



Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling

Volume XV, No. 2

WINTER 2016

President's Address **Elizabeth R. O'Brien**

Winter can be a tricky time for some. Although many religious and spiritual traditions have just completed celebrating a season of miracles, the post-holidays can bring with it a sense of waiting. The earth (for many of us) is resting, the signs of wildlife are fewer, New Year

has come and gone with its promise of resolutions, and we may begin to reflect on how we can begin again in a new way. Here at ASERVIC, I believe we are resting up for a series of big events—and there are so many things to come.

I am pleased to announce that several decisions have been made and initiatives begun in the last few months. Our new Counseling & Values Journal editor, Craig Cashwell, has accepted his position beginning July 1, 2016. The new ASERVIC logo has been voted on by members, approved by the ASERVIC Board, and is officially being launched in this edition of *Interaction*. We are planning our events at ACA, which include our two newest endeavors, an Emerging Leaders Program and an ASERVIC Advisory Board. To me, these events make wonderful “bookends” to our organization; recruiting and fostering our future organization leaders and gathering wisdom from established leaders who have served in the past and can help us preserve our history moving forward. And finally, in the coming weeks we will have the results of the ASERVIC elections, which will determine our incoming president-elect-elect and our newest class of board members beginning in the next fiscal year.

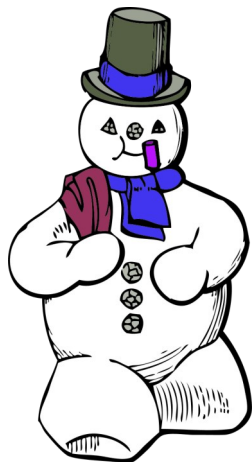


While all of this is going on (and it feels like a lot now that I've written it down) I also want to remind ASERVIC members that we are continuing to work on initiatives such as planning the 2017 ASERVIC conference, having greater communication with our state divisions, engaging members in volunteer opportunities, the formation of a joint task force with ALGBTIC and ASERVIC on ethical issues that may arise when working with individuals in the LGBTQI+ community, and joint webinars with our sister organizations on the intersections of spirituality, religion, ethics and values with their areas of expertise.

As you begin planning for ACA in Montreal, Canada, please check our website for updates on ASERVIC sponsored events at ACA, exhibit hall booth hours, and ASERVIC events that take place outside of the conference (ASERVIC Graduate Student members know how to have a good time!). Also consider purchasing your ASERVIC Luncheon ticket soon so that we can meet up and share fellowship and stories. This is one of my favorite events at ACA and I hope to see you there.

Until then~
Be well and take care,

Elizabeth



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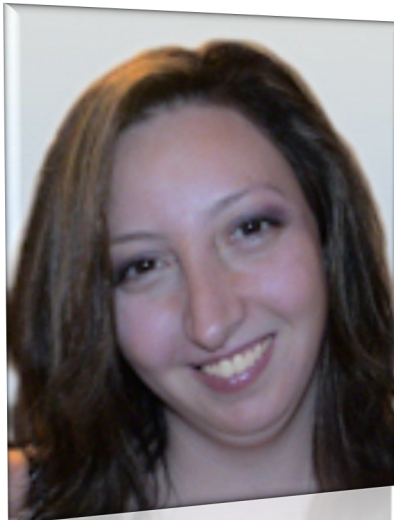
Spirituality in the Field

Alyse M. Anekstein, PhD, LPC, NCC

As I reflect on what to write for this column, I am reminded of the famous quote “to be or not to be? That is the question” (Shakespeare, trans. 1992, 3.1.58). This could be attributed to my theatre training, but I digress. The spiritual competencies I will be discussing in this article are: 3. The professional counselor actively explores his or her own attitudes, beliefs, and values about spirituality and/or religion and 4. 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.

My attitudes, beliefs, and values have been grounded through my upbringing in a Jewish conservative household in a town where

the majority religious culture was of the Roman Catholic faith. My childhood was spent travelling twenty minutes each way after school at least three times a week to Hebrew school and after my Bat Mitzvah to Hebrew high school in a different town. Although I was a minority culture within my town of origin, I found a strong sense of community within my temple and developed a Jewish identity and strong faith in G-d. For example, through my training, I was always taught to replace the “o” with a hyphen because you should never erase or destroy anything that contains the name of our higher power. As I expanded my knowledge in Hebrew high school, I was taught to critically examine the Jewish culture and find my fit within the religion. I found that I had a consistent internal struggle with the role of women in Judaism and my identity as an independent



career-driven woman.

A few months before entering a master’s program, my grandfather died unexpectedly. I found myself torn away from the faith that I once cherished and questioning the belief I learned in Judaism that things always happen for a reason. During this time, I started to embrace alternative methods of healing such as Reiki and tried to find my fit in Judaism again with this new information. As I moved forward in my journey and started a Ph.D. program, I found myself, again, in a situation of being in the minority culture. In fact, the closest temple was about a four hour drive. Even though I didn’t have a sense of community through a temple, I found myself gravitating towards people of different faiths that had a strong spiritual or religious belief system. It was through these wonderful connections I found out that no matter what happened around me, my faith in G-d was very strong and always present. I also started to find ways to connect with my Jewish heritage despite my geographic limitations.



One of the ways I connected to my Jewish heritage was through a research project in counselor education with several amazing women all belonging to different faith traditions. We were provided a wonderful opportunity to present our findings at a counseling conference. The only problem was that this conference was scheduled to take place during one of the holiest days of the year in Judaism. This leads me back to my opening quote “to be or not to be? That is the question” (Shakespeare, trans. 1992, 3.1.58).

I felt as if I had to make the decision, “to be” a Jewish counselor educator or “not to be” a Jewish counselor educator. If I embraced my Jewish heritage, I would lose out on an opportunity to present this amazing research on religion and spirituality to the counseling community. If I denied my Jewish heritage, I would be turning my back on the integrated identity I had worked so hard to find. Ultimately, I chose to attend the conference and thought I might be able to find a local temple to honor my Jewish heritage. Once there, I was disappointed to discover no written acknowledgement or mention of the holiday coinciding with the conference. In addition, the concierge at the conference hotel was not familiar with the holiday nor had any information on local temple services. I have since learned that the two holiest days of the year in Judaism have consistently had counseling conferences scheduled during those dates in certain divisions because it is always traditionally held at that time of year.

Back to my opening quote, Hamlet talks about the question to live or to die. In my experience at that counseling conference, I felt a strong need to choose between my counselor educator identity and my Jewish integrated identity. Although comparing this experience to the idea of choosing to live or die may seem a bit dramatic, there is a potential career risk in putting this information in written format. Who am I to question a long standing tradition of an established profession? Yet, at the same time, by providing my experience of religion and spirituality in the field of counseling, it may help increase awareness of how our attitudes, beliefs, and values may impact our clients.

As counselors and counselor educators we talk about the need to be aware of our attitudes, beliefs, and values in regard to spirituality and religion as well as the need to evaluate the influence of our spiritual and religious beliefs on the client and the counseling process. Although this is my experience within my chosen profession and my faith tradition, I believe there is interconnectedness between all of our collective experiences. The content may change but the process of struggle remains the same. As a profession, we challenge our colleagues and students to take risks, to be authentic and vulnerable, and to find their inner strength to combat any injustices and facilitate change. In writing about my experience, I am modeling that strength, authenticity, vulnerability, and the potential risks that come with any situation when we advocate for our students, our clients, and ourselves. I am also providing just one example of the impact counselors and counselor educators can have when we neglect to continuously evaluate the influence of our religious and spiritual beliefs on others. In our work with students and clients, we must always be evaluating the influence of our own spiritual and religious beliefs and find our inner strength and vulnerability to take the risks necessary to advocate for change. I believe that if we can demonstrate awareness in our actions with just one person we will be starting the process of changing the world.

NEW MEMBER

SPOTLIGHT



Taheera Blount

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

My spiritual journey began at an early age. As a child, I grew up surrounded by spirituality and religion. My grandparents and other family members were deeply involved in the Christian church. As a result, I became involved in church and dedicated majority of my time serving as an usher and praise dancer. In addition, my mother served on the intercessory prayer group and in most instances I attended prayer groups with my mom. It was through this experience that I began to know God in a profound way and witnessed the miraculous power of prayer. I am grateful for the spiritual legacy my grandparents and mother provided. Through humble beginnings, I am able to counsel individuals from underserved populations that seek wellness and recovery.

What drew your membership to ASERVIC?

I was drawn to join ASERVIC because of my research interest in spirituality within the counseling process. By attending ASERVIC's conference this year, I gained valuable insight regarding how counselors incorporate religious practices as practitioners.

How do you see yourself contributing to ASERVIC?

I hope to contribute to ASERVIC by continuing my research interest exploring the impact of spirituality among African American women in recovery from substance use. In addition, I would like to volunteer within the organization. I am extremely excited to be connected to ASERVIC.

ETHICS CORNER

Shannon Karl, Ph.D., LMHC, NCC, CCMHS, ACS

Client Spirituality and *DSM-5* Diagnosis

Client spirituality is oftentimes a lightly covered area of clinical assessment and care. Counselor attendance to the client's spiritual and/or religious landscape is imperative and merits close attention in the delivery of clinical services. The 2013 publication of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5)* brought heightened emphasis to the pathophysiological model of client diagnosis. The manual's focus on neurobiological factors arguably strengthens the professional nomenclature, but risks decreased attention to spiritual and/or religious factors that can ameliorate the negative effects of a mental health diagnosis.

ASERVIC's Spiritual Competencies

The new diagnostic emphasis on the pathophysiological model raises concern about lack of clinical focus on spiritual and/or religious belief systems. Counselors can incorporate the client's spiritual and/or religious paradigms through clinical integration of the Spiritual Competencies developed by the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC).

ASERVIC's Spiritual Competencies, endorsed by the American Counseling Association, apply across clinical practice settings. The 14 competencies are divided into separate categories that include (1) culture and worldview, (2) counselor self-awareness, (3) human and spiritual development, (4) communication, (5) assessment, and (6) diagnosis and treatment. ASERVIC competencies 11 to 14 directly relate to client diagnosis and treatment and are as follows:

11. When making a diagnosis, the professional counselor recognizes that the client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives can a) enhance well-being; b) contribute to client problems; and/or c) exacerbate symptoms.
12. The professional counselor sets goals with the client that are consistent with the client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives.
13. The professional counselor is able to a) modify therapeutic techniques to include a client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives, and b) utilize spiritual and/or religious practices as techniques when appropriate and acceptable to a client's viewpoint.
14. The professional counselor can therapeutically apply theory and current research supporting the inclusion of a client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives and practices.

In attending to these competencies, the clinician incorporates the client's worldview into assessment and treatment. This includes the spectrum of faith-based beliefs (or lack thereof) and their impact on the client's perception and attitude concerning their diagnosis.

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Spiritually-Related Diagnostic Issues

Receiving a mental health diagnosis can negatively affect client self-concept regardless of spiritual and/or religious belief systems. As with many elements of life, perspective and attitude make a difference. Counselors have the opportunity to identify and harness client resiliency factors. To effectively work with clients of varying spiritual and/or religious backgrounds, counselors should assess the client’s unique phenomenology and gather specific information about spiritual and/or religious beliefs. This includes discussion of attitudes about clinical interventions and treatment prognosis.

Interventions

The following lists several treatment interventions to assist with promotion of spiritual wellness in client care and includes:

- Exploring cognitive schemas surrounding the client’s perception of mental illness and how that intersects with specific spiritual and/or religious belief systems. For optimal outcome, it is critical for clients to possess affective understanding, acceptance, mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-care.
- Garnering knowledge of, and ability to work within, a client’s spiritual and/or religious structural systems. Counselors should be exposed to a spectrum of spiritual and/or religious belief systems including agnosticism and atheism.
- Supporting client meditation and/or prayer and incorporating, as relevant, into client care represents a resiliency factor with evidenced-based support.
- Using scripture (bibliotherapy) as inspiration and balm can be soothing and meaningful for clients within specific faith-based belief systems.
- Existential Therapy can be especially useful for agnostics and atheists and provides a forum for the exploration of death anxiety across a spectrum of beliefs.

Final Thoughts

Counselors, please use care when conveying diagnostic information and always assess the impact of the client’s spiritual and/or religious belief systems on diagnostic perception. Clients bring unique life experiences inclusive of spiritual expression. Integration of the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives into the overall therapeutic process bolsters treatment efficacy.



ASERVIC Welcomes

Counseling and Values
Journal Editor

Dr. Craig S. Cashwell



Join ASERVIC in Montreal at ACA



<u>Meeting / Event</u>	<u>Hotel</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>End Time</u>
Board Meeting	Le Westin	Thursday	March 31	9 am	4 pm
Editorial Board Meeting	Le Westin	Friday	April 1	8 am	9 am
Luncheon	Le Westin	Friday	April 1	12 pm	2 pm
Emerging Leaders Meeting	Le Westin	Friday	April 1	2 pm	3 pm
ASERVIC, AARC, AADA, ACAC, AHC, & IAAOC					
Joint Reception	Le Westin	Friday	April 1	6 pm	8 pm
Advisory Board	Le Westin	Saturday	April 2	2 pm	3 pm
Interfaith Service	Le Westin	Sunday	April 3	9 am	10 am

In Memoriam

Allen Weber - An ASERVIC Legacy

by Bryce Hagedorn, PhD, LMHC, NCC, MAC, QCS

Last week, I read ACA's Counseling Corner Column (below) about the passing of Dr. Allen Weber and it hit me pretty hard. Whereas Allen wasn't the president when I first joined ASERVIC (in 1998), he was the first president with whom I interacted regularly. Allen exemplified the best of ASERVIC's ideals with his servant's heart, genuineness, compassion, and willingness to go the extra mile by engaging with ASERVIC members (such as myself). I am happy to admit that his example and gentle spirit helped pave a path for my continued involvement in ASERVIC throughout the years. In reflecting on his role in my life, I sincerely hope that I successfully carried Allen's energy and dedication into my time as ASERVIC's president, that I was able to sufficiently connect with the members and meet their needs. To conclude, as you can read below, Allen died on the day that we celebrate Jesus' birthday: I imagine that brought a smile to both Allen and Jesus' face.

Counseling Corner Column

<https://www.counseling.org/news/news-release-archives/dr-allen-weber>

Allen Weber, OFM, 75, a professed Franciscan friar for 33 years and a priest for 50, died Dec. 25, Christmas Day, at Hackensack University Medical Center. In the years between his ordination (in 1961) and his involvement with ACA's Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling, Allen taught religion and later served as a School Counselor at Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains, NJ.

He was received into the Franciscan Order in 1981. Allen went to St. Bonaventure University, first as a counselor in the Counseling Center on campus and later a Counselor Educator. He taught in the university's graduate counselor education program, as well as in Clare College, the university's core curriculum.

He was president of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling, a Division within the American Counseling Association, from 2000 to 2003. Allen often presided with early Sunday morning Mass for ACA Conference attendees.

For more information regarding Allen's life and death, as well as memorials please click here.

- See more at: <https://www.counseling.org/news/news-release-archives/dr-allen-weber#.dpuf>



Spirituality in the Field

SUBMISSION REQUEST

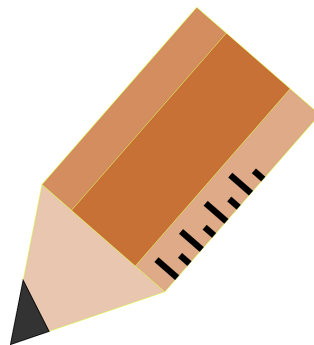
DO YOU HAVE IDEAS OR A STORY TO SHARE REGARDING YOUR PRACTICE OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD? IF SO, PLEASE SUBMIT TO THE NEXT EDITION OF INTERACTION. THE INNOVATION COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO FORMALLY INVITE CURRENT ASERVIC MEMBERS TO CONSIDER SHARING THEIR “SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD” EXPERIENCES FOR PUBLICATION IN AN UPCOMING ASERVIC NEWSLETTER.

INQUIRIES AND SUBMISSIONS FOR THIS SPECIAL SECTION OF THE NEWSLETTER CAN BE SENT TO LYNN BOHECKER (LBOHECKER@MESSIAH.EDU)

- ◇ FOLLOW THE ASERVIC NEWSLETTER “GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION” AS PUBLISHED IN THE MOST RECENT NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION (SEE ASERVIC WEBPAGE WWW.ASERVIC.ORG)
- ◇ 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

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

The deadline is *FRIDAY, May 13th*



Please refer to ASERVIC.org for guidelines for publication or contact the editor at lakepoo@mail.regent.edu for more information.