

Integrating living faith with your practice

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Joint commission mandate:

JCAHO requires organizations to include a spiritual assessment as part of the overall assessment of a patient and leaves the specifics to each organization.

Gospel mandate, ministry, and message:

Reconciliation. It's not all black and white, lots of color and shades of grey.

Tripartite Biblical view of Body, Soul, Spirit mandate:

Biopsychsocial-spiritual (BPSS) approach

Integrating spiritual runs into BPSS pressures from within and without:

Internal, family, work, time, and the opposing influence of the Zeitgeist or “spirit of the age”

We have BPSS life and death advocacy choices to make in each encounter:

How do we do it? Primarily by following Jesus' example of sharing His Truth, in His Way, and allowing His Life to flow.

Getting to know people in all BPSS dimensions of their existence:

We were trained to do the “body” (B) part pretty well, weren't we?

We need to get to know patients personally – the “soul” (PS) part:

- Who are they; what they do; who are they related to; how do they think, feel and act?
- What is important to them, motivates them, inhibits them?

And we're called to get to know them better spiritually (S):

- What are their hopes and fears?
- Why do they think they are ill?
- Where is God in their lives and current situations?
- Do they believe in a God who answers prayer?
- Where do they feel weak? What are their sources of strength?
- Have they found support in a faith community? etc.

Be living letters:

Be alive, lively, active, engaged, interactive, accessible, transparent, and perky vs. dead, dreary, sullen, withdrawn, aloof, inaccessible, opaque, and drab.

Share in language with God-breathed personal content that communicates with others vs. being “closed books” without content that others can't “read” or wouldn't want to.

Be genuine ladies and gentlemen:

Courteous and kind, cheerful, comforting, faithful and hopeful, and loving

Be 100% available to each person:

- Greet people warmly, graciously, courteously.
- Ask about their welfare.
- Comment on something attractive or interesting about them, their hair, clothing, facial expression, companion.
- Mix humor and lightheartedness into your conversation.
- Allow space for personal anecdotes if they relate.
- Don't let the world clutter you up or get you down.

Be observant for nonverbal cues about underlying issues:

- Ask what brought them to you, then draw them out.
- Look for underlying motives beneath superficial reasons.
- Be sensitive to metacommunication, body language.
- Mix empathy with lightheartedness when probing into potentially painful subjects – “this is such a bad situation you have to either laugh or cry, or both...”
- Don't be afraid to dig around and ask personal questions – people are unusually receptive to someone who cares.
- Take note but don't think you have to do something about everything you uncover.

Exercise your privilege to “laying hands on” people

- Don't be afraid to touch people appropriately.
- Do a good examination.
- Be warm but professional, firm but gentle.
- Check things that will confirm that you care enough to be thorough.
- Describe what you're doing and what you're finding as you go along.
- Keep up your personal conversation, weaving in pertinent spiritual inquiry and comment along the way.

Make a faith connection

People come to us with bad news. Be prepared and able to share good news with them.

- Be gentle but bold.
- Don't be afraid to wear your Christian heart on your sleeve – “God bless you!”
- Don't be ashamed of the Gospel “for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”
- Don't hide your light under a bushel but put it on a lampstand.
- Be disciplined – it's the mark of a disciple.
- Let the Holy Spirit be your guide.
- Offer to pray... and then pray openly, then and there.

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