SPIRITUALITY AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN NEW ZEALAND

NZAOT Clinical Workshops 2011
Waitangi
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Spirituality and Occupational Therapy

Objectives

- Introductions: people, topic and consent
- Explore our own spirituality / spiritual journeys
- Identify a framework to assist a discussion about spirituality
- Explore our collective knowledge and experience of spirituality in practice
  - Literature and practice (definition / models / assessment / interventions / documentation)
  - Barriers and facilitators
- Discuss AUT process and progress to date
- Making links and looking to the future
‘Spirit’ embraces a range of emphases.

- **Depth**: immanence, implicate reality, Greek ‘ideals’
- **Mystery**: ‘strangeness,’ that which is beyond grasp, immensity, awe, wonder, ‘nature as the place where I meet the divine’
- **Systems**: ‘World soul’, Gaia, self-organising, organismic, evolutionary, directional, ultimately non-random, transcending, ascending,
- **Connectedness**: monistic field, consciousness as fundamental, energy, quantum level reality, the numinous, ‘oceanic’ states, spirit as the ‘in-between’, ancestral patterns, morphic resonance
- **Truth**: purpose, meaning, grounded in final reality, making sense (of e.g. suffering or evil), a ‘plan’, good and evil, a basis for ethics
- **Life/Vitality**: the sustainer of life, the vibrancy of life, the physicomaterial as manifest (Bohm’s explicate) expression of spirit, creativity, richness, quality, beauty, aesthetic, the Greek ‘forms’ as manifest ‘ideals’
- **God/Gods**: the transcendent, the Creator(s), creatureliness, smallness in the face of immensity, the factual basis of I/Thou, the logos, incarnating the logos
- **Religion**: as organised forms of the ‘truth’, as cultural narratives predicated on an underlying reality, as ‘practice’ of the spirit, individual/social expression of spiritual reality, as revelation from the Divine
- **Relational**: the lived basis of the I/Thou, the ground of loving, the spiritual quality of intimacy, the sustainer of separateness and closeness, the ground of boundaries, the source of love and hate, sacrifice, forgiveness, hope
- **Unexplained**: that not captured by science or physicomaterialism, the bizarre, the non-normative, the ‘spooky’, rag-bag for the inconvenient, the ‘edge’ of normal reality
- **Other ‘worlds’**: ‘unseen’ layers of reality, the ‘presence’ of the unseen (angels, ancestors, recently departed dead), reincarnation, afterlife, heaven/hell, mediumship, denial of the ‘concrete’ world, spiritualism
- **Other**: .............
Spirituality is increasingly discussed in health literature from a wide variety of angles.

Spirit and spirituality means (many) different things to different people....
Famous figures in the spirituality/religion/psychology tradition

- **William James**: ‘performing a function that no other portion of our nature can successfully fulfil.’
- **Carl Jung**: religion as the experience of the ‘numinous’ or Holy
- **Robert Assagioli**: spirituality as a vital force in human life and an essential aspect of the psyche
- **Abraham Maslow**: peak experiences - the highest reach of human nature
- **Stanislov Grof**: spirituality emerges during deep self-exploration—vital element of existence
- **Viktor Frankl**: logotherapy - our need and search for meaning defines our being

Content of slide courtesy of B. Broom, AUT Mindbody Healthcare papers, lecture October 2010
Spirituality at the ‘heart’ of the person (and the model)
<table>
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<th>Ways to think about spirituality</th>
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<td><strong>Individual / subjective / Interior</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Exploring) individual experience of spirituality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual explanation of spirituality (worldview) / meaning (client-centred focus) / developmental processes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Collective / Inter-subjective / Interior</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal / relationship / qualities of relationship (client w others, therapist w client, in communities), rituals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture / worldview</td>
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<td><strong>Individual / Objective / Exterior</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual’s practices / occupations / modes of doing (as expressions of spirituality or as means to connect with person’s sense of spirituality)</td>
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<td><strong>Collective / Objective / Exterior (societal / systems)</strong></td>
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<td>Definition</td>
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<td>Conceptual understanding: models / frameworks</td>
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<td>Health system: your service / Assessment / interventions / outcomes</td>
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<td>Education system: OT curriculum / placement</td>
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(Adapted from Wilber, 2007)
Spirituality and occupational therapy

- Still a lot of questions but generally an agreement that this is a legitimate sphere of practice (Unruh, A., Versnel, J., & Kerr, N., 2003).
- Many different facets identified / highlighted by many authors (Wilson, 2010)
- There are no articles on spirituality in NZJOT
Collective / inter-subjective / interior domain

What does spirituality mean to us in terms of the interpersonal dimension?
Spirituality and therapeutic relationship:

- Creating a space for exploration of what this means for us as people (lecturers, students, therapists)
- Do we model permission to legitimise spirituality in practice? – do we have a “right” to exclude it? What about client-centred /“person-centred” / holistic practice?
- Qualities of kindness, openness, being truly human, safety, vulnerability, heart centred practice, compassion; uncovers greater similarity than difference (therapist/client; lecturer/student; within a team?) – meeting the person first

“Spirituality is not finally a matter of technical expertise but of shared humanity at its deepest level “(Kroeker, cited in Townsend, E., & Polatajko, H., 2007, p. 68)
Conceptual Understandings

- **Conceptual / Exterior / Observational**
  - Individual’s practices / occupations (as expressions of spiritual rituals, e.g. church/mosque attendance, prayer, meditation; or as means to connect with spirituality, e.g. gardening, tramping, work!)
  - **Academic / scientific demands**
    1. Definition (Mayers and Johnston, 2008; Lipton, J. E., 2011)
    2. Conceptual Models / Practice models / frameworks (Durie, 2001; Kang, 2003; McColl, 2003; Smith, 2008)
    4. Education system: OT curriculum - what do we do with all of the above? (Csonto, 2009; Thompson & MacNeil, 2006)
To define or not to define..

- Most authors try to provide a definition of spirituality – there is a lack of consensus throughout.
- Defining spirituality may limit dialogue and exploration of what spirituality means for individuals and what it means in the therapeutic encounter (Broom, personal communication, 2011).
- Offering a definition for spirituality may provide a useful starting point for discussion (AUT staff development meetings, personal communications, 2011).
Some definitions

- "Spirituality can be defined as the search for meaning and purpose in life, which may or may not be related to a belief in God, or some form of higher power. For those with no conception of supernatural belief, spirituality may relate to the notion of a motivating life force, which involves and integration of the dimensions of mind, body and spirit. This personal belief or faith also shapes an individual’s perspective on the world and is expressed in the way he/she lives life. Therefore, spirituality is experienced through connectedness to God/a higher being; and/or by one’s relationships with self, others or nature" (Johnston & Mayers, cited in Mayers and Johnston, 2008, p. 273)

- "Spirituality is a deep belief or faith in something about how the world or the universe works, and our place in it" (Lipton, J. E., August 25, 2011).
Some models

- Smith (2008) – leaves room to include the client’s perspective / worldview; fits with CMOP-E
- McColl (2003) – occupation focused perspective (Canadian)
- New Zealand Ministry of Health. (n.d.) – Maori model of health
Assessment


- Some examples of questions / assessment:
  - McColl (2003) – spirituality main focus
  - Puchalski, C. - FICA Spiritual History Assessment (Bouthot, et al, 2011)
Education

In all articles accessed:

- agreement about lack of sufficient education about spirituality in occupational therapy education (USA, Canada, Australia, UK)
- given as one of the reasons for not addressing spirituality in practice.
Where to from here?

- Ongoing process within AUT
- Making links with practitioners
  - Mutual information / resource sharing
  - Including in students’ placement experience
- Enough interest for a Special Interest Group?
References

References cont.