Critical Incidents
in Integrating
Spirituality
into Counseling

edited by Tracey E. Robert and Virginia A. Kelly

AMERICAN COUNSELING
ASSOCIATION

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Foreword

Working from the premise that spirituality is at everyone's core, that we all are, in the words of French philosopher and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "spiritual beings having a human experience," editors Tracey E. Robert and Virginia A. Kelly proffer a cutting-edge, practical must-read that effectively integrates critical incidents, spirituality, and counseling in a variety of settings with diverse populations across the entire developmental spectrum. Moreover, *Critical Incidents in Integrating Spirituality Into Counseling* not only readily falls under the umbrella of professional counseling, but it also adds to the clinical and conceptual knowledge base of an important specialty area.

Drs. Robert and Kelly have long been well-respected proponents of the interface of the sacred with the secular in mental health, and they acknowledge the guidance of pioneers in the field, many of whom are contributors to this book. Furthermore, the editors' leadership, research, and service in such organizations as the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) and the International Association of Addictions and Offender Counselors establish their "walking the talk."

The editors place the book in a historical context, noting the relevant debates over religion, spirituality, and psychotherapy of such luminaries as Freud, Jung, and James. In addition, Drs. Robert and Kelly acknowledge the profound and courageous leadership of pioneering ASERVIC board members during times in which many in the mental health field looked askance at those who dared to posit that a person's spiritual and religious beliefs potentially affected his or her psychological and physical well-being. One

might ask how it is even possible to divorce a client from his or her belief system.

Described by the editors as a casebook, this helpful manual's intended audience would easily include counselors in training, counselors in the field, counselor educators, psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, and other mental health professionals, as well as pastoral counselors and those with pastoral counseling training in a variety of religious settings. Not only can this easy-read be used as a text or companion to a text, it can also be recommended as a handy professional reference to be kept permanently in one's library.

The book is organized into seven theme-based sections, each with a specific clinical focus. These sections include a look at incidents or cases from a developmental perspective ranging from childhood, including school counseling issues, to adolescence; to young, middle, and mature adulthood; to the end of life. This latter stage is often viewed as an uncomfortable topic, yet it is vital to address it. A second section presents such issues as trauma, abuse, and disaster from a wellness model. Another denotes the relationship between spirituality and specific disorders, including sexual addiction and eating disorders. Because the topics of substance abuse and dependence are so important, they are in a separate section. Alcoholics Anonymous, which is arguably the most powerful spiritually based psychotherapeutic movement, provides the background for a cogent case, followed by the presentation of another scenario in the context of families and addiction. Another section focuses on job loss and on career issues over the life span—including career choice, career planning, and career search—all of which are especially relevant given the current macroeconomic situation. A separate section on dilemmas in the context of diversity factors deals with such wide-ranging topics as religious identity; individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ); military families; offenders; and the integration of religion into counseling. Finally, spiritual interventions, such as meditation, prayer, and group work and trauma, end the book.

As previously noted, the book is written in casebook style and is viewed by the editors as a potential companion to texts for courses on spirituality and counseling. This useful, applied format does indeed "bridge the gap between theory and practice." First, a contributor presents a situation, a crisis, a critical incident, or a dilemma with a spiritual or religious dimension. Next, this same expert practitioner describes spiritually based interventions he or she used. Questions for possible alternative strategies or treatment are then posed. Finally, another expert practitioner responds with additional input and critique, and the editors themselves then reflect on the case with the goal of conceptual integration and subsequent therapeutic benefit.

With regard to author instructions, Drs. Robert and Kelly requested that contributors adhere to the spiritual competencies of ASERVIC. According to ASERVIC, these competencies, revised in 2009 and endorsed by the American Counseling Association (ACA), "are intended to be used in conjunction with counseling approaches that are evidence based and that align with best practices in counseling" (ASERVIC, 2009, preamble). As with the format of this casebook, the ASERVIC competencies follow a developmental design; address and respect diversity; incorporate assessment, diagnosis, and treatment; allow for counselor introspection and reflection; and respect and honor client values, beliefs, background, personhood, and humanity. Furthermore, authors were advised to take into careful consideration the revised *ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014) and the ACA-endorsed *AMCD Multicultural Counseling Competencies* (Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development [AMCD], 2004).

This useful book also addresses several of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) core content areas, including those of assessment, helping relationships, and social and cultural diversity. Thus, for those counselor educators concerned with its fit into the CACREP curriculum, *Critical Incidents in Integrating Spirituality Into Counseling* could easily be incorporated into such courses as Advanced Techniques and Practice, Interventions and Ethics, and Diversity Issues, among others.

Over 50 in number, the contributors include a virtual who's who of counselors with expertise in the integration of counseling and spirituality. Many are seasoned authors, renowned practitioners, esteemed counselor educators, and professional association leaders. It is apparent from reading the book that all contributors must view professional counseling as a true vocation, a calling. The cases and critical incidents contained in the book are objectively, yet humanely, presented. These cases describe suffering beings in various and sundry dilemmas who are guided to wholeness through a variety of spiritually based techniques and resources in a therapeutic relationship that values, affirms, and normalizes without moralizing, judging, or criticizing.

The editors' stated goal for *Critical Incidents in Integrating Spirituality Into Counseling* is to "offer counselor educators, students, and clinicians a highly useful educational tool that helps them incorporate the entirety of human experience into the counseling process for more effective teaching and practice" (p. xii). This they do with aplomb! In essence, this casebook ably assists professional counselors as they respond to their clients' initial push of despair and pull of hope.

—*Christopher M. Faiver*
Professor Emeritus
John Carroll University

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Preface

"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience," wrote French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his 1959 book *The Phenomenon of Man*. Spirituality has been defined in various ways over the years—the search for the sacred, a process of human re-formation, the internal experience of individual persons. Spiritual or religious beliefs often express a key human need: the search for meaning and purpose in life. In describing this search, Burke and Miranti (1992) stated, "The very core of our existence depends on one's ability to remain centered and focused while struggling to exercise the freedom to grow and transcend life's difficult choices" (p. ix).

Increasingly, recognition of the spiritual domain as central to human experience has become integral to counseling practice (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2001, 2009). Integration of religion and spirituality into counseling and therapy has been debated for more than 100 years by the likes of James, Freud, and Jung (Hage, Hopson, Siegel, Payton, & DeFanti, 2006). The Association of Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC), committed to integrating these values into the counseling process, grew from humble beginnings in the 1950s and 1960s. During the late 1970s and 1980s, attention was focused on exploration of religion and spirituality in counseling and recognition of the importance of cultural sensitivity to the client's worldview.

Before 1990, the spiritual domain and religious views of clients were not addressed in most training programs. Then a Summit on Spirituality (1995) that included ASERVIC leaders identified

competencies for counselors interested in integrating spirituality and religion into counseling. They developed a description of spirituality as "an animating force in life . . . the capacity and tendency that is innate and unique to all persons . . . and includes one's capacity for creativity, growth, and the development of a values system (p. 30)." The ASERVIC board took leadership of the process and endorsed the competencies and conducted a town meeting at the national conference for discussion with counseling professionals. The result of this meeting was a formal description of spirituality and identification of nine competencies. The development of counselor competencies gave structure to the discussions that had been taking place and provided data to be included in curricula and accreditation standards.

Growing recognition of the importance of the spiritual domain increased the need for training materials and strategies for integrating the new ASERVIC competencies into counseling. Several useful references were published. In 2003, Marsha Wiggins Frame's comprehensive textbook *Integrating Religion and Spirituality Into Counseling* provided a framework for counselor educators that supported counselors-in-training and increased their confidence in addressing a major domain in their clients' lives. In 2005, Craig Cashwell and J. Scott Young described and developed the competencies in their book titled *Integrating Spirituality and Religion Into Counseling: A Guide to Competent Practice,* which serves as a resource for counselor educators, students, and practitioners. This book became required reading in many counselor education spirituality courses and made a significant contribution to the counseling literature. In 2011, Cashwell and Young published a revised edition in response to new research and updated competencies and requests from practitioners and counselors-in-training for clarification and direction on how to integrate spirituality into practice.

We see this casebook, *Critical Incidents in Integrating Spirituality Into Counseling*, as a companion book to these texts and the next step in the evolution of integrating spirituality into the counseling process. Our goal is to offer counselor educators, students, and clinicians a highly useful educational tool that helps them incorporate the entirety of human experience into the counseling process for more effective teaching and practice.

Critical Incidents in Integrating Spirituality Into Counseling uses an applied format that presents a variety of critical incidents/cases. The book is organized in seven theme-based sections: life span issues, spirituality and wellness, specific disorders, substance abuse, career, diverse populations, and frequently used spiritual interventions. Each critical incident/case examines a specific topic related to integrating spirituality into counseling (e.g., emerging adulthood, disaster mental health, sexual addiction, job loss, and Islam identity conflict). Reporting counselors describe the presenting situation and the treat-

ment and interventions they provided. They pose three or four key questions that ask for possible alternative strategies, interventions, or approaches that might include or further integrate spirituality into the process. Practicing counselors and counselor educators with expertise in integrating spirituality into counseling then provide responses to the questions and insights and recommendations related to the presented case. For each case, we then offer our reflections on its significance in the context of the integration of spirituality into counseling, providing a concise summary of beneficial counseling outcomes.

As a classroom tool, *Critical Incidents in Integrating Spirituality Into Counseling* can help counselors-in-training by fostering discussion and case conceptualization and intervention skills. Case studies have been shown to be an effective teaching tool in a variety of disciplines, especially applied fields of study like education and mental health, where processes, problems, and programs can be examined to increase understanding and improve practice. Case studies can serve a number of purposes, including applying tools and facilitating decision making, to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The book also may serve as an easy reference for practitioners in the field.

We selected authors known for their expertise and research in various specialties within the counseling field. Many have advanced the integration of spirituality into counseling through their work in ASERVIC, a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA). In their responses, the authors were asked to address the *ACA Code of Ethics* (2014) and the ACA-endorsed Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004).

Of note, a review of the literature reveals a struggle to define spirituality in research-based studies—studies that are intended to provide strategies for competent practice. Many studies have indicated that definitions vary because the nature of spirituality is personal and assessing and measuring the construct can be difficult. However, with the ASERVIC competencies as a guide, counselors must know the difference between spirituality and religion for effective practice.

For the purposes of this book, we define *spirituality* as the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life, often individual to clients, including the influence of their belief system and worldview and their values as they face the challenges of life events. We define *religion* as a belief that is associated with a world religion or specific philosophy, such as Buddhism, and is outwardly manifested by organized practices and sacred texts. Applying our definition of spirituality to include meaning and purpose in life and values allows counselors to address the belief systems of nonaffiliated and nonreligious clients, which is an important part of adhering to the ACA ethical and multicultural competencies. We hope this book helps counselors recognize the differences between spirituality and religion and how to use the two constructs to enhance the counseling process.

Also, wellness, a foundational construct of the counseling profession, places spirituality at the person's core. Ignoring this domain can result in a lack of understanding of the client's worldview and an insensitivity to multicultural issues. Both can be detrimental to the counseling effort.

In counseling, as in many disciplines, the only constant is change. The counseling field has evolved in recent years to accommodate clients' changing needs and increasingly has recognized the important role the spiritual domain can play in meeting them. Since the 1990s, when ASERVIC developed competencies to help professionals address spiritual and religious issues in counseling, the field also has recognized the need for more and better training and strategies for integrating the competencies into counseling. We hope this book will make a positive contribution to the literature by helping counseling professionals keep up with the always changing challenges and rewards of bringing spirituality into counseling.

Critical Incidents in Integrating Spirituality Into Counseling takes a practical, hands-on approach to exploring spirituality in counselor education and practice. Overall, we see the use of this tool as a potentially rewarding next step in the movement toward the integration of human and spiritual experience.

—*Tracey E. Robert and Virginia A. Kelly*

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About the Editors

Tracey E. Robert, PhD, LPC, NCCC, is an associate professor and director of clinical training in the Counselor Education Department at Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT. She is a past president of the Association of Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) and currently serves as president of the North Atlantic Regional Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Tracey received ASERVIC's Graduate Student National Research Award in 2003 for her dissertation work on the relationship between spiritual well-being and job satisfaction among working adults. She designed and implemented an 18-credit certificate program for Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Counseling.

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Virginia A. Kelly, PhD, LPC, is an associate professor in the Counselor Education Department at Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT. Ginny is a past president of the International Association of Addictions and Offender Counseling and of the North Atlantic Regional Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. She received Chi Sigma Iota's Outstanding Researcher award and has published a monograph on integrating spirituality into counseling.

About the Contributors

Anjabeen Ashraf, PhD, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

Bobbie A. Birdsall, PhD, Boise State University, Boise, ID

Cecile Brennan, PhD, John Carroll University, University Heights, OH

Ford Brooks, EdD, Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, PA

Mary Alice Bruce, PhD, University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY

Larry D. Burlew, EdD, Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ

Matthew Carlson, MEd, professional school counselor, Orting High School, Orting, WA

Craig S. Cashwell, PhD, LPC, NCC, ACS, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC

Jane C. Chauvin, PhD, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA

Sharon E. Cheston, EdD, LCPC, Loyola University Maryland, Columbia, MD

Abigail H. Conley, PhD, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Jennifer M. Cook, PhD, M.Div, LPC, NCC, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI

Stephanie Dailey, EdD, LPC, NCC, ACS, Argosy University, Arlington, VA

Richard G. Deaner, PhD, LPC, NCC, Georgia Regents University, Augusta, GA

Robert A. Dobmeier, PhD, LMHC, CRC, the College at Brockport, State University of New York, Brockport, NY

Taysier El-Gaili, MSc, candidate, CAS, Loyola University Maryland, Baltimore, MD

Donna Fletcher, MA, LPC, LADC, Child and Family Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT

Ryan D. Foster, PhD, LPC, NCC, Marymount University, Arlington, VA

Misty M. Ginicola, PhD, Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT

Jane Goodman, PhD, Oakland University, Rochester, MI

Paige Greason, PhD, LPCS, NCC, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, NC

Bryce Hagedorn, PhD, LMHC, NCC, MAC, QCS, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL

Stephanie F. Hall, PhD, LPC, Monmouth University, West Long Branch, NJ

Janice Miner Holden, EdD, LPC-S, LMFT, NCC, ACMHP, University of North Texas, Denton, TX

Victoria Holroyd, PhD, private practice, Virginia Beach, VA

Diana Hulse, EdD, LPC, NCC, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT

A. Michael Hutchins, PhD, LPC, private practice, Tucson, AZ

Lisa R. Jackson-Cherry, PhD, LCPC, NCC, ACS, Marymount University, Arlington, VA

Gerald A. Juhnke, EdD, LPC, NCC, MAC, ACS, the University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX

Virginia A. Kelly, PhD, LPC, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT

Michele L. Kielty, PhD, LPC, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

Melissa Luke, PhD, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Joel Clark Mason, DMin, Drew University, Madison, NJ

Mary Jo Mason, PhD, LPC, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT

Holly Mensching, MA, NCC, private practice, New Canaan, CT

Dana Michie, MA, LMFT, private practice, Wilton, CT

Geri Miller, PhD, LPC, LCAS, ABPP, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

Judith G. Miranti, EdD, LPC, LMFT, NCC, Xavier University, New Orleans, LA

E. Christine Moll, PhD, LMHC, Canisius College, Buffalo, NY

Oliver J. Morgan, PhD, NCC, LMFT, University of Scranton, Scranton, PA

Keith Morgen, PhD, LPC, NCC, ACS, Centenary College, Hackettstown, NJ

Sylvia C. Nassar-McMillan, PhD, LPC, NCC, ACS, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

Jocelyn Novella, MA, LPC, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT

Nicole B. O'Brien, PhD, LMFT, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT

Eileen R. O'Shea, DNP, RN, CHPPN, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT

Summer M. Reiner, PhD, LMHC, NCC, ACS, the College at Brockport, State University of New York, Brockport, NY

Edina L. Renfro-Michel, PhD, LPC, ACS, Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ

Leila F. Roach, PhD, LMFT, LMHC, NCC, Stetson University, DeLand, FL

Tracey E. Robert, PhD, LPC, NCCC, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT

Catherine B. Roland, EdD, Georgia Regents University, Augusta, GA

Joyce Shea, DNSc, APRN, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT

W. Matthew Shurts, PhD, Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ

Anneliese A. Singh, PhD, LPC, University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Christopher A. Sink, PhD, LMHC, NCC, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA

Cheri Smith, PhD, LPC, Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT

Hallie Sylvestro, MA, NCC, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC

Kim M. Tassinari, MA, LPC, NCC, doctoral candidate, Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ

J. Scott Young, PhD, LPC, NCC, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC

Mark E. Young, PhD, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL

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