Spiritual Care of the Nonreligious

A conversation with
Mary Martha Thiel
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Hebrew SeniorLife
The Louisville Institute
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Series of Webinars

Part 1: Spiritual Care of the Nonreligious

Part 2: Teaching Spiritual Care of the Nonreligious (2/24/16)

Part 3: Spiritual Care of the American “Jewish Not Religious” with Rabbi Sara Paasche-Orlow (3/2/16)
Who are the “nonreligious” we are serving?

- Spiritual But Not Religious (SBNR)
- Religiously unaffiliated
- Persons combining practices from multiple traditions
- Persons with “no religion in particular”
- “Nones” = none of the above
- Religiously affiliated
- Atheists
Humility

• Some have always been nonreligious
• Some have left religious traditions
  – Sins against the earth
  – Sins against people of color
  – Sins against the poor
  – Sins against LGBTQ persons
  – Sins against the disabled
  – Sins against other religious traditions
Sins against Atheists

• 2014: gay boys could join Boy Scouts

• 2015: troop leaders could be gay

• Today: no atheists or agnostics are allowed
Chaplain’s Tasks

- Assess spirituality of resident
- Identify areas of strength, and work to build on them, to increase *spiritual well-being*
- Identify areas of distress, and work to ameliorate them, to decrease *spiritual distress*
  - ...Using resident’s language of meaning
  - And resident’s spiritual resources *(SGTO’s)*
What is Spirituality?

• A personal quest to find meaning and purpose in life by trusting and relating to “Something Greater than Oneself”

• Present in all people, from the very young to the very old
What are some “Something Greater than Oneself’s” (SGTO’s)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God</th>
<th>Science</th>
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<tr>
<td>Higher Power</td>
<td>My family</td>
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<td>The moment</td>
<td>Friends</td>
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<td>Luck</td>
<td>My ancestors</td>
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<td>Israel</td>
<td>Community of fellow</td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>Voluntary communities</td>
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<td>The universe</td>
<td>On-line communities</td>
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<td>Beauty</td>
<td>Vocation</td>
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<td>Vocation</td>
<td>Philosophical belief, e.g.</td>
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<td>Scripture</td>
<td>humanism</td>
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<td>Literature, poetry</td>
<td>Peoplehood, e.g. the Jewish</td>
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<td>Religious texts</td>
<td>community</td>
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<td>Pets</td>
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SGTO: Vocation
“The world of business is becoming one of the great cathedrals of the spirit. Businesses are becoming places in which meaning can be created, in which mutuality begins to happen. Business is the force in the world that is fulfilling every major value of the great spiritual traditions: intimacy, trust, a shared vision, cooperation, collaboration, friendship, and ultimately love.”

What are some more “Something Greater than Oneself’s” (SGTO’s)?

- Parents, grandparents
- Neighborhood of FOO
- Siblings
- Children, grandchildren
- Artwork
- Legacies
- Sports teams
- My medical team
- Congregation
- Denomination
- Music and other arts
- The military
- Patriotism
- My heroes
- Values
- Family members remembered from Shoah
- Nature
About to see his father for the first time.
Rugby star

His biggest fan.
What is Religion?

The beliefs, practices, and attitudes associated with an organized group or community; usually has a common authoritative text or narrative
What is Spiritual Wellbeing?

• Life-giving connection to the SGTO
• Beliefs, values, community and practices that nurture hope, wonder, resiliency, meaning and purpose, love (given and received), reconciliation with others, and inner strength and peacefulness
• Can be expressed in religious and/or secular language
What is Spiritual Distress?

- Distress resulting from a broken or threatened connection to the SGTO
- The upset that results when events threaten core beliefs in life’s meaning, purpose and fairness
- Can be expressed in religious or secular language
Chaplaincy’s Pastoral Concern

“...the merely individual connection with the divine, ... the whole modern muddle of gauzy ontologies and piecemeal belief that leads so many people to dismiss all doctrine out of hand, or to say that they are spiritual but not religious ... all this is fine until life, or death, comes crashing into you with its all-too-specific terrors and sufferings.... Definite beliefs enable us to withstand the storms of suffering that come into every life, and that tend to destroy any spiritual disposition that does not have deep roots.”

» - Christian Wiman, My Bright Abyss
ACPE Code of Ethics 2016

101.4: approach the religious conviction of a person, group and/or CPE student with respect and sensitivity to avoid the imposition of their theology or cultural values on those served or supervised
Mordecai Kaplan Model

- Belonging
- Behavior
- Belief
HSL Spiritual Assessment Model ©

• Love/Belonging
• Forgiveness
• Hope
• Trust
• Meaning/Vocation/Legacy
• Gratitude
• Identity
Chaplain’s Tasks

• **Assess spirituality** of resident
• Identify areas of strength, and work to build on them, to increase *spiritual well-being*
• Identify areas of distress, and work to ameliorate them, to decrease *spiritual distress*
  – ...Using *resident’s* language of meaning
  – And *resident’s* spiritual resources (*SGTO’s*)
“I’m not religious, but I believe...
in the power of hope, in the power of
determination and in guardian angels.”
Some *secular* spiritual resources

- Relationships (family, friends, staff, team, you)
- Photos of loved ones and special times
- Memory
- Cooking
- Gardening
- Act of compassion (ex. cards to soldiers)
- Signing petitions
- Flowers/watch the changing of the seasons
- Read or be read to
- Ethical Will
A Field Guide for the Spiritually Independent
More *Secular* Spiritual Resources

- Team sports (playing, watching)
- Having a pet visit
- Guided imagery (only with cognitively intact)
- Meditation (only with cognitively intact)
- Music (making it, listening to it)
- Journal-keeping
- Life review
- Quiet
- Hand massage
Even More Secular Spiritual Resources

• Repetitive actions: knitting, ipad musical art, getting a back rub, petting a canine visitor, patting a baby’s bottom
• Phoning/e-mailing/writing letters/Caring Bridge: connecting!
• Sharing in favorite movies/videos
• Writing poetry, journaling, drawing, painting
• Sharing (age appropriate) jokes about absurdity
• Getting outside
• Studying
• Giving charity
Open-Eyed Prayer

- I will be holding you in my heart during....
- I hope you will find a community that welcomes you and your child....
- I trust that it won’t always feel like it does today....
- I wonder what doors will open for you that we haven’t even imagined....
- May your courage continue to sustain you...
And some spiritual/religious tools

- Music
- Scripture
- Beads
- Bells
- Yahrzeit candles
- River stones
- Qibla
- Prayer
Let your context inform your practice

Ex. Hebrew SeniorLife

* Boston one of the least religious cities in US
* RC’s here are often significantly disaffected
* Residential context means Love/Belonging the most frequent need
* Art is both religious and secular
* Dog therapy