CURRICULUM MODULE OR INTEGRATING FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Utilizing Spirituality to Motivate Clients

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Primary course: Human Behavior in the Social Environment (BSW & MSW)

Secondary course(s): SW Elective (BSW & MSW)

CURRICULUM MODULE ON UTLIZING SPIRITUALITY TO MOTIVATE CLIENTS

I. Core Competency Addressed:
Educational Policy 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

II. Specific Practice Behaviors Related to the Module:
Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development. Social workers:
- utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation; and
- critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

III. Materials Needed and/or Assigned Readings:
Sermabeikian, P. (1994). Our clients, ourselves: The spiritual perspective and social work practice. *Social Work, 39*(2), 178-183.

> Sermabeikian wrote this article in the mid 90's when the spiritual perspective was virtually unexplored within the social work community. The author uses Jung's analytic psychology to present a theoretical framework for understanding spirituality as a construct that transcends religion or philosophical ideologies. This article opens a dialogue for understanding the therapeutic benefit of the client's spiritual beliefs and values in the helping process as well as understanding that professional judgments in practice are not value free.

Sheridan, M. (2008). The spiritual person. In E. D. Hutchison's (Ed.), *Dimensions of Human Behavior: Person and Environment, Third Edition* (p. 183-224). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

> Sheridan discusses spirituality as a universal characteristic of the human condition which includes a search for meaning, purpose, and connection, and is not to be confused with religion. The spiritual dimension of the individual can be conceptualized as a series of stages similar to that of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development, each with its own unique characteristics. Sheridan stresses that the rich diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs must be taken into account given the current increase in globalization. Two theories of spiritual development, Fowler's Stages of Faith Development and Wilber's Integral Theory of Consciousness, are discussed and provide a model for understanding human development beyond the ego and self-actualization. Sheridan outlines the use of these theories as a framework for evaluating the client's position on a spiritual developmental continuum and discusses the role of spirituality and spiritual assessment in social work practice. He summarizes how social work has evolved from its strong moral and religious beginnings to a more secular focus to the renewed interest in the significance of the spiritual dimension in enhancing our understanding of human behavior. Finally, Sheridan discusses the role of spirituality in relation to human

diversity as well as in relation to the struggles of human existence, problems in living, how spirituality can enhance individual and community well being, and the implications for social work practice.

IV. Description of the Module:

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss their understanding and critique in class. Reading assignments will be given in advance in order to provide ample time for students to be prepared for discussion. Class discussions will be facilitated through questions that encourage students to consider their understanding of spiritual principles and motivation.

Discussion will be encouraged using the following questions:
- How have you derived meaning, purpose, & direction in your life?
- How are you connecting with self and others?
- How have you or how might you benefit from a connection with an intangible essence, beyond human existence & rational knowing?
- How might your spiritual experience benefit you in your work with clients?

Class Activity I

Students will be asked to…
1. Make a list of what you consider to be universal spiritual beliefs. These may include honesty, compassion, and integrity to name a few.
2. Identify 3 key beliefs that could be motivating for clients.
    i. How might these spiritual beliefs motivate a client?
    ii. What are the positives of using spiritual beliefs in practice?
    iii. What are the negatives?

Assignment I

1. Students will explore the use of spirituality in social work practice.
2. Each student will develop an annotated bibliography of 1or 2 current journal resources and 1or 2 current online resources on the use of spirituality in practice.
3. Students will upload their annotated bibliographies electronically for the entire class in the course website.
4. Students will be randomly assigned to groups to read the bibliographies of the group members.
5. Students will participate in asynchronous discussion posting their thoughts and comments on how spirituality is currently being used in practice.

Class Activity II

1. Competent social work practice involves a base of knowledge, skills, and values. Identify at least three elements on each of the following that establish spiritual competence:
    i.   Knowledge
    ii. Skills
    iii. Values

Assignment II
1. Assignment I provided students with a collective view of the literature to determine the current use of spirituality in practice.
2. Now students will review the literature for theories, models, or perspectives of faith and/or spiritual development.
3. Select a theory, model, or perspective for use with clients.
4. Write a 5 – 7 page paper summarizing your findings from the literature regarding the use of the identified theory in motivating clients.