (Vince-Qua, 2020). Expressive therapies, including the use of poetry in therapy, can assist counselors in efforts to find purpose, meaning, and connection during these trying times. With physical distancing precautions in place, connection with/in nature has been deemed a safe alternative to meeting indoors and has innumerable benefits including reduced anxiety, decreased tension, and revitalization (Coon et al., 2011; Kuo & Taylor, 2004; McCaffrey, 2007). The use of expressive therapies and engagement with/in nature may be employed as a means to restore our spiritual wellness.

Expressive therapies have long been used as an alternative, or in conjunction with, traditional talk therapy amongst counselors and other mental health providers (Hinz, 2019).

The use of poetry in therapy, as a form of expressive writing, helps clients gain insight into thoughts and emotions and process them in a unique way which might have otherwise been difficult using traditional means (Rubin, 2010).



Poetry in therapy can take many forms in promoting spiritual wellness such as inviting the client to write or share their own poetry in session; having the counselor share their own written poetry that is relevant and appropriate to the client's experience, and processing mutually selected published poetry from books and/or online sources (McArdle & Byrt, 2001).

To demonstrate the utility of poetry, Fawn, the first author of this piece, wrote a poem relevant to both the current sociopolitical and historical climate and to the relationship between spiritual practices (including mindfulness) and well-being.

The poem is akin to the therapeutic process as there is an identification of current feelings, an exploration of treatment goals related to spiritual growth, and an outgrowth of alleviation from suffering. Specifically, Fawn demonstrates how practicing mindfulness in nature is a spiritual practice that invokes an interconnection between the mind, body, spirit, and earth through awareness and breath. Counselors are invited to share this piece with their clients and provide processing questions related to their own experiences and therapeutic goals with clients.

The research on poetry in therapy has shown it to be beneficial for various issues that impact spirituality such as the need for connection, meaning, and hope (Silverman, 1997). Using poetry in therapy can help clients explore and develop their value systems while fostering meaning in their lives through a creative outlet (Silverman, 1997). Through poetry, clients have an opportunity to identify guarded emotions and reconnect to the innermost depths of self which can also be a form of spiritual practice.

Poetry also offers a unique way to connect with others who utilize the creative practice as a form of healing. Professional organizations such as the National Association for Poetry Therapy (NAPT, n.d.) bring together individuals across various walks of life who share in its utility.



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# Spiritual Assurance through Nature

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*Distracted in time but still I fray  
My soul is reflected in hues of grey  
Lives are gone, others remain broken  
Guilt sets in from the words left unspoken  
Despair grows with social unrest*

*I am too familiar with the tightness in my chest  
Bound by isolation to keep us safe  
How do I heal with an unknown fate?  
As thoughts unwind, I begin to lose my ground  
I seek peace from the relentless sounds  
I need to take a moment to connect with my breath*

*I turn towards nature to guide me on this trek  
With each step my breath begins to slow  
I become aware of the sun's assuring glow  
Time stands still as I step into the present  
With each exhale the thoughts descent*

*The trees lean in as to offer their embrace  
Loneliness mitigates amongst the landscape  
I thank the earth for her loving gifts  
With gratitude my spirit begins to lift  
In this moment I feel love and peace  
In this moment I am free*



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By Kara Schneider

## Reconceptualizing Multicultural Counseling: Spiritual Competency Is Cultural Competency

Western nations are characterized by their increasing religious diversity. The United States of America, for example, is considered the most religiously diverse nation in the world (Eck, 2002).

Although the exact number of distinct religions in the U.S. is nearly impossible to know, researchers report that there are more than 160 denominations within Christianity and more than 700 non-Christian groups (e.g., Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc.) (Hage et al., 2006; Pew Research Center, 2020).

Furthermore, there is growing data on the number of Americans who identify themselves as “spiritual” rather than “religious” (Pew Research Center, 2020). Taking into account the vast array of religions and those self-identifying as spiritual, it can be expected that mental health professionals will encounter great religious and spiritual diversity among their client populations.

Although they are not mutually exclusive, religion traditionally references community level engagement with structured beliefs and rituals whereas spirituality generally refers to the internal, individual relationship with one’s Higher Power(s) (Bryant-Davis, 2015). Nonetheless, religion and spirituality share a foundational cultural dimension: values and beliefs (Bryant-Davis, 2015). Values and beliefs are also core components that makeup one’s worldview.

Koltko-Rivera, a researcher who advanced the psychology of worldviews, defines worldview as:

**“the interpretive lens one uses to approach and understand reality and one’s existence within it...a way of describing the world and life...a set of beliefs that includes limiting statements and assumptions regarding what exists...what is good or bad, and what types of behavior and relationships are proper or improper.”** (2004, p. 4).

The influence that culture has on beliefs and worldview leaves spiritual competence inextricable from a counselor’s cultural competency when working with clients. When mental health professionals exclude religion and spirituality from a client’s cultural framework it can lead to misinterpretation of one’s culture and potential misdiagnoses of a mental illness (National Alliance on Mental Illness [NAMI], 2021). This perpetuates the longstanding mistrust that many minority groups experience in seeking treatment (NAMI, 2021). Hays and Aranda (2016) have shown in part, because of that, racial and ethnic minorities often seek help from spiritual leaders to manage their mental illness long before seeking care from healthcare professionals.

By neglecting someone's belief and value system, it consequently rejects their culture and a piece of who they are. As unintentional as something like that may be, this is a microaggression expressed through a lack of awareness inhibiting the counselor to create a safe space for their clients to bring their whole selves into therapy.

It is important to note that just because a mental health professional is interested in spirituality does not mean they are culturally competent in that way. For example, a counselor who has a background in Christianity does not automatically achieve spiritual competency. Bryant-Davis (2015) suggested that to be spiritually competent, there must be an awareness of one's personal value-informed worldview, an empathic, strengths-based understanding of the client's spiritual worldview, and the ability to design and implement intervention strategies that are appropriate, relevant, and sensitive to the client's spiritual worldview. Thus, it is congruent for clinicians to seek out further training in the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) and ASERVIC guidelines to complement the values and standards sanctioned in the ACA Code of Ethics (Cashwell & Watts, 2010; Ratts et al., 2016). In addition, there is growing research around culturally responsive interventions and therapeutic models such as the Multiphase Model (MPM) approach (Bemak & Chung, 2017). This approach emphasizes things such as recognizing family and community support, understanding the sociopolitical context, and integrating indigenous healing methodologies (Bemak & Chung, 2017). Being intentional about continuing education in these ways will be critical to counselor professional development and cultural competency.

No matter the theoretical orientation a counselor holds, there are core elements that should be present to attend to the spiritual and cultural needs of clients. A metatheory that can be utilized with any theoretical orientation that counselors may find useful is multicultural orientation. Hook et al. (2017) identifies cultural humility, cultural opportunities, and cultural comfort as the three pillars to the multicultural orientation framework. Cultural humility is fundamental to the entire framework and drives the other two pillars. They describe culturally humble therapists as carrying a realistic understanding of their own cultural values, while also remaining open to other perspectives without believing one perspective is superior to another (Hook et al., 2017). The level at which a counselor can be culturally humble is often the level to which they can remain open and curious about others' beliefs and values rather than being presumptuous or arrogant. Cultural opportunities are the second pillar and are the moments in therapy that occur when a client may mention a belief, value, or some other aspect of their heritage, and the counselor takes time to explore it with them. A counselor's awareness of these moments is the key to not missing that opportunity. Cultural comfort is the third pillar of the multicultural orientation framework and hinges on the first two. It is defined as the emotional states of a counselor surrounding the culturally relevant conversations in session with their clients. Hook and colleagues (2017) found that therapists who were less culturally comfortable with racial or ethnic minority clients had a higher rate of dropout for those clients. Considering these three pillars in context of spirituality not only can help counselors provide effective and appropriate care, but it also underscores the notion that religion and spirituality do not have to be elusive concepts in counseling, but rather honored as part of one's culture.

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# *Native American Holistic Health: Culture*



**Date:** Thursday, February 25, 2021 from 12-1pm CST/1-2pm EST

**Presenter:** Dr. Steven Byers, Associate Professor of Psychology and Counseling at Northeastern State University.

**Cost:** FREE

**Duration:** One (1) hour

Dr. Byers will be presenting on indigenous healing. Please keep a look out for the event advertisement in order to register. For more information about this and other ASERVIC's webinars, visit [www.aservic.org](http://www.aservic.org).

ASERVIC is pleased to offer webinars for continuing education to students, counselors, supervisors, and counselor educators. If you are interested in being a webinar presenter, please contact Elizabeth Norris ([Elizabeth.kaye.norris@live.mercer.edu](mailto:Elizabeth.kaye.norris@live.mercer.edu)) with a brief abstract of your proposed presentation topic.

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Dear ASERVIC Members, please use the link below to share your thoughts with us on:

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- 2. brief examples of an ethical situation/dilemma regarding ethics and values that needs to be explored/discussed*
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Thank you.

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