

## SPIRITUAL ISSUES IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

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### THE SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS

Spiritual issues are inextricably interwoven with psychological health. Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1970), one of the founders of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, believed that every individual is born with spiritual needs and a longing for transcendent experiences. The psychologically healthiest individuals in his observations were those with a well integrated, deep sense of spirituality in life. For psychiatrist Scott Peck (1989), spirituality is not merely personal. It is also collective and practical, involving recognition of that which is greater than the self.

Spirituality is not the special property of any group or religion. It exists in the hearts of men and women of all races, creeds and cultures, both within and outside of religious institutions. Spirituality presupposes certain qualities of mind, including compassion, gratitude, awareness of a transcendent dimension, and an appreciation for life which brings meaning and purpose to existence. Whereas spirituality is essentially a subjective experience of the sacred, religion involves subscribing to a set of beliefs or doctrines that are institutionalized. In this paper, I will not discuss the relative merits of religious affiliation, but will attempt to focus on and explore the relevance of spiritual issues for individual psychotherapy.

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Ken Wilber (1980), a major theorist in transpersonal psychology, has given us a developmental map of consciousness that leads through self-actualization to self-transcendence. He argues that all motivational drives are subsets of the fundamental spiritual drive to attain unity with the Absolute. Each successive stage of psychospiritual development achieves a higher order unity. At each stage

the self seeks unity in accordance with the constraints of the particular self-concept with which it identifies. The gratifications of each stage can be both stepping stones and obstacles to the realization of unity and liberation. Thus spirituality underlies both personal impulses to growth and healing and many creative cultural and social enterprises.

#### SPIRITUAL ADDICTIONS

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The shadow side of this fundamentally healthy search for wholeness can be called addiction to spirituality. Whenever spirituality is based on wishful thinking and the abdication of personal responsibility, it is potentially addictive. For example, addiction to spirituality can be found among those members of spiritual communities who would have difficulty coping with the world on their own. Addiction to spirituality can also be found among people who use spirituality as a magical solution to problems they are unwilling to face. It is this addictive form of spirituality that has led many psychologists to pathologize spirituality in general, or at least to view it with suspicion.

Spirituality can become addictive whenever it is used as an escape from reality or an avoidance of life. When it is used to compensate for lack of satisfaction in work or love relationships, it tends to breed dependency rather than promoting liberation. As a way of avoiding intimacy or autonomy it can be as detrimental to psychological health as any other dysfunctional pattern. The temporary feeling of well-being engendered by some spiritual practices such as certain forms of meditation, chanting or other communal rituals are of questionable value as a substitute for working out interpersonal relationships.

In a recent interview, one Western meditation teacher (Clements, 1990) described his sense of internal deprivation while living as a Buddhist monk in Asia, which eventually led him out of the monastic isolation back to the world. He had noticed that his own self-defeating demands for perfection had sabotaged his sense of well-being. The years of intensive practice leading to insight and clarity of consciousness had bypassed and avoided some deep psychological issues. The process of reintegration back into the world was difficult, as it often is for people who have immersed themselves in spiritual practice for a long time in a monastic setting. He now understands that his original quest for spiritual liberation involves coming to terms with the totality of his physical, emotional, mental and spiritual life.

On the other hand, experiences of well-being attained through contemplative practice can be psychologically nourishing and

healing if they are appropriately integrated with ordinary life. Insofar as one is attracted to altered states for the purpose of getting high and avoiding the pain of ordinary life, these states can become addictive. It is natural, then, that these practices are particularly attractive to people who are having difficulty with their personal lives.

Spirituality is closely associated with the experience of universal love, which can be a powerful healing force as well. In a world that has devalued the sacred quest, many people who long for unconditional love are eager to submit to someone who seems to offer it and who takes on the role and authority of a parent. Such surrender can easily become an avoidance of self-responsibility. The desire to be as a child, free from the anxiety of not having answers to existential questions, trusting in a powerful, wise parent who offers guidance and protection, can be very compelling.

Psychologically healthy integration of the spiritual seems to require a foundation of personal integrity based on self-knowledge and a willingness to see things as they are. It implies a compassionate response to suffering and a commitment to telling the truth to oneself as well as to others. Healthy integration of the spiritual is the result of an authentic response to ultimate questions such as the meaning and purpose of birth, life and death, and the universal human confrontation with aloneness and with existential freedom. The transcendence of egocentric concerns does not imply that interpersonal relationships must suffer as a result. Attention to all aspects of life with love, compassion and open-mindedness is a more natural result of a psychologically mature spirituality.

As a spiritual symbol, a cross can be interpreted as representing the intersection of the vertical dimension of experience, grounded in personal history and reaching to the transcendent, balanced by the horizontal extension of connection to others, and to the whole biosphere. Wholeness unfolds at the point of intersection, where the opposites are not in conflict, but in relationship. It is at the intersection of the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite, the personal and the transpersonal that we experience our essential spirituality and wholeness. Wholeness implies including what has been excluded or overlooked. Psychospiritual healing, then, can be based on a concept of wholeness that looks for the balance and integration of opposites.

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Psychotherapists may sometimes encounter clients who have used spirituality as a means of repressing, denying and avoiding psychological problems. For example, a dysfunctional family may be very religious and attend church regularly, yet refuse to acknowledge the psychological pain of its members because of an unspoken rule that feelings are not to be discussed. Others may think that as long

as they perform some formal ritual of worship they are entitled to indulge egocentric ambitions or exploit others with impunity. On the other hand, spirituality that eschews traditional forms of worship may run the risk of deteriorating into magical thinking and superstition. Although the seeds of genuine spirituality can be found under even some of the most innovative forms of spiritual practice, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit spiritual teachings.

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False teachers and charlatans often tend to resemble genuine spiritual teachers since they naturally make a point of maintaining appearances to convince their followers that they are authentic. One indication that they may have other motives besides service to humanity can be observed in their relationship to money, sex and power. Power, of course, is seductive and potentially corrupting. Even those who have attained some degree of realization may discover that when others admire them and believe their every word, they too can be seduced. Anyone can become intoxicated with status and success. When sex and money become easily available, greed may be hard to resist.

On the other hand, when a person is rigorously ascetic, and aversion to the body, money, sex and power predominate, the judgmental attitude may indicate a strong reaction formation. The "great middle way" that passes between the opposites, that leads through the conflicts of attraction and aversion to the peaceful reconciliation of opposites, neither condemns nor pursues these objects of desire. Whenever money, sex and power are the main focus of attention, greed and ambition tend to follow. Transcendence of ego then becomes increasingly difficult and addiction is reinforced.

#### SPIRITUAL AMBITION

Beginning students of spirituality are likely to replace worldly ambition with spiritual ambition. Here the hazards of entrapment are just as real as they are in the secular world. As long as one is passionately in pursuit of anything, one is not free. If spiritual liberation is the ideal, the seeker must learn to recognize how this ideal can be subverted in the name of progress toward some vague, unattainable goal.

The process of spiritual development does, however, have certain predictable stages and pitfalls. If the purpose of the journey is a shift in consciousness from fear to love, from bondage to liberation, and from confusion to understanding, progress toward these goals can be recognized. Each stage presents specific challenges that prevent us from recognizing the truth and freedom that are already present.

Some other challenges for beginning spiritual seekers include self-deception, self-doubt, fear of self-knowledge, guilt, greed and anger. Problems of discernment and self-betrayal are often encountered when one first becomes aware of a spiritual impulse.

The intermediate seeker who has made a commitment to practice in the pursuit of a spiritual life can become either inflated by spiritual insights or caught in dualism. Such feelings of elation are often followed by deflation or depression. A person may also experience conflict between the desire for inner development and the demands of the outer world. In some cases suffering may be perceived as more desirable than happiness, particularly if suffering is believed to have spiritual merit.

In more advanced stages, the struggles of ego may lead to a dark night of the soul, in which all life is perceived as meaningless suffering, and desire is supplanted by aversion to life. At this stage the seeker must also be aware of the more subtle pseudo-realizations that can be extremely pleasurable and seductive. At every stage, attractive illusions can offer escape from the pain of existential realities. At any stage, the failure to temper spiritual ambition with the realities of ordinary life is potentially pathogenic.

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A clinician working with spiritual issues in psychotherapy needs to recognize both pathological and healthy patterns. A healthy interest in spirituality can be an asset in treating psychological dysfunction, and spiritual practice can be an important discipline underlying a client's steps in the quest for meaning, as well as reducing anxiety and alleviating depression. A clinician who is familiar with meditation and meditation research (Shapiro & Walsh, 1984), for example, may assess the value of different types of meditative practice for a particular client and may make appropriate recommendations, while avoiding some of the pitfalls of dogmatic or narrow approaches.

Some spiritual issues encountered in psychotherapy with those who are motivated by spiritual ambition are the following: addiction to spiritual experiences, denial of the shadow, spiritual specialness, guilt and purification, and idolatry. We will consider each of these, and conclude with a discussion of the characteristics of psychologically healthy spirituality.

#### SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

Transpersonal experiences often have a healing effect on the psyche and can be particularly helpful in recovery from addiction (Grof, 1990a). They can also stimulate psychological growth. A clinician may be called upon to distinguish those experiences that

contribute to psychological health from those that are regressive and potentially damaging. In the context of therapy, any experience, regressive or visionary, can be potentially rewarding, provided that the therapist does not make inappropriate interpretations, confusing genuine experiences of self-transcendence with regressive pathology. This confusion is what Wilber has called the pre/trans fallacy. Both reductionistic interpretations of genuine mystical experiences and glorification of poorly differentiated pre-personal experiences can be detrimental to the psychological health of a client.

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The first glimpse of states of consciousness that transcend ordinary reality can be both fascinating and seductive. A taste of bliss or a sense of being at home in the universe can be more compelling than other desires. Such experiences can help people wean themselves from chemical addictions and have become a valuable tool for recovery (Grof, 1990a; 1990b). On the other hand, problems may develop when the person does not have a healthy psychological foundation that enables him or her to recognize the value of the experience without idolizing the person or the method that induced it.

In a letter to Bill W., the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, Carl Jung wrote about a former patient:

His craving for alcohol was the equivalent, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for Wholeness... The only right and legitimate way to such an experience is that it happens to you in reality, and it can only happen to you when you walk on a path which leads you to higher understanding ... beyond the confines of mere rationalism ... (jung, 1961).

When the longing for mystical experience is no *longer* satisfied by conventional religion, many forms of false mysticism may emerge. Substitute gratifications can take many forms, including drugs and alcohol, co-dependent relationships and even fanatical patriotism. Whenever critical intelligence is discarded in favor of blind devotion to a particular experience, a person or a cause, addiction becomes a risk.

When transpersonal experiences are shared by a group of people, the feeling of belonging that ensues is often a welcome alternative to a sense of separation, isolation and alienation.

Reactions that sometimes follow initiation into this realm of experiences can be detrimental both in terms of generating dependency and in leading a person to believe that the source of the experience is outside in a substance, a person or a group rather than within oneself. For example, unconscious projections of power and wis-

dom onto the initiating source can contribute to inappropriate feelings of helplessness and dependency for some people.

#### DENIAL OF THE SHADOW

Ego defenses of projection and denial can easily be reinforced by some forms of spirituality. Spiritual groups that see themselves as unique in their dedication to truth and righteousness tend to divide the world into believers and non-believers, those who are awake and those who are asleep, those who are on a path and those who are not. Any dichotomy that reinforces the position that what *we* believe is right and what *others* believe is wrong leads to denigration of the outsider and unquestioning obedience. Of course, these hallmarks of cult behavior can be found not only in religious groups, but also in contemporary secular society (Deikman, 1990).

Ego inflation and projection of the negative shadow is evident in the devaluing of outsiders. Psychologically healthy spirituality does not presume that there is only one way to find the truth. Respect for other people's traditions and beliefs is an essential ingredient of psychologically healthy spirituality. Sometimes people who call themselves spiritual are in fact bigoted, judgmental, and condemning of anyone who does not accept a particular dogma or belief system.

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Since the psychological mechanisms of projection and denial operate unconsciously, those who see themselves as good, while others are regarded as evil, are generally not aware of projecting their unacknowledged impulses onto their enemies. It takes a certain degree of psychological maturity to acknowledge that the shadow, symbolizing what we most fear and dislike, must also be uncovered in ourselves.

Since nobody is perfect and since we can learn from each other's mistakes, it may be useful to regard those who disagree with us as potential teachers from whom we can learn about a different perception of reality. This seems to be a more rational democratic and compassionate attitude than one which assumes others are either totally right or totally wrong. Furthermore, it enables us to understand and communicate with a wide variety of human beings who have different views of reality and nevertheless share the same human experiences of fear and the same human desire for happiness.

Idealistic new converts to religious groups are particularly susceptible to self-deception and to a belief in their own infallibility. New converts are sometimes used as recruiters, because they are espe-

dally fervent in their enthusiasm for the newly discovered joys of belonging to a group that has access to special knowledge. They have yet to be disillusioned, disappointed or discouraged when their newly accepted beliefs fail to provide the rewards they had consciously or unconsciously anticipated. A new convert is like the person who has fallen in love, blind to even obvious faults, and unwilling to subject the object of adoration to critical examination. Sometimes swept away by an exhilarating taste of ecstasy, a new convert genuinely wants others to share in this wonderful experience, and fails, as we all do within our own belief system, to recognize proverbial blind spots. New converts who think they have found answers are probably less likely to seek therapy. Disillusionment may be more likely to precede a search for psychological help.

#### SPIRITUAL SPECIALNESS

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The desire for spiritual specialness lends itself easily to manipulation and control. Those who have special status in religious communities are granted special privilege, and unquestioning obedience is often both encouraged and reinforced. The more elaborate the spiritual hierarchy, the more entangling it can be, particularly when the hierarchies are esoteric, secret, and hidden from the view of "ordinary mortals." The implicit promise of power and status to be bestowed on the faithful can lead many well intentioned seekers down sidetracks that often end in despair. Those who are unwilling to explore such hierarchical pathways for fear of being duped may also miss an opportunity for valuable learning. It seems that the erroneous assumption that spirituality is the privilege of a few of the elect rather than available to everyone is a prevalent contemporary belief that clients bring with them to therapy. A psychotherapist must be willing to question these assumptions, while respecting the client's choice of a particular path.

Beginners on the spiritual path often fall prey to the appeal of spiritual specialness. Whenever we take pride in "our" spirituality, we have lost the essence of it. The spiritual dimension of our life is a precious gift; at the same time, it is nothing special. The capacity to awaken to the spiritual dimension is a human potentiality that has been discovered and developed in different ways by people of many cultures throughout human history. Psychologically healthy spirituality therefore needs no claim to specialness. One counts oneself as equal to others, spiritually no more important and no less important than anyone else.

Claims to specialness indicate attachment to a particular form that obscures the nature of genuine spiritual awareness, which is inclusive rather than exclusive. Psychologically healthy spirituality

requires letting go of specialness in any form. Even the desire to be nobody is a distortion of this task.

Jack Kornfield tells the following story of two rabbis to illustrate this point:

One day a rabbi entered the temple and began to pray. He said, "O Lord, I am nobody. O Lord, I am nobody." Soon his assistant came along and hearing the rabbi praying thus, he was moved to join him and also began to pray. "O Lord, I am nobody." Soon the janitor came along and he too was inspired to pray and knelt down and said. "O Lord, I am nobody." Thereupon the rabbi's assistant remarked, "Look who thinks he's nobody."

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (1991) has said that attachment to the idea of no-self is just as detrimental as attachment to any other self-concept.

Transpersonal psychologists have emphasized the importance of becoming somebody before you can be nobody (Engler, 1986). In other words, ego identity must be established before it can be relinquished. Surrender of egocentricity as evidenced in generosity and altruism appears to be a natural expression of mature and psychologically healthy spirituality.

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A person lacking ego strength tends to be defensive, to resist change, and to be motivated primarily by fear. A weak ego also implies low self-esteem and a negative self-image, both of which are associated with addictive patterns of behavior. Transcendence of ego in authentic spirituality does not mean self-abnegation. Ego just becomes less important. From a transpersonal perspective, ego, like the rational mind, is a good servant and a poor master.

Giving up unworthiness, or identification with being a victim, can be just as difficult as giving up self-importance in other disguises. Heroic fantasies of self-sacrifice take many forms. Anyone prone to co-dependency will be susceptible to them, and all of them are obstacles to liberation and psychologically healthy spirituality.

Growing up in a sexist patriarchal culture, women are particularly susceptible to attachment to a negative self-image. Others, particularly men, are perceived to be more intelligent, more competent, wiser. Women may be specially attracted to spiritual teachers on whom they can project the good father image. Patriarchal religions reinforce women's sense of inferiority whenever women are denied symbolic equality as well as equal rights.

The search for the wise father is not limited to women. Men who have grown up in this culture, often with absent fathers, may also seek a substitute parent. To the extent that a spiritual teacher

relieves one of the responsibility for making one's own decisions and choices in life, dependency is cultivated and self-reliance is undermined, The burden of freedom can weigh heavily on the shoulders of anyone who feels incompetent to judge or evaluate spiritual teachings, yet each one must choose whom to trust, whom to obey and whom to follow. If you do not trust yourself, how can you possibly know whom to trust?

Spiritual discernment is both a gift and a skill that comes from practice, from the willingness to see things as they are, and from giving up wishful thinking and eradicating self-deception insofar as possible, regardless of how difficult it may be.

#### GUILT AND PURIFICATION

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When spirituality is motivated by fear and guilt, it can also be psychologically crippling. A person suffering from low self-esteem can exacerbate his or her psychological problems by irrational feelings of guilt for perfectly natural human impulses such as anger and sexuality. Fear of punishment by some external authority, either human or supernatural, tends to keep such a person locked into ritualized behavior designed to avoid punishment either in this world or in the hereafter. The fear may be, for example, a fear of hell-fire or of an unfavorable reincarnation. Thus, fear may contribute to a desire for self-mortification or a susceptibility to manipulation by spiritual authorities who claim to know what one must do to ensure happiness or a favorable afterlife,

Fear of punishment is commonly associated with feelings of guilt and unworthiness, and these emotions sometimes contribute to the practice of purification rituals. These rituals can be beneficial or damaging, depending on how they are conducted and interpreted. Confession, for example, can have a healing effect on a person who afterwards feels unburdened, absolved from guilt and encouraged to start over, with strengthened resolve to avoid past mistakes and find a better way. Psychotherapy often serves this purpose as well. On the other hand, if confession is simply a formality, it is useless at best. At worst, if a person feels judged, confession can exacerbate feelings of guilt and unworthiness.

Group rituals of purification can also be powerful. Revealing long kept secrets, discussing taboo topics, and participating in non-verbal group activities such as chanting, dancing or playing music, all contribute to the feeling of bonding and belonging to a particular group. Some spiritual groups tend to repress emotions; others encourage emotional sharing. Purification rituals can also contribute to building a sense of loyalty and specialness in group members. Those who have been through such rituals are the insiders,

privity to secret knowledge and experiences that others presumably could not understand. This can exacerbate the dichotomy between *us* and *them*. Specialness thus becomes an egocentric investment in self-righteousness.

Ram Dass speaks of the time in his spiritual journey when he realized that he was willing to embrace suffering, and perceived suffering as grace. Then he realized that he was more willing to embrace suffering than to embrace joy, because suffering allowed him to hold on to his sense of righteousness.

One of the risks of purification rituals, then, is the investment in self-righteousness that can ensue if the rituals have the desired effect of relieving the burdens of guilt. Whether the investment is in seeing oneself as especially pure or especially guilty, the specialness is an obstacle to recognizing our ordinary humanness which is the ground of authentic spirituality in any form,

#### IDOLATRY

A spirituality that is narrowly focused on idols or symbols of divinity believed to be the exclusive purveyors of spiritual blessing is problematic from the perspective of psychological health, since it tends to create dependency, avoidance, escapism or denial. Once a client is trapped in a world of illusory fear and desire, the possibility of transcending all concepts and images is likely to be overlooked. In the absence of such transcending experience, idolatry often masks wishful thinking. Idols that are either conceptual or imaginary can never be argued out of existence. The possibility of seeing through or beyond them, as in seeing through a veil of illusion, remains the prerogative only of those who are willing to look at their life as it is, rather than cling to their preconceptions, or indulge in wishful thinking.

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Fascination with idols and with the symbols of spirituality can reinforce a client's entrapment in illusion. Thus every aid to spiritual awakening can also become a psychological trap. Images that awaken spirituality at one stage in our development can become obstacles when we become attached to them. Likewise, practices that were liberating at one time can imprison us at another time. Hence the merits of a particular practice or belief can only be evaluated within the context of a particular person's experience and stage of psycho-spiritual development. Learning to let go of cherished beliefs is one of the challenges everyone encounters on their psycho-spiritual path.

Spirituality can often mask death anxiety. Abdicating decisions about life in obedience to a spiritual teacher may be comforting if

such obedience is perceived as "being good." At times, however, disobedience may be necessary for psychological health. Leaving a teacher can be just as important as finding a teacher at the appropriate time.

Eventually authentic spiritual development leads to becoming one's own authority. It may be sufficient but it is not necessary to go through orthodox religious channels to experience love or attain liberation. We have much to learn from the great religious traditions, but spirituality is not the exclusive property of any institution or tradition. Taking responsibility for our beliefs, values and attitudes calls for examining spiritual assumptions in the light of reason and experience. This process of examination can be appropriately undertaken in, and aided by psychotherapy, as well as by orthodox religious means. In sum, it seems that psychologically healthy spirituality does not call for faith in any of our idols, but for a willing acceptance of life itself as a meaningful encounter with truth.

#### HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

*personal  
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Given all these difficulties encountered by psychotherapists dealing with spiritual issues, let us turn now to examine what aspects of spirituality can be affirmed as psychologically healthy. First of all, psychologically healthy spirituality supports personal freedom, autonomy, and self-esteem, as well as social responsibility. It does not deny our humanity or depend on suppression or denial of emotions. On the contrary, it calls for listening to our human heart and trusting the wisdom of our human intuition (Vaughan, 1979).

As an innate capacity that exists in every human being, psychologically healthy spirituality is not limited to anyone set of doctrines or practices. From a psychological perspective, spirituality is a universal experience, not a universal theology. Spirituality may be theistic as in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, non-theistic as in Buddhism, or polytheistic as in Hinduism. It can also be humanistic, as expressed by Abraham Maslow in his research on peak experiences and transcendence. Spirituality can be found at the heart of the great religions and in no religion. Spirituality can be found everywhere, not only in temples, churches and synagogues, not only in the stars, not only in music and song and dance, not only in the beauty of nature or the intimacy of a love relationship, but in every moment of every day of ordinary life. Spirituality is often awakened in the presence of death, and whenever the heart opens fully to love without fear. Those who seek peace, truth and love and find it within themselves become the teachers who can share their experience. Ghandi said, "My life is my message." And so it is with everyone of us.

Psychologically healthy spirituality is based on experience rather than dogma, and it respects individual rights and different forms of worship. **It** is associated with creativity and with compassion. Some characteristics of psychologically healthy spirituality are also characteristic of psychological maturity. They include the following:

*Authenticity:* A commitment to being responsible and true to oneself. This means living in harmony with one's professed beliefs, being reliably and reasonably consistent in thoughts, words, feelings, and actions.

*Letting go of the past:* Releasing negative emotions is necessary groundwork for psychological maturity. Living fully in the present requires letting go of guilt and resentment associated with the past.

*Facing our fears:* Uncovering and confronting one's fears so as to reduce our level of anxiety and raise our level of personal peace.

*Insight and forgiveness:* When we understand both ourselves and others better, we learn to both accept forgiveness ourselves and extend it to others. Psychotherapy tends to focus on self-forgiveness, while some spiritual teachings tell us to forgive others. Both are involved in spiritual growth.

*Love and compassion:* Giving and receiving love in personal relationships is an integral part of psychological maturity. When a source of love is discovered within, as it is in spiritual experience, it can be freely extended to others without concern for repayment. Relationships are then based on what Maslow called "being needs" rather than on deficiency needs.

*Community:* Since our lives depend on an intricate network of mutually conditioned relationships, psychological maturity is not isolated from community. The community of fellow spiritual seekers is said to be one of the precious jewels of spiritual practice. The psychologically healthy spiritual person is both altruistic and realistic, valuing him or herself and others both for what they are, and also for what they can become (Elkins, 1988).

*Awareness:* The cultivation of non-interfering attention to both inner experience and to the world of perception is a pre-condition for recognizing the power of the human mind. Awareness of the distorting influence of fear and desire helps to counteract self-deception. Mature awareness of reality, temporal and eternal, finite and infinite, includes an awareness of body, mind, psyche, soul and spirit.

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*Peace:* Making peace with ourselves means accessing our inner peace which can then be cultivated and extended to others. Unless we can learn to live in peace with each other, planetary survival is at risk (Walsh, 1984). Healthy spirituality is not a matter of isolation, but a matter of living in harmony with nature and with other people.

*Liberation:* Psychologically healthy spirituality is liberating. By releasing us from limiting, egocentric self-concepts and *excessive* self-concern, it promises freedom from the common shackles of fear and ignorance.

#### REWARDS OF PRACTICE

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Writing on *The Two Faces of Religion*, psychiatrist N. S. Xavier (1987) defines mature spirituality as being based on the dynamic factors of courage, love and wisdom. These three factors are intimately connected. It takes courage to act on the basis of love and wisdom; love means nurturing oneself and others with courage and wisdom, and wisdom is defined as a healthy balance of reason and intuition. Thomas Merton and Mahatma Gandhi are cited as examples of individuals whose lives exemplified a mature spirituality.

Indications of a psychologically healthy spirituality include a reduction of fear and anxiety, an openness of heart and mind, an increase of kindness and compassion, a willingness to risk loving without attachment, a commitment to truth, authenticity and responsibility, and an acceptance of one's own and everyone else's human frailties.

When we are able and willing to take responsibility for the psychological and spiritual quality of our lives, to learn from our mistakes and correct them rather than judge them, then our spiritual path becomes increasingly clear and easy to follow. The spiritual journey does lead us from fear to love, from ignorance to understanding, and from bondage to freedom.

In closing it is appropriate to quote His Holiness, the Dalai Lama of Tibet (1991):

Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individuals is difficult, it is the only way. Wherever I go, I express this, and I am encouraged that people from many different walks of life receive it well. Peace must first be developed within an individual. And I believe that love, compassion, and altruism are the fundamental basis for peace. Once these qualities are developed within an individual, he or she is then able to create an atmosphere of peace

and harmony, This atmosphere can be expanded and extended from the individual to his family, from the family to the community and eventually to the whole world.

This, then, is the task at hand for psychotherapists dealing with spiritual issues in psychotherapy,

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Reading the book *Spiritual Competency in Psychotherapy* was like having a series of extended conversations with a good friend about what really matters in psychotherapy and life. Philip Brownell generously shares his experiences, insights, knowledge, questions, and struggles about spirituality and psychotherapy in this book. By the time we finished reading it, we felt grateful for the gems of insight we discovered...<sup>Â</sup> The book offers counselors and psychotherapists who lack experience or comfort in dealing with spiritual issues (especially those who have not worked out their own approaches to spirituality) ways of understanding the nature of spirituality. It orients clinicians to respectfully help clients who have spiritual and religious issues. The topics of spirituality and psychotherapy have often been controversial in the literature on schizophrenia treatment. However, current research indicates many potential benefits of integrating issues of religion and spirituality into psychotherapy for individuals with schizophrenia. In this paper, implications are presented for incorporating spiritual and religious issues in psychotherapy for individuals with schizophrenia. A background on the integration of spirituality into the practice of psychotherapy is discussed. The literature on spiritually-oriented psychotherapy for schizophrenia i