

SPIRITUALITY IN COUNSELLING

The concept of spirituality for individuals of different cultures, races and communities often carries many interpretations. The purpose of this handout is not to impose a limiting definition of the way this term may be used but rather to explore ways to offer a universal application of spirituality in a therapeutic context. For us at Reach, spirituality in counselling is about uplifting a person's sense of self. For those who have tasted the bitter fruit of despair, desperation, and depression, they are looking to counselling and psychotherapy to help restore or discover an elation, happiness and contentment in their lives. Therefore, as counselling is a therapeutic process that enables the individual to achieve a greater awareness, deeper understanding, enhanced self esteem, greater sense of purpose and well-being, it can quite legitimately, when carried out with integrity, be defined as a spiritual art. So let us not be troubled by the use of this term, because the concept of spirituality in counselling really refers to the discovery or the recovery of peace of mind, stability and happiness.

Spirituality in this context, therefore, is not given to mean something religious although it may mean that. Nor does it imply that one focuses on a God or a Supreme being, although for many it may mean that too. Here we use the term spirituality to mean resurrection and upliftment of one's consciousness, a return to a state of inner harmony and contentment, through the removal of obstacles or blockages, which deny self-realisation and a chance of fulfilling one's potential.

Increasingly, schools of thought such as psychosynthesis, transpersonal psychology and other so-called 'new age' or 'fringe' approaches to therapy are rapidly emerging, to make the concept of spirituality a more acceptable phenomenon. We at Reach don't apologise for daring to say that we believe spirituality in counselling is a central component of the therapeutic process. For us, spirituality means humanity, compassion and support. By providing the appropriate resources, we have found that a sense of oneself, one's spirit, can and does return. And with that the motivation, sense of purpose, direction, and belief in the possibility of being whole and functional. So, starting from today, dare to invoke the spiritual aspects of your life. Take time to focus on the subtle and the unseen and you will be inspired even more to be the very best you can be.

Spirituality in counselling is all about rebirth, it is about the recycling of the old which gives rise to a newer, clearer sense of self. Counselling is a very powerful catalyst in the growth process but by itself is not sufficient for the journey towards wholeness and health. This is why, in addition to the conventional concepts of counselling, we offer a range of other knowledge and experience proven to enable the individual to find a greater sense of completeness and purpose. This is why we work with diet and nutrition, the principles of mind-body medicine, hydrotherapy (the therapeutic uses of water), creative visualisation, positive affirmations and much more. Experience has taught us that unless we address the multi-factorial nature of the human condition, our ability to help empower someone is substantially undermined. This is why spirituality begins with awareness through knowledge, then builds on that knowledge as a foundation for positive change. But whilst an individual is unable to identify the 'hole in the soul' and prevent further leakage, the cycle of sabotage, intolerance, frustration and despair continues to spin uncontrollably, thus compromising the individual's integrity. Spirituality in counselling fosters positive change out of which comes a wealth of experience that sustains further growth and improvement. Take a really close look at yourself. Don't be afraid and discover what your spirit needs and once you know what that is, then give generously to yourself.