

Spirituality & Wisdom

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- Stanislaus County's first training conducted in September 2003.

Intention: Create dialogue, encourage curiosity, and enhance provider's exploration about faith, spirituality or religious beliefs with people we serve.

- Share the richness and differences of various beliefs and traditions.

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- Discover the shared meanings and shared experiences among individuals with different belief systems.
- Explore concerns and benefits of engaging in faith, spiritual, and/or religious conversations with consumers and family members who receive services.
- Increase participant's comfort in discussing spiritual issues with consumers and families.

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- Learn new ways to work with consumers and family members related to spirituality.
- Training is open to all staff, staff supervisors and managers, community agency contract staff and volunteers.
- Training has a blend and balance of self examination by participants, combined with how this could matter for clients we serve and practical applications.

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General thoughts and considerations

- Participants who attend this training love this topic, it seems to call to them.
- An "inquiry based" training, with a multi-cultural and multi-faith training body, keeps the training open and manageable.
 - Avoids pitfalls of domination of a specific faith or religion or the "right way" to do something.

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- This training does "open the door" for an organization to support or invite providers to include spirituality, faith or religion in their work.
- Training includes participants personal self exploration, but does so in the larger context of working with others.

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Review the Training Agenda

A. Introductions/welcoming environment

- Training room has displays of art work, books, family and cultural items of significance brought in by the trainers, music, and a large wicker elephant in the middle of the room.
- Overviews goals/learning objectives.
- Sharing spiritual traditions- all trainers.
 - Sets the tone that we welcome participants to share their own experiences in the training.

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B. Defining spirituality and religion

- We ask participants to read the definitions out loud. Gives participants opportunity to make meaningful distinctions for themselves.
- Each participant is asked to create their own definition of spirituality- some definitions include religion, some do not.
 - We have 6-8 share with the whole group.
- Defining spirituality and religion is foundational, and it adds an important distinction for all of us.

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C. The role of spirituality and religion in culture

Each trainer shares how spirituality and religion is expressed or is a part of their culture.

- This tends to bring out the values and role of religion and how the culture and family are impacted by it.
- Lots of 'pros and cons' about how religion has shaped attitudes, behavior and thinking of people.

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D. Panel presentation

Consumers share their experiences

Five questions:

- What role does spirituality or your faith play in your recovery or you being well?
- What role did your faith or spirituality play for you when you were ill?

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- What conversations or comments were made by providers about your spiritual life or your faith?
- Was faith or spirituality included as part of your care or treatment by your provider(s)? If yes, how?
- What should providers of mental health care know about you, as it relates to your faith and spirituality?

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The panel is among the most impactful parts of the training, even in Stanislaus County where we have had consumer panels for a long time

- Important to prep the panel members before the training for support and clear/concise sharing.
- Helps participants hear directly what spirituality and faith means to the panelists as people, not as consumers of services.
- Helps participants understand how providers have included or discounted faith and spirit.
- Adds considerations of how to support people both when they are well and when they are struggling.

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E. Stanislaus County and BHRS policy about promotion of religion

Review of our county policy by our Director.

- It's a short segment, but important for people to hear directly from our director about this policy.
 - Promotion, proselytizing, use of County time or County resources is forbidden.
- Reinforces not to promote religion.
- Leaves a range of gray areas; consisting of what we are permitted to do and following the lead of the person who receive services.

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F. Spirituality and faith in alcohol/drug services

Use of video clips of individuals (and service providers) in recovery from addiction and how spirituality is critical to their recovery.

- Participants are exposed to an entire treatment system that supports and endorses a "Higher Power" throughout its service delivery.
- Some distinctions between the 12 step spiritual focus and county or CBO's rehabilitation focus.

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G. Engaging clients in discussion about spirituality and/or faith

Two role plays; One where the "client" initiates the discussion about their faith or religion; the second role play the provider brings it up first.

- Generates lots of discussion and comments from the participants.

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H & I. Concerns for providers discussing spirituality faith, and religion

- Trainers discuss specific examples of when spirituality or faith was problematic/difficult or a positive experience.
- Small group work allows participants to more fully explore with others the concerns and opportunities that are available to them.
 - Using good judgment of how or when to proceed. Participants often want more clarity and more of "how" to delve into spiritual and faith issues.

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J. Working within peoples faith or introducing ideas outside their faith

- Share ways of working within a person's faith or cultural beliefs.
 - Lots of examples of working with someone and staying within their cultural belief system.
- Share ways of introducing something new or outside a persons point of reference.
 - Lots of opportunity for introducing new ways of thinking about the distress people experience.
 - For example, introducing depression an illness.

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K. Spirituality and Culture

Each trainer shares a specific experience they have had of how spirituality lives within their culture or family.

- Reinforces the importance of how culture, spirituality, faith are connected and expressed.

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L. The elephant in the living room

Being 'wounded' and 'loved' is explored.

- **The wicker elephant that sat in the room all day has red fabric on one side that resembles a semi-heart shape. Some see it as a 'heart', others see it as a 'wound'.**
 - **What does the elephant represent about us, other people, or the issue of spirituality?**

- **Poem or reading by of one of the trainers.**

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M & N. Closure

The training is closed with candles and a moment of reflection for all.

Evaluations are completed by participants.

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