CSWE Religion and Spirituality Clearinghouse Submission Form

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TITLE OF RESOURCE	TIME FRAME (Check all that apply)
The bridge activity: Utilizing an experiential activity to explore spiritual growth.	x Class unit of < 30 minutes x Class unit of 30-60 minutes ___ Class period of > 1 hour x Two or more class period ___ Theme for academic term x Homework assignment

DESCRIPTION (Maximum 250 words)
The bridge activity is an expressive technique that can be used with students and supervisees (called "participants") to explore understanding of individual spiritual development. This activity can be useful specifically when discussing spirituality as research shows that when creative interventions are used in conjunction with traditional training modalities they can enhance participants' understanding and engaging their senses in the learning experience. The art therapy-based activity has participants draw metaphorical representations of their stage of the faith development, as defined by Fowler (1988). Participants are asked to fold the paper into a "z" shape, so that the paper has three panels. In the first panel the participants are asked to draw a metaphorical representation of their current stage of faith development. In the third panel participants are asked to draw a picture of how they would like to further develop their faith (either by exploring their current stage or by working toward the next stage). Upon completion of these two drawings, participants are then asked to use the middle panel to create a "bridge" that can be drawn. Participants are asked to write words or create goals that can help to guide them from one side of the bridge to the next. The facilitator can use process questions to clarify participants' understanding of their current stages and viability of goals and to create a timeline for goal attainment

RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL TRADITION OR PERSPECTIVE EMPHASIZED BY RESOURCE (Maximum 250 words)
The purpose of this activity is to facilitate participants' understanding of personal spiritual development and examine how it can affect the clinical relationship. For this reason, there are no references to specific religious traditions—it is the facilitator's role to encourage participants to create their own interpretation of what constitutes spirituality in their lives. The activity is designed to help participants examine their own perspective on spirituality and how they use this resource in their daily lives. Ultimately, it is the facilitator's responsibility to ask questions that can help participants better understand their perspective and to reflect on how this value may affect them in their lives as well as how it can impact their interactions with clients in the field. Example process questions are provided in "Description of Learning Activity" section.

CONNECTION TO 2008 EPAS COMPETENCIES (Select most relevant; maximum of 3)
___ Identify as professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly
___ Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice
x Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
x Engage diversity and difference in practice
___ Advance human rights and social and economic justice

___ Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research

 x   Apply knowledge of human behavior and social environment

___ Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services

___ Respond to contexts that shape practice

___ Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

RELEVANCE OF RESOURCE FOR PRACTICE (Maximum 250 words)

The Bridge Activity is useful for all educational levels of participants to explore their spiritual development and reflect on their goals for future growth. Particularly important is that studies show that neurobiological responses to creative and expressive techniques can help individual scan knowledge and expand their understanding of concepts in ways that traditional didactic raining cannot (Mullin, Luke, & Drewes, 2007). Discussions on spirituality can be deeply personal, but using creative techniques can help engage participants in communicating their thoughts and feelings on the subject in a way that is less threatening than dialogue. As participants engage in the activity they are able to reflect on their personal experiences and how these experiences may affect the therapeutic relationship. As participants listen to each other's interpretations of their drawings and goals for themselves they can receive the benefit of exploring spiritual diversity in the classroom setting and see how a facilitator can model appropriate responses to different belief systems while helping participants engage in frank discussions on issues related to spirituality and how it can be explored outside of the classroom and in a therapeutic setting.

APPLICABLE PROGRAM LEVEL	CONTENT AREA
___ Undergraduate	x Diversity and cultural competence
___ Graduate	___ HBSE
x Both	___ Policy
	x Practice skills
	___ Other (specify): _____
	_____

ASSESSMENT MEASURES (Check all that apply)

___ Case study paper	___ Participation in group presentation
___ Individual presentation	___ Research paper
___ Journal	___ Other (specify): _____
___ Participation in group discussion	_____

SUGGESTIONS, IF ANY, IN APPLYING RESOURCE IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS (Maximum 250 words)

This activity can be used in other classes to aid participants in understanding their current context and examine their goals. The authors find that this activity lends itself well to exploring growth during the clinical phase of training when participants are struggling to create links between theoretical learning and

clinical practice. If facilitators are willing to help clinical level participants, the activity can also be taught to new clinicians so that they can engage in a simple experiential activity with clients while still under supervision in their training courses. The parallel process of participants' completing the activity and then transferring that insight into using the activity with clients can be a powerful tool that helps participants' become more comfortable with using creative techniques in their clinical practice.

SUGGESTIONS, IF ANY, FOR PREPARATION FOR INSTRUCTOR (Maximum 250 words)

Facilitators are encouraged to feel comfortable with using experiential techniques and to have a working knowledge of Fowler's stages of faith development. Facilitators will need to determine the timeframe for using the activity (once, several times over a semester, etc.) so that process questions will be appropriate for the activity. It is important that facilitators encourage participants to only share as deeply as they feel is appropriate for the setting, particularly if sharing will take place in a classroom with participants who may not know each other well. The authors' have found that using this activity, particularly as it relates to the deeply held values of spirituality, can be an emotional experience for participants.

Additionally, it is encouraged that facilitators complete the activity independently, so that they can engage in the experience firsthand and process their own reactions to what is revealed. This will help facilitators to model empathy for participants' experience of completing the activity.

READINGS OR OTHER LEARNING MATERIALS (APA format for references)

Canda, E. (1990a). Afterward: Spirituality re-examined. *Spirituality and Social Work Communicator, 1*(1), 13–14.

Canda, E. (1990b). An holistic approach to prayer for social work practice*. Social Thought, 1*6(3), 3–13.

Council on Social Work Education. (2008). *Educational policy and accreditation standards.* Retrived from http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=13780

Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.

Hodge, D. R. (2002). Does social work oppress evangelical Christians? A "new class" analysis of society and social work. *Social Work, 47*(7), 401–414.

Mejia, X. E., & O'Brien, E. R. (2006, September). *Creative solution focused supervision: The bridge activity.* Paper presented at the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, Orlando, Florida.

Mullin, J. A., Luke, M., & Drewes, A. A. (2007). Supervision can be playful, too: Play therapy techniques that enhance supervision*. International Journal of Play Therapy, 16*(1), 69–85.

National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Code of ethics*. Retrieved from http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES (Maximum 250 words) or Attachment (Maximum 6 pages, double-spaced)

Please see attached.

The Bridge Activity: Utilizing an Experiential Activity to Explore Faith/Spiritual Growth

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Honoring our clients' spirituality/faith is considered a basic cultural competency for those who work in the mental health field. However, social work students may have conflicting feelings between acknowledging personal faith and honoring clients' faith (Hodge, 2002) as well as some confusion in how they can integrate these beliefs appropriately in the clinical setting (Furman, Benson, & Canda, 2011). Accreditation oversight and acknowledgement by professional organizations regarding the importance of religion and spirituality in individuals' lives has led to social work programs incorporating education about spirituality/faith into the core curriculum (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2008; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2008). In order to meet these educational and ethical requirements, instructors can employ didactic educational techniques such as expressive arts to further students' spiritual development in the classroom setting.

Engaging in creative interventions is often used in conjunction with traditional training modalities as a way to enhance students' understanding and engage their senses in the learning experience. Studies show that neurobiological responses to creative and expressive techniques can help individuals gain knowledge and expand their understanding of concepts in ways that traditional didactic training cannot (Mullin, Luke, & Drewes, 2007). This modality can be particularly useful when discussing deeply personal issues including spirituality and religion.

Many students and instructors come to the helping profession with personal definitions of religion, spirituality and spiritual development. Because these definitions can be extremely diverse, it is important to define certain terms and concepts so that all participants have a common lexicon to work

from. Within this activity the term *spirituality* is defined as "'the search for meaning, purpose, and morality fulfilling relation with self, other people, the encompassing universe and ultimate reality however a person understands it'" (Canda, 1990a, 1990b as cited in Furman, Benson, Grimwood, & Canda, 2004, p. 772), which is open for individuals to interpret for themselves. Additionally, stages of faith are taught using Fowler's (1981) model, which contends that faith is foundational for all human beings. "Faith is not always religious in its content or context. Faith is a person's way of seeing him or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose" (Fowler, 1981, p. 4). Fowler's developmental stages of faith offers a universal structure that is appropriate for various faiths and spiritual practices. This structure provides a generic foundation for assessing the role of a person's faith apart from specifics of diverse spiritual practice. Appendix A provides a resource list for additional information for specific settings and audiences. Participants should use the terms *spirituality* and *faith* as is most befitting for each individual; within this article we will use "spirituality/faith" to encompass both. After these concepts have been discussed, we then begin the creative intervention.

Activity Description

The bridge activity is an expressive technique that can be used with students and supervisees (called "participants") to explore their understanding of their spiritual/faith development (Mejia & O'Brien, 2006). The activity itself is very simple and requires one blank sheet of paper and either crayons or markers. Participants fold the paper into a Z shape, creating three panels. Participants are then asked to create a metaphorical drawing on the first panel of where they believe they are in their current stage of spiritual/faith development. In the third panel the participants are asked to draw how they would like to further their spiritual/faith development or spiritual/faith knowledge. After these two tasks are completed, participants are then asked to use the middle panel to create a bridge between these two drawings. Participants can either write or draw goals, plans or ideas that will help them to maneuver between these two places. At this point the supervisor (or facilitator) can ask questions to help participants explore the meaning within the drawings, tease out underlying themes, /or discover ideas

that individual participants and supervisor may not have previously considered. The following case study gives an illustration of the bridge activity completed by a student during her clinical experience. It can be used as a model for educators who conduct bridge activity.

Case Study

A participant in her first clinical field experience course was asked to complete the bridge activity during an individual supervision session (see Figure 1).

Figure1. Bridge activity example from student participant

After completing her drawing, the supervisor processed the participant's bridge activity experience and is reported here using the participant's terms. The following are example questions that were used:

- Tell me about the first panel. What does this scene mean to you?
- How does the first panel convey your experience of your faith?
- Tell me about the meaning of the three paths in the third panel?
- How is the third panel conveying what the next part of your faith journey will look like?
- Describe the bridge that you have built for yourself and how the words you have written relate to your journey.

This supervisee shared that she conceptualizes her faith as being safe, warm, and calm; her belief is that other traditions (such as those metaphorically drawn in the third panel) give their followers the same feelings. Additionally, her bridge showed that although she is interested in exploring other faith traditions, it would take some risk on her part. She is part of a devotedly Christian community; exploring other faiths may be perceived by her family and friends as stepping outside of the cultural norm. She also shared that she would most likely struggle with understanding religious doctrines that are outside of what she has been taught, but she believes that for her growth as a helper, that this risk is necessary.

As the participant and supervisor discussed the risks associated with learning about other religious faiths, they also worked together to create goals that the participant could complete by the end of her clinical experience to attain her desired levels of growth. These goals were as follows: (a) contact a local synagogue and ask to attend their services, (b) contact a local Islamic organization to learn more about their religious doctrines, and (c) engage in self-reflective journaling about her experience learning about these two new faiths.

In a later session, the supervisor and participant revisit the goals that were set forth previously. The participant and supervisor discussed the participant's difficulty with her perception that friends and family within her religious community are not supportive of her spiritual exploration and her dissonance with wanting to be a competent clinician as well as maintain her ties with her support system. As the participant and supervisor discussed these issues, certain questions arose: (a) Have you previously had experiences where your scholarly and professional explorations contradicted the beliefs held by your friends and family? (b) How were you able to negotiate communicating your needs to others while remaining respectful of their views? and (c) What have you learned about yourself and your faith as you explore the faiths of others? The participant and supervisor tackled these questions and used insights from the participant's journal entries to discuss some of the aforementioned issues. The participant decided that she would continue her exploration of other faiths and seek counseling for issues related while negotiating any continued discord with family and friends.

Subsequent supervision sessions explored the parallel process of how she experienced challenges presented by her faith family that were similar to those of an existing client. The confluence of these issues made it imperative that the supervisor and participant discuss countertransference that may be occurring in the therapeutic process. After it was determined that the participant was not significantly impaired, the supervisor presented some questions regarding how faith development was affecting the therapeutic relationship. Questions presented were:

- How does your faith community regard understanding and forgiveness of others?

- Compare and contrast this to the faith of your client.

- How does your faith community handle conflicts among members?

- Compare and contrast this to your client.

While this list is not exhaustive, it shows how a supervisor can process this type of conflict while bringing a supervisee to a more cognitive awareness of their personal dissonance. In taking the supervision process a step further, when the participant is less emotionally reactive and more cognitively aware, discussion can begin to center on how the supervisee can maintain an empathetic stance in the therapeutic relationship thereby working on the client's presenting issues and not the supervisee's reactions to them.

Resource Application

Facilitators may find this experiential activity useful in other classroom and training settings. The authors have used this activity when working with practicum or internship students to discuss areas of struggle, particularly as it relates to the first field experiences. The bridge activity can be useful for a one-time application to explore issues or can be used over the course of a semester in several classes to discuss goals and areas of desired growth. For example, the authors have used this activity at the beginning of a field experience semester during group supervision classes to explore how participants experience their first week in the field and ask students to draw how they think they will experience their

final week of the semester. The bridge is built around specific competencies that need to be worked on and mastered by the end of the field experience. The goals that are created are revisited briefly in future group supervision sessions but only for accountability purposes. Appendix B gives a sample rubric if the activity is a graded assignment in a course.

It should be noted that when students and facilitators share these drawings there should be certain steps followed. First, facilitators and students should all agree to the rules of sharing (these may need to be reiterated if included in the course syllabus). Example rules include that everyone should share some piece of their drawing or process, feedback should be presented in a way that is respectful, and discussion should remain confidential within the context of the class. Example questions that could be asked include: (a) What is your experience of learning more intimate details of your classmates spiritual/faith development? (b) How does this sharing time affect how you feel/think about sharing your own spiritual/faith development, traditions, etc.? and (c) How does exploring your spiritual/faith development help you conceptualize the NASW Code of Ethics as it relates to incorporating clients' spiritual/religious beliefs into the clinical setting?

Conclusion

Spiritual development, religion, and faith are sensitive and necessary subjects to examine with all social work students. Using creative interventions such as expressive arts can be a more accessible and less threatening way for instructors to facilitate conversations among students. This article describes the bridge activity, which is one such creative intervention that can be used to help explore spiritual development and be adapted for use in other courses.

References

Canda, E. (1990a). Afterward: Spirituality re-examined. *Spirituality and Social Work Communicator, 1*(1), 13–14.

Canda, E. (1990b). A holistic approach to prayer for social work practice. *Social Thought, 16*(3), 3–13.

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Furman, L. D., Benson, P. W., Grimwood, C., & Canda, E. R. (2004). Religion and spirituality in social work education and direct practice at the new millennium: A survey of UK social workers. *British Journal of Social Work, 34*, 767–792.

Hodge, D. R. (2002). Does social work oppress evangelical Christians? A "new class" analysis of society and social work. *Social Work, 47*, 401–414.

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National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Code of ethics.* Retrieved from http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp

Appendix A

Additional Readings

Autry, L. L., & Walker, M. E. (2011). Artistic representation: Promoting student creativity and self-reflection. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 6,*42–55.

Duffy, T. (2007). Promoting relational competencies in counselor education through creativity and relational-cultural theory. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 2*(1), 47–59. doi:10.1300/J456v02n01_05

Evans, M., & Atkins, M. J. (2007). Making meaning using creativity and spirituality. *The Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 2*(1), 35–46. doi:10.1300/J456v02n01_04

Gladding, S. T. (2008). The impact of creativity in counseling. *The Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 3*(2), 97–104. doi:10.1080/1540138082226679

Hamdan, A. (2007). A case study of a Muslim client: Incorporating religious beliefs and practices. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 35,* 92–100.

Morrison, J. Q., Clutter, S. M., Pritchett, E. M., & Demmitt, A. (2009). Perceptions of clients and counseling professional regarding spirituality in counseling. *Counseling and Values, 53,* 183–194.

Osborn, D., Street, S., & Bradham-Cousar, M. (2012). Spiritual needs and practices of counselor education students. *Adultspan: Theory Research & Practice, 11*(1), 27–38.

Smith, A. (2007). Indigenous and cultural psychology: Where does faith come in? *Pastoral Psychology, 56,* 95–104. doi:10.1007/s11089-007-0093-y

Smith-Augustine, S. (2011). School counselors' comfort and competence with spirituality issues. *Journal of Counseling and Values, 55,* 149–156.

Steen, R. L., Engels, D., & Thweatt, W. T. III. (2006). Ethical aspects of spirituality in counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Values, 50,* 108–118.

Appendix B

Rubric

Areas of Competency	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development. (CSWE, 2008, EP 2.1.1)	Participant is unable/unwilling to complete activity-cannot articulate spiritual /faith growth areas.	Participant is able to articulate areas of spiritual/faith growth and can communicate how it can enhance service deliver to constituents, is aware of area resources that can be of use to constituents.	Participant is able to articulate areas of spiritual/faith growth and can communicate how it can enhance service deliver to constituent and develops a plan to begin gain a greater level of expertise in this area.
Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice. (CSWE, 2008, EP 2.1.2)	Participant is unable/unwilling to reflect on how personal value of spirituality/faith can impact self and others	Participant is able to reflect on how personal value of spirituality/faith can impact self and others, can give specific examples in own life and in life of constituents.	Participant is able to reflect on how personal value of spirituality/faith can impact self and others; can also identify how these values relate to professional ethics codes.
Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups. (CSWE, 2008, EP 2.1.4)	Participant is not aware/cannot articulate how personal biases can influence work with diverse groups.	Participant is aware and can articulate how personal biases can influence work with diverse groups, is able to offer specific examples within personal practice.	Participant is aware and can articulate how personal biases can influence work with diverse groups; is able to create a set of goals on increasing awareness and gaining greater levels of competence.

Note. Exceeds expectations = demonstrates evidence of strong knowledge, skills and dispositions in this area. Meets expectations = demonstrates evidence of satisfactory knowledge, skills and dispositions in this area. Below expectations = demonstrates evidence of limited knowledge, skills, and dispositions in this area. EP = educational policy.