



**North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW)**  
PO Box 121; Botsford, CT 06404 \*\*\* Phone/Fax (tollfree): 888.426.4712  
Email: [info@nacsW.org](mailto:info@nacsW.org) \*\*\* Website: <http://www.nacsW.org>

*“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”*

**THE INTEGRATED HELPING ASSESSMENT MODEL:  
“THE EYE OF THE EAGLE”**

**Robert and Nicole Hewitt**

**Presented at:  
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Dallas, TX**

**The Integrated Helping Assessment Model:  
"The Eye of the Eagle"**

A Teaching Model: Spiritually Sensitive Approach to Effective Social Work Practice

Robert L. Hewitt, PhD  
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Nicole M. Hewitt, MSW (PhD Candidate)  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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## What Is Spirituality?

- A quality of the inner self or soul.
- It is personal, internal, and is less visible than religion (at first glance).
- Spirituality involves a sense of the sacred and the recognition that there exists some power, life force, or divine being that transcends the material world and one's personal experiences and existence.
- Spirituality and religious practices for many people are interrelated and overlapping, but not always.
- For example, some individuals possess a deep spiritual life but engage in few religious practices.
- On the other hand, some participate in observable religious activities without possessing much in the way of an inner faith or spirituality.

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## Why The Need To Create A Spiritually Sensitive Context for Social Work Practice?

- A social worker's clients come from diverse backgrounds in terms of culture, religion, and spiritually.
- A worker must understand and be accepting of how different individuals and groups formulate various answers to questions about the meaning and purpose of life and how best to live one's life.
- Of equal importance, or more so, is that the social worker must have grappled with these same questions.
- In sum, the social work practitioner must be accepting of the beliefs and the paths chosen by others and also understand and be comfortable with her or his own spiritual beliefs and choices.
- The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) says that all accredited schools of social work and social work depts. should have a spirituality component in their curriculum.

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## Workshop Goals

- Present a theoretically based, spiritually sensitive practice-focused model for social work practitioners, educators, supervisors and students.
- Provide a perspective for assisting social workers to begin to address five practitioner qualities or aspects necessary for effective spiritually sensitive social work intervention.
- Provide a forum for discussion of the nature and practice implication of the model.
- Offer three educational tools to apply the model and promote spiritually sensitive practice.

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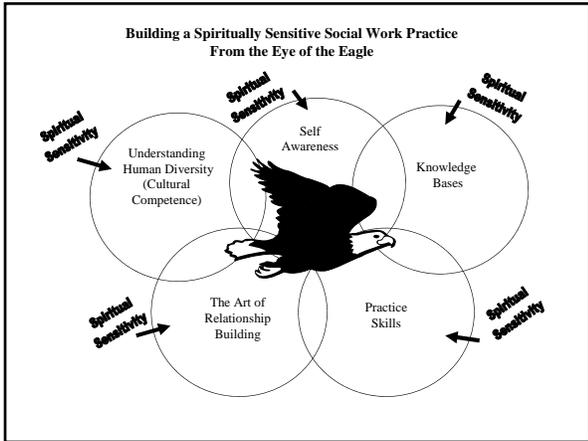
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## Why the Eye of the Eagle?

- The mighty eagle has been lauded throughout the history of mankind as a dynamic bird of prey, powerful, and relentless, yet is also protective of the young and is wise in it's ability and skill as a survivor
- For most Native Americans, the eagle is a symbol of protection and spirituality
- The feathers of the eagle have a highly spiritual significance and are given only at significant passages of life, such as birth and coming age.
- The sole monarch of the sky, the eagle has long been a symbol to biblical writers.
- In the United States the bald eagle, is our national mascot.
- The eagle, along with the "eye of the eagle", symbolizes those qualities, competencies and attributes direct practice social workers strive to achieve.
- Webster states that "eagle eye" means to have unusually sharp visual powers; keen watchfulness; alert watchfulness.

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### Why The Eye of The Eagle? (cont'd)

- The eagle has tremendous peripheral vision and can see from a great distance. This matchless bird can also look directly into the sun and not be blinded.
- This model offers social work practitioners a paradigm that speaks to all the foundation components that prepares them to work in a variety of practice situations including culturally and spiritually diverse clientele.
- Just as the eagle faces difficult storms weather wise so too does the social work practitioner face many difficult life trauma situations in providing services to spiritually diverse persons.
- And as the eagle has worked to develop skills, knowledge, strategies and other attributes to manage "the storm" the social work practitioners must develop, manage and continue to hone the skills, knowledge, self awareness, human diversity competence, and relationship building qualities that are the foundation components for a spiritually sensitive social work practice.

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**Spiritually Sensitive Self Awareness**  
**(Value Clarity)**

- The worker needs to be clear about his or her feelings, opinions, beliefs, and moral commitments that shape the approach to practice.
- The worker's own strengths and resources, including those based in spiritual and religious perspectives, need to be identified and linked to social work in a way that is congruent with the NASW Code of Ethics.
- The worker's own limitations, biases, prejudices, and negative attitudes also need to be identified, so that one can grow beyond them.
- Major value commitments of the worker and agency that have an impact on clients should be disclosed so that the client can exercise informed consent or refusal of service.

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**Fishbowl Dialogue:**

- What does it mean to be spiritually self aware? How does this play out for me? What do I think, what do I do that demonstrates this type of awareness?

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**Spiritually Sensitive Understanding of Human Diversity**  
**(Inclusivity)**

- Spiritually sensitive practice goes beyond tolerance of spiritual diversity among clients.
- It moves us to appreciation and advocacy for clients' religious freedoms and spiritual self-determination and the many variations of spiritual expression.

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**Spiritually Sensitive Understanding of Human Diversity  
(Inclusivity)**

- > Am I considering the spiritual diversity or religious aspects that are or could be salient in this case?
- > What do I do to make my helping efforts effective?
- > What are my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this type of spirituality or religious perspective?
- > How do I perceive the role of spirituality in this situation (a strength or a weakness)?
- > How might my values, beliefs, and attitudes about this type of spirituality impact on my ability to effectively assist this person?
- > Am I viewing this client as an individual first, and a part of a spiritual or religious group second?
- > What do I need to have, know, or understand in order to be effective in this particular helping situation?

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**Fishbowl Dialogue:**

- What has been the difficulty for Christians in being inclusive of different spiritual perspectives?

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**Spiritually Sensitive “Art” of Relationship Building  
(Respect)**

- Spiritual perspectives may describe a respectful helping relationship as:
  - Affirming inherent dignity and worth;
  - Recognizing the divinity or sacredness of each person;
  - Upholding an I-Thou relationship (being mindful of the essential unity between worker and client);
  - A bond of trust must usually exist before people are willing to risk that difficult human experience—change.
  - An understanding and strong belief in social justice

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**Spiritually Sensitive “Art” or Relationship Building (Respect)**

- All considerations of social justice rest on a core belief: Every human being is intrinsically valuable.
- This worth is not something that must be earned or proven, nor is it a function of one’s race, nationality, gender, IQ, income, social status, education, political affiliation, occupation, spirituality, perspective or other external characteristics or life circumstances.

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**Fishbowl Dialogue:**

- What does it mean to view every person as having dignity and worth regardless of what someone has done? When have you done this or seen this done?

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**Spiritually Sensitive Knowledge (Creativity)**

- Spiritually sensitive social workers must strive to develop the creativity to make abstract concepts like “spiritual” and “spirituality” concrete and practical.
- This is especially true given that spirituality and religious perspectives are dynamic (over time) in how they are understood and utilized especially in times of personal troubles and life stress.
- A social worker with imagination can identify a variety of ways to approach and solve a problem. Creative thinking is characterized by the integration of diverse facts and information and the formation original ideas.

*Research*

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**Spiritually Sensitive Practice Skills  
(Client Centeredness)**



- The ability to do something well arising from talent, training, or practice (Random house Webster's College Dictionary, 1991).
- More specifically, having skills means the helper possesses specific behaviors that are used in the implementation of the service delivery function.

*Spiritually Sensitive Direct practice skills are used in two primary ways:*

- To assist the professional helper and the particular client to deal with and effectively manage their own feelings.
- To assist the particular client to deal with and effectively manage his or her problems.

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**Spiritually Sensitive Practice Skills  
(Client Centeredness)**



- Spiritually sensitive social work practice gives the value of client centeredness special nuances.
- Client centeredness means taking the client's worldview and spiritual experiences seriously.
- Client centeredness means truly *starting where this particular client is...and going at this client's pace.*

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**Spiritually Sensitive Practice Skills  
(Client Centeredness)**



- In such an approach, the social worker comes across as hearing what the person is saying, which is a vital and sometimes under-rated quality of direct social work practice.
- We say "under-rated" because we believe that in beginning practice we may not realize how diligent and intentional we need to be in our efforts to **listen** and **accurately hear** what the other person is really saying.
- If one is seeking to create a spiritually sensitive context for practice the need for the skill of client centeredness is especially critical.
- So often people are expecting us to not be listening for it.
- People are not expecting us to respect that part of them.

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**Spiritually Sensitive Practice Skills  
(Client Centeredness)**



- The practice skill of client centeredness allows the practitioner to embrace this listening truth:

*In true listening*

*We reach behind the words,*

*We see through them,*

*To find the person who is revealed.*

*Client centeredness listening is a search to find the treasure (as in the center) of the true person as revealed verbally and non-verbally.*

(R. BOLTON, 1979)

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**Educational Action Tools to Promote  
Spiritually Sensitive Practice**



- Walk About/Talk About
- Decision Case Model
- Dialogue Across Spiritual Perspectives



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**“Walk About / Talk About”**

- ✓ I believe spirituality is a critical component within effective social work practice because:
- ✓ I believe spirituality is often ignored or avoided in practice because:
- ✓ One way I currently incorporate spirituality into my practice is:
- ✓ The difference between spiritually sensitive practice and religious-based practice is:
- ✓ The challenges practitioners face in attempting to incorporate spirituality into practice are:
- ✓ The ethical dilemmas practitioners or agencies face in deciding how to incorporate spirituality into practice are:

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**The Nature of the Decision Case Model  
as a Tool for Promoting Spiritually  
Sensitive Practice**

- **A resource** for social work practitioners in both state and other nonsectarian institutions as well as those that are faith based;
- A decision case method is **designed to be useful across all social work** curriculum and practice settings including the following:
  - \* human behavior and social environment
  - \* professional values and ethics
  - \* Social policy
  - \* Research
  - \* Intervention on the multi-level of generalist social work practice
- This model is used **with the assumption and expectation** that all accredited social work programs teach about religion and spirituality as a significant dimension of human diversity.

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**The Nature of the Decision Case Model as a Tool for  
Promoting Spiritually Sensitive Practice**

- The purpose of case method discussion is to provide opportunities for *students and practitioners to use their analytic and critical thinking skills, their knowledge of social work theory and research, and their common sense and collective wisdom* to identify and analyze problems, to evaluate possible solutions, and to *formulate a preferred intervention*.

In other words .....

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