

European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health

Newsletter March 2013

Volume 8 • No. 1

Editorial

Dear colleagues, dear friends

In our first newsletter 2013 Thomas Steinforth's shares with you his thoughts on how to promote spiritual aspects in care-giving institutions and organisations. His main focus is on the staff who can be trained and supported in several ways.

We also want to prenotify the 4th European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health to give you the opportunity to make plans in advance. The conference will take place May 22 - 24, 2014, in Malta. Again there will be a 4-day preconference research workshop with Prof. Harold Koenig. For further information see www.ecrsh.eu.

If you like to discuss a scientific topic, propose a theory or announce a publication or an event, don't hesitate to contact us! This newsletter brings you in touch with a growing audience interested in the field of religion, spirituality and health. Just send an e-mail to: info@rish.ch.

Stefan Rademacher, PhD

Promoting Spiritual Competence

Dr. Thomas Steinforth

Starting point

Employees who are required to observe spiritual aspects in their work and to regard patients' or care-dependent persons' spiritual needs are entitled to being supported by their organization. The organization (especially church-based organizations) have an obligation to promote the development of "spiritual competence".

"Spirituality" and "Competence"

Some definitions are necessary:

Spirituality - as I see it - is the lively relationship to "something" or "somebody", out of

which I pattern and interpret my life, my actions and experiences. In this relationship maintained and cultivated by spiritual practices, I can search (and sometimes find) strengthening, encouragement, orientation and meaning.

Competence: A competent person is able to do something properly and in a manner appropriate to the situation (it's more than just reeling something off!). Competence is based on knowledge, experience, practice and reflection. Spirituality is also something someone can be competent in to a lesser or greater extent.

Spiritual Competence

I am a spiritually competent person if I am able ...

- to express my spiritual relationship and the associated experiences and convictions invitingly and in a way that other persons get an impression and become able to make use of the expression for their own lives (note: according to the situation, this "power of speech" includes foregoing easy interpretations and using the "power of silence"!)
- to be impressed by other persons' expressions without unprofessional confusion of "mine" and "yours"; it specially means I am open to expressions indicating spiritual or religious needs
- to remain with persons I can't help with words and deeds – not least, spiritual competence is dealing with one's own "incompetence"
- to pattern and cultivate the "Between" between persons: The "spirit" blows and works of its own accord and there is no way "to manage the spirit". But its blowing depends on conditions in the "Between" (culture, atmosphere ...) which must be cultivated by spiritually competent employees and management personnel.

"Experts in spirituality" with pastoral education must be able to act and communicate in the manner described to a greater degree than "normal" employees. But spiritual competence is required – in a lesser or greater extent – in everyday care or so-

cial work. There can't be a division of labor that relegates spiritual competence to a few experts. Many employees in the social field and healthcare sector are already spiritually competent! Nevertheless, they require purposeful support for their further development.

Spiritual competence can be promoted in various ways:

Selection of Personnel

Selection of appropriate personnel (already equipped with high spiritual competence) seems to be an effective manner of supporting spiritual competence. But despite its distinction from other skills, spiritual competence doesn't become obviously and immediately apparent in behavior, manner and habit. For this reason, there is no simple selection procedure for recognizing someone's spiritual competence. It is a given that discussion of a candidate's motives and spiritual/religious attitudes is possible and sometimes necessary. But any screening conversation should observe limits of privacy: The candidate's spirituality includes aspects which do not involve anything apart from the candidate himself!

Church-based organizations can talk about the applicant's relationship to the church in order to recognize spiritual competence. But a person who is seemingly far removed from "normal ecclesiastical life" can also be equipped with spiritual competence and can enrich the organization with spiritual questions, curiosity and openness. On the other hand, there are persons deeply ingrained in ecclesiastical life who lack openness and attention to other people's spiritual needs.

Individual Promotion

There are many possibilities of supporting the individual development of spiritual competence:

Training courses and introductory days can approach spiritual principles associated with specific corporate identity and spiritual aspects in everyday profession-

al life. The goal is to support individual reflectivity, to impart basic knowledge about spirituality and practical know-how (for example: How can I recognize spiritual needs in the case of dementia?) It is important to avoid any kind of proselytizing; employees are adults with an individual spiritual history and identity.

Spiritual accompaniment and retreat days can support employees in linking their work to their spirituality.

Organizational Development

Individuals can apply their spiritual competence only if the corporate culture allows and enables it. Corporate culture can be developed ...

- by giving well-considered spiritual impulses in meetings – spiritual impulses can act as “healthful interruptions”
- by spiritual practices (prayer, worship services, rituals) on the occasion of special events (note: there should be no pressure to take part in religious activities!)
- with retreat days for teams and organizational units
- by systematic inclusion of spiritual aspects in planning and decision processes
- by methods designed to change perspective in the course of change management: to see things from the patient’s or care dependent person’s perspective is helpful in order to design strategies, to adjust organizational structures and processes and to adopt measures to meet patients’ (spiritual) needs.

Notice: An extended version of this text will be published (in German language) in the journal “Spiritual Care”, issue 3/2013.

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Announcements

PUBLICATIONS

Comprehensive Review of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health

Free access and download on:
www.hindawi.com/isrn/psychiatry/2012/278730/

Achtsamkeitsbasierte Rückfallprävention bei Substanzabhängigkeit: Das MBRP-Programm (mit Online-Materialien)

Sarah Bowen, ed.: Johannes Lindenmeyer & Goetz Mundle
Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Verlag, 2012

MEETINGS & CONFERENCES

Depression und Burnout

Klinik SGM Langenthal
April 25, 2013, Langenthal (Switzerland)
For further information see:
www.klinik-sgm.ch

Alter und Spiritualität

Careum Weiterbildung (with Stiftung Diakoniewerk Neumünster & Kalaidos Fachhochschule Gesundheit)
April 25, 2013, Aarau (Switzerland)
For further information see:
www.careum-weiterbildung.ch > Tagungen

Palliative und Spiritual Care

Medizinische und theologische Perspektiven
April 29, 2013, University of Berne, Berne (Switzerland)
Contact:
anja.michel@theol.unibe.ch

Zeit. Geist. Zeitgeist - Neue Herausforderungen in Psychotherapie & Seelsorge

International Congress of the Akademie für Psychotherapie und Seelsorge APS



Akademie für
Psychotherapie
und Seelsorge

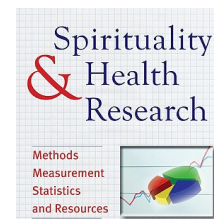
May 8-11, 2013, Würzburg (Germany)
For further information see:
www.aps-kongress.de

Ageing Gifts - Ageing Changes - Ageing Hopes

5th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality



July 7-10, 2013, Edinburgh (UK)
For further information see:
fiop-mha.events-made-easy.com



Harold G. Koenig, MD

Duke Spirituality & Health Workshop

August 12-16, 2013,
Duke University,
Durham, NC (USA)
Contact:
harold.koenig@duke.edu

IAPR Congress 2013

International Association for the Psychology of Religion in cooperation with the University of Lausanne
August 27 - 30, 2013, Lausanne (Switzerland)
For further information see:
www.psychology-of-religion.com/conferences/

4th European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health ECRSH 2014

May 22 - 24, 2014, in Malta (Malta)
For further information see:
www.ecrsh.eu
Contact:
info@rish.ch

Impressum

This Newsletter is published by the Research Institute for Spirituality and Health, Langenthal / Switzerland

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