Screening, Assessing and Addressing Spiritual Suffering

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The presenter has nothing to disclose.
Opening Reflection

“Humor has always been an expression of the freedom of the human spirit. It is an ability to stand outside of life’s flow and view the whole scene – the incongruities, the tragedies outside our control, the unexpected.”

Terry Paulson
Learning Objectives

- Name 4 components of pain
- Identify your role in screening, assessing and addressing spiritual suffering
- Understand the components of spiritual suffering
Suffering Versus Pain

- Bodies have pain
- People suffer

“Spiritual suffering is a subjective response to pain and not in itself destructive. Many persons come to recognize times of suffering and illness as opportunity to get to know their soul.”

(Groves & Klauser, 2005, pp. 38-39)
Four Components of Pain

- **P** Physical problems, often multiple, must be specifically addressed and treated.
- **A** Anxiety, anger, and depression are critical components of pain that must be addressed.
- **I** Interpersonal problems, including loneliness, financial stress, and family tensions are often interwoven into the symptoms.
- **N** Not be able to integrate the reality of the disease, disability, or approaching death, a sense of hopelessness, a search for meaning can cause severe suffering.
Spiritual Suffering: What is it?

- Loss of meaning and purpose in life
- Serious challenges to the human spirit
  - Theological and belief issues
  - Existential and meaning issues
  - Relationship issues
Spiritual Indicators of Suffering

- Fear
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Regret
- Questions of Why
Personal Indicators of Suffering

- Isolation
- Anger
- Expressed sense of Hopelessness
- Shame
Physical Indicators of Spiritual Suffering

- Physical pain unresolved after extensive pharmacological interventions
- Pain that is unspecified or frequently changes location
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
Together, as people who care, we answer the call of every person we serve.

- Basic spiritual support: ALL OF US
- Primary spiritual support: care team (RN, MSW, MD, NP, etc.)
- Specialist spiritual care: chaplain
Spiritual Suffering: Tools

- Screening for religious/spiritual struggle
- Religious/Spiritual history taking
- Spiritual Assessment
Religious/Spiritual History Taking

- SPIRIT
- HOPE
- FICA
Spiritual Assessment

Assessment provides a foundation for “action, communication, contracting, evaluation, accountability, quality assurance, and research”

(Fitchett, 1993, p. 20)
Assessments

- Guide our efforts
- Direct our attention
- Create a plan of care
- Evaluate
- Hold each other accountable
- Insight into cost-effectiveness and measurable goals
- Provide foundation for research
Paul W. Pruyser: Guidelines for Pastoral Diagnosis

- Awareness of the Holy
- Providence
- Faith
- Grace or Gratefulness
- Repentance
- Communion
- Sense of Vocation

(Pruyser, 1976, pp. 61-79)
George Fitchett: 7 X 7 Model of Spiritual Assessment

Holistic Dimensions

- Medical
- Psychological
- Psychosocial
- Family Systems
- Ethnic and Cultural
- Societal Issues
- Spiritual

(Fitchett, 1993, 42)
7 x 7 Spiritual Dimensions

- Beliefs and Meaning
- Vocation and Consequences
- Experience and Emotion
- Courage and Growth
- Ritual and Practice
- Community
- Authority and Guidance

(Fitchett, 1993, 45-49)
“Diagnosing pain is about holy listening rather than compulsive fixing.”

“Spiritual suffering and physical pain are always interrelated.”

(Groves & Klauser, 2005, p. 40)
Spiritual Pain Scale

1. Completely Peaceful

2. General Well-Being

3. Extreme Anxiety

(Groves & Klauser, 2005, p. 41)
Meaning Pain Scale

1. Life is filled with purpose and meaning

2. Feel generally motivated

3. Life has become meaningless

(Groves & Klauser, 2005, p. 45)
Forgiveness Pain Scale

1. Feel a deep sense of reconciliation toward self and others

3. There is no outstanding issues that are calling for forgiveness in my life

5. Feel strong sense of unforgiveness toward self or another

(Groves & Klauser, 2005, p. 48)
Relatedness Pain Scale

1. Feel strong sense of connection with persons and things that matter most to me.

3. The most important areas of my life seem balanced.

5. Feel seriously alienated from someone or thing that is important to me.

(Groves & Klauser, 2005, p. 51)
Hope Pain Scale

1. Feel hope filled and optimistic
2. Generally trust what the future holds for me
3. Experiencing deep depression and hopelessness

(Groves & Klauser, 2005, p. 54)
Develop your own assessment

Fitchett suggests three major issues to consider when selecting an assessment or developing your own:

1. What are “your concepts about the spiritual of life?”
2. What are “your concepts about norms and authority in the assessment process?”
3. What are “your needs and preferences regarding the spiritual assessment process?”

(Fitchett, 1993, p. 90)
Addressing Spiritual Suffering

- Control
- Pain
- Burden
- Fear
- Meaning
- Forgiveness
- Relatedness
- Hope
Meaning

Loss of meaning as cause of suffering.

What’s most important to you right now?
What meaning do you assign to your life right now?

Where do you find meaning?
What’s been your purpose in life?
Forgiveness

To forgive or not forgive?
To whom is forgiveness being offered or who needs it?
Is it an act of forgiving someone for an injustice suffered? From victim to offender?
Is it a state to be found within?
Relatedness

What’s the relationship with one’s self?
What’s the relationship with one’s community?
How is the relationship with things, roles, events, places, identities, deities?
Hope

Hopelessness

For what do you hope?

What connects you to hope?
Considering Personality Types

The world contains so many wonderful human beings. We are not the same.

Meyers Briggs Type Indicator
The Enneagram

When are we doing our assessment?
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What’s in your pack?

What tools do you use to assist in addressing the suffering you meet?

We each have tools with which we are very comfortable. How often do you stretch yourself to explore or develop something new?
Options

- Art
- Breathing
- Relaxation
- Coma Therapy
- Dream Work
- Touch/Energy
- Guided Imagery
- Religious Rites
- Spiritual Practices

- Meditation
- Prayer
- Music
- 12-Step Process
- Letter Writing
- Ethical Will
- Movement
- Journaling
- Life Review
- Rituals
Closing Reflection

“May your inner eye
See through the surfaces
And glean the real presence
Of everything that meets you.”

(O’Donohue, 2008, p. 40)

