

*Essential Recovery, Essential
Spirituality: Role of The
Therapist as Spiritual Midwife*

Daniel L. Smith

MA LCSW CCGC NCGC

Clinical Supervisor NCPG, Inc.

Daniel L. Smith NCGC

- Ravenswood Retreat Center
- P.O. Box 29504
- St. Louis MO 63126
- GORRILLA8M@AOL.COM

- 314 265 2440

RECOVERY? SPIRITUALITY?

- “God comforts the disturbed and disturbs the comfortable.”
- Anonymous, quoted in Millman, *Living on Purpose*

We're here to ...

- examine the complex interaction between recovery and spirituality
- glimpse the topography of spiritual growth
- discover ways to assist recovering individual find paths to spiritual wholeness and community based resources

If we are successful...

- Better understand the gambler's **search** for meaning & purpose
- Better define **wholeness** in the addict who is regaining meaning & purpose
- discuss the therapist - community resource relationship as key to the therapist - client relationship

Preliminary Issues to consider

- Literal and referential differences between AA, NA and GA's approaches
- Transference in the various interpretations of this "power of our own understanding"
- The elusive nature of "process" vs "ingestive" addictions
- **The spiritual bankruptcy** of the addict who has lost meaning and purpose when the addictive behavior ends

1. *Recognizing Spiritual Health and Bankruptcy*

- Spirituality: what it is and what it isn't
 - “*spiritus*” breathe/breath
 - *connection to inner resources*
 - *paradox: “something greater than ourselves” vs “outside ourselves”*
- abuse of spirituality = disconnection, emptiness
- The futility of “Coaching, coaxing & directing” spiritual growth - *Spiritual growth must be experienced*

Drinking Ends, Emptiness Begins

- “After a little while, I discovered that my entire life had revolved around getting high and coming down, and covering up the mess. I wasn’t using anymore, but I was still lying, manipulating, and struggling to find something -- someone --anything to hold onto.” (EXCERPT FROM A CLIENT ASSESSMENT)

Gambling ends, emptiness begins

- “The spiritual emptiness is overwhelming; when I stop doing this, there’s nothing left in my life which has a shred of meaning.” (EXCERPT FROM A CLIENT ASSESSMENT)

Spiritual Emptiness

- There is a deep hole in your being, like an abyss. You will never succeed in filling that hole, because your needs are inexhaustible. You have to work around it so that gradually the abyss closes. Since the hole is so enormous and your anguish so deep, you will always be tempted to flee from it.
- There are two extremes to avoid: being completely absorbed in your pain and being distracted by so many things that you stay far away from the wound you want to heal.
- (Henri Nouwen)

*Ah, Where does this emptiness
come from: **“NEVER! ALWAYS!”***

-**EXERCISE # 1**: examine the “never” & “always” messages and all the sorry lies you tell yourself.
- Write 2 to 5 injunctions (never) and mandates (must, always)
- Replace each statement with truth.
- Begin to tell a new story about yourself.
- Adapted from Caitlin Matthews

Injunctions, Mandates

- Don't succeed
- Don't be
- Never marry
- Never let anyone help
- 'you'll never amount to anything'
- Be perfect
- Always be polite
- Always hide true feelings
- Be quiet

Bankruptcy of Spirit

- “Addictions take precedence over all else, even life itself.”
- “Attachment & the suffering that comes with it are part of the human dilemma... part of life, but a severe addiction is usually life threatening.”
- Christina Grof, *Addiction, Attachment & Self*, 1993, 143)

Gaining Perspective

I float face up and fish-eyed to the sky
To hope or chance as if to divine
An evening's mystery among the heavens,
Calm seas at night enfolding--
Then quietly dine late at La Cocina on lizard
soup no less,
And see the little legs look up
At me as god no doubt had seen
Me floating (C) D. L. Smith, from "Aruba Dream" 1997

2. *Quenching Spiritual Thirst*

- **Soul Sickness** occurs when
 - *one stops participating in one's life...*
 - *when external demands take precedence over our right to be soul connected ...*
 - *when outer noises drown out inner voices ...*
 - *when we lose touch with our core being ... and our divine roots*
- **Soul Pain = pain of being disconnected from whom we rightfully are** (Breton, Largent, *The Paradigm Conspiracy*, 1996, 18))

Soul Loss results from ...

- Abuse, trauma, injury, any unconsciousness, etc. despite a strong spiritual program, and or
- A lack of spiritual program
- *“We put aside whom we are and become what people and systems expect.”* (Breton, Largent, 18)

Relieving Emptiness: The Hero's Journey

- Grof cites Joseph Campbell:
- 1. We escape from the known world into addiction (separation)
- 2. Our troubles increase until we surrender (initiation)
- 3. In recovery, we return to divine connection by letting go of ego control (“Letting go absolutely”)

Obstacles in the Journey to Wholeness

- Denial
- Dissociation
- Demands of attachment
- Disillusionment

Denial

- Our humanness supposes we are separate from our source (divinity)
- Our training reinforces this estrangement with layers of protection, defenses, reactions, control-paradigm injunctions & mandates
- These successfully shield us from the dangers of the world but also from G*d

Dissociation

- A “state of mind that exists beyond pain” well known among addicts
- Produces detachment & isolation which prohibit enjoyment of the richness of life
- Results in forfeiting the potential of loving connections with others & self
- eg. Sundance, torture, abuse

Dissociative Reactions While Gambling Reported By Adult Pathological Gamblers

Dissociative Reactions	Jacobs 1982 N=121	Jacobs 1984 N=88	Kuley & Jacobs 1988 N=30	Brown 1994 N=27	Hudak 1994 N=27	Lesieur & Rosenthal 1994 N=239	Deverensky & Gupta 1996 N=32	Hardoon et al 1997 N=11	MEDIAN N=640
While gambling	Per Cent Reporting “occasionally” To “all the time”								
Felt like in a Trance	79%	76%	43%	81%	79%	59%	50%	73%	75%
Felt like a different person	79	67	54	70	68	NA	56	55	67%
Felt like I was outside myself	50	51	33	52	56	35	47	27	49%
Experienced memory blackout	38	38	50	44	36	23	19	0	37%
Lost track of time	a	a	a	a	a	a	66	82	74%

a=not reported

Demands of Attachment

- “When you think you’ve hit bottom, just look down.”
- Many bottoms, each different, each distinct
- “letting go” of addictive behaviors, people, places, activities, things, feelings, resentments ... must precede any new growth

Disillusionment

- Change is inevitable, growth is optional.
- “letting go” can become a way of facing challenges
- Three choices:
 - Fight
 - Hang on
 - Let go

Clinging, craving, grasping, clutching, holding on, wanting

- A universal experience
- humans by nature cling to relationships
- grasp at intensity and drama
- clutch wealth, possessions, pleasure, even recognition

• --Grof, 140

Defenestration

When the space at the end of the line
Comes full
Every so often
This man without wings
Leans out of the pane-less window,
Spits thirteen floors down
To dampen the pavement
For an afternoon's diversion—

How he sits there in his underwear
Boozy flesh bestirred by the constant hum in his head
And the voice of the little kid
Calling him out of his sleep, the racetracks'
flypaper's casualty,
And the sounds of tinkling coins perhaps from the street below

Bankruptcy of Spirit complicated by Sobriety

- Sobriety = “everyday consciousness
(William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*)
- Addiction may have yielded “brief glimpses of the Absolute & a heightened feeling of identification with the cosmos” (Bill Wilson, letter)
- FINE PRINT: Nothing will replace them...
- unless we resume our search without the addiction; just stopping = emptiness

A short spiritual

.....EXERCISE #2: Discuss

- Where have you experienced **HUNGER** in
- Social
- Solitude
- Sexual
- Intimacy
- Money
- Body

3. *Surveying your spiritual aptitudes*

- Spiritual Experience
- Classical Paths to Wholeness
- Evolution of the Spirituality Survey

Spiritual Experience

- *“experience is not what happens but what we do with what happens.”*

(Aldous Huxley)

- Letter from Carl Jung to Bill Wilson: *“Craving for alcohol [is] the equivalent, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval terms: union with God.”* (quoted in Mel B., *New Wine*, 1991)

An experience of spirituality

-**EXERCISE #3**: Learn from osmosis or experience?
- List 3 lessons from things you've read or watched
- List 3 lessons learned from experience
- Discuss which are most vivid, stand out most clearly or are more important

And those Problems?

- “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” Albert Einstein
- So what stops us from thinking outside the soul-destroying paradigm (aka outside the box)????


Fear of Unknown = Fear of Failure

-**EXERCISE # 4: Embrace Failure**
- List three mistakes you made in the last two or three days
- What have you learned from each mistake?
- ... that may make it more likely for you to succeed next time facing a similar situation?

• (Dan Millman, *Living on Purpose*)



hmmm

- “The road to success is paved with failures.” Dan Millman, *Living on Purpose*, 26
 - “There is glory in a great mistake.” Nathalia Crane in *Today’s Gift*, 2/17
 - Humans must be free to make mistakes. We cannot protect another person from the experiences of the world. It would be harmful for both of us to try...
- 

4. *Demanding Wholeness*

- “There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance -- that principle is contempt prior to investigation.” Herbert Spencer
- Resentments, Inventories, and Personal Communion with Your Higher Power

Specific Blocks to Spiritual Growth

- Fear, or the *Unwillingness to consider need for growth (narcissism, egocentrism)*
- Anger, resentment
- Guilt, shame
- Decreased conscientiousness
- Increased neurosis
- A closed heart

*Wholeness is more than
abstinence... the recovering person
must*

- Break from old patterns & negative emotional states which keep us stuck
- Redirect to self the leaking of creative energy on others' problem & drama
- Inventory daily behaviors, knowing that to fall short is to be real, and real, human

Negative Emotional States = ill health

- Anger, resentment, and frustration create incoherent, random, jerky “heart rate variability” patterns... creating disharmony in the autonomic nervous system which carries information from brain to heart to rest of body

- *Childre, Martin, (C) Institute of Heartmath Research Center, 1998)*

Ah, sweet resentment!

- “A lot of people express anger. I grow tumors.”
 - *Woody Allen*
- *resentments affect T-cell count, hormonal levels, heart rhythms, heart rate variability, blood pressure, neurotransmitter production and availability*

Anger and Resentment Worksheet

- Natural response to a threatened harm or a perceived injustice or
- Natural response to unfulfilled desires or wants or especially needs
- Separate from the behavior it might prompt
- (re) sentire (inability to let go)

Ah, Guilt! Ah, Shame!

- “Carrying around this guilt has weighed me down.” Arnie
- Guilt: feeling badly about a behavior
- Shame: feeling badly about myself
- “Guilt stems from issues I had before gambling.” client

Guilt and Shame

- Addiction began as a high or as an escape, as an illusion of being in control, but it turns on us: what results is
- ***a pathological relationship to a mood altering experience that brings about negative, life damaging consequences***

Positive Emotional States = Health

- **Appreciation, love, care, compassion** produce coherent & ordered heart rate variability patterns.
- “Such a pattern is generally associated with autonomic nervous system balance and cardiovascular efficiency.”

Childre, Martin, Institute of Heartmath Research Center, 1998

Practicing the Positives

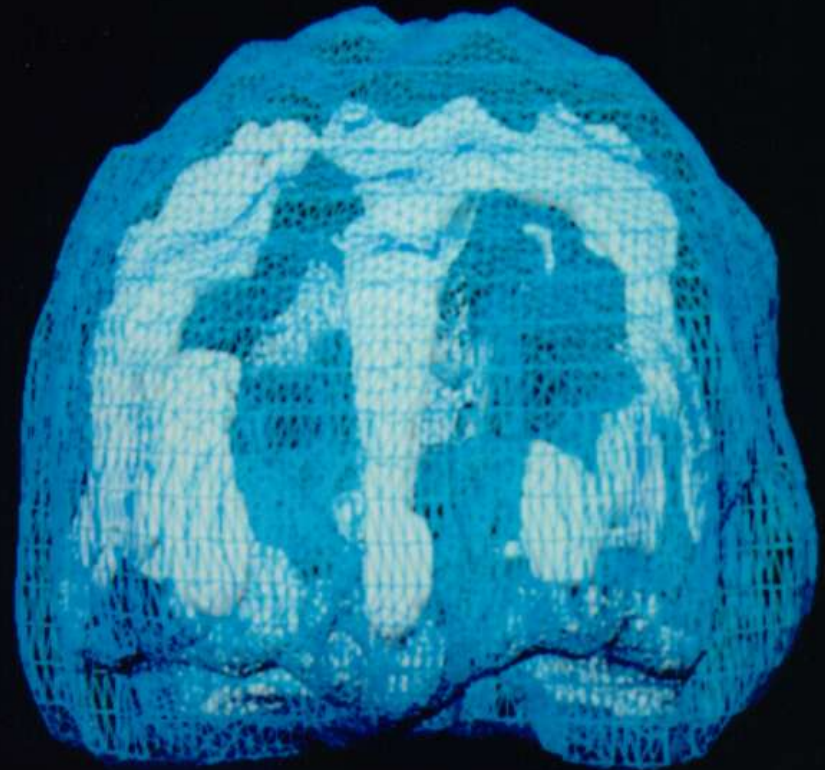
- **...EXERCISE #5:** Live in the positive
- List one instance each in the past week when you felt 1) appreciated, 2) loved, and 3) cared for.
- How long did the feeling(s) last?
- Did you acknowledge the person(s) involved?

Why bother?

- Cardiovascular disease claims more lives each year in the US than the next seven leading causes of death...
- 25% of Americans are hypertensive (50,000,000 people in this country alone)
- We live in a nutty world lacking spiritual balance. **And then there are those unfortunates who ...**

Normal vs OCD

Many thanks to Kate Lewis for these slides; ...note these are not HER brain...but more like mine



“Spiritual Awakening”

- Ongoing and never ending
- wider view of reality
- attuned to feelings
- geared to a purpose
- revealed by an ability to love self & others

“Spirituality”

- Personality change sufficient to bring out recovery
- religious conversion
- god consciousness
- vast change in feeling and outlook
- profound alteration in response to life
- new found inner resource
- Blocked by lack of honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, or contempt prior to investigation

Harmony and Balance in a Nutty World.....

- STRESS comes not from an incident but from my perception of it.
- Really talking about DIS -stress
- Humans suffer from 60 thoughts per second
- ^ distress = ^ hormones (stroke -causing cortisol can stay elevated for 3+ hours!)
- ^distress = incoherence in thinking & decreased immune system (T-cell) response

(Childre, Martin, *The Heart Math Solution*)

Harmony & Balance from cultivating Positive Emotional States

- + emotions (happiness, appreciation, compassion, care, love) create hormonal balance and immune system responses.
- Mental & emotional diets determine overall energy, health, well being.
- Stay informed but not immersed.
- Junk emotions, negativity = toxicity

(Sue Schulte, ABD, Director of Wellness Programs,
St. Anthonys' Medical Center, St Louis Mo)

From Selfishness to Selflessness

- “If you have much, give of your wealth. If you have little, give of your heart.” Arab Proverb
- Continuum: Selfish to Selfless
- Does not mean denying self or ignoring own needs, boundaries, and health
- Does mean giving, not taking
- Always means giving thanks

Tis blessed to give

- **EXERCISE #6:** List three people you know well.
- For each person, list specific, concrete, & non material “gifts” you have given each person.
- For each person, list what you received from each.
- If you consider well, you may see you’ve received at least as much as you’ve given.

Millman, 87

Another way to look at it: Your Energy Input / Output

- “Look at life as an energy game. Each day ask yourself, *‘Are my energy expenditures (actions, reactions, thoughts, feelings) productive or non productive?’*
- *‘During the course of the day, have I accumulated more stress (distress) or peace?’*

Sue Schulte

Eustress, Distress, We All Stress, But Who Stresses

You the Most might be toxic?

- Use the Serenity Prayer
- Remember your Protective Boundaries
- Remember Intimacy & Playfulness
- Put your effort where your greatest priority and health reside
- Can always detach & hold a place in your heart for those who drain you of life

Giving to the Most Important

Too late I understand
that love is not in the blood
but in every simple kindness I denied
those to whom I owed humanity
just because they were day to day beside
me

Kathleen Raine, *The Oracle in The Heart*

The Circle of Kindness

-**EXERCISE #7** : Kind v. Toxic Support
- Draw a Circle, think of the people closest to you, in your support system, at work or at home
 1. Whom do you include in your circle of kindness?
 2. Whom do you exclude?
 3. Are there any toxic persons represented?
 4. Where do YOU stand in the circle?

Recovery is

- Fully participating in a process of positive change and positive growth,
- Remaining abstinent (and bet free) and responsible for avoiding relapse/slips
- Being responsible for one's progress along the predictable course of spiritual growth

Recovery is

- A profound shift to a paradigm (*worldview, philosophy, mental model, or life perspective*) that honors who we are and unveils the truth underneath the roles we've assumed

Thanks for taking the time and effort today!

- Daniel L. Smith NCGC

Ravenswood Retreat Center

P.O. Box 29504

St. Louis MO 63126

email GORRILLA8M@AOL.COM

- 314 265 2440