Integration of Lonergan's Functional Specialties in an Advanced Practice Health Promotion Course

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 Lonergan’s Philosophy
The philosophy of Bernard Lonergan’s General Empirical Method (GEM) is the basis of this abstract. Knowing as a process is not simply “taking a look at what’s there” or “reporting what I feel about something”, but a change in our lives. This 4-fold process of Lonergan’s cognitive theory experience, understanding, judging and deciding has given me the opportunity to change my courses in the master’s program.

Health can be viewed within a context of wholeness, in which “health” is not the absence of disease but a state of physical, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing. Yet nursing theorists (i.e., Watson, 2012) view understanding of one’s own spirituality to be central to caring for the spiritual needs of others. Reflective understanding, authenticity and the human person is the subject of consciously developing unity within the profession.

Two Key elements:
1) Subject-object challenge of nursing inquiry and empirical and theoretical evidence and opportunities to answer the question “what am I doing when I am knowing?”
2) Common sense vs. scientific knowledge
Integration of nursing theory, science and practice may be achieved through self-transcendence.

Application in an Advanced Practice Promotion Course

This project aims to provide students with empirical and theoretical evidence and opportunities to answer the question “what am I doing when I am knowing?” Several multidimensional facets of a personal and spiritual perspective was explored. Emphasis was on the integration of body, mind, and spirit. Techniques that were introduced include, but not limited to, mindfulness, reflection and other exercises to recognize the relationships between spirituality and health.

Students identified personal core belief systems and values and explored cultural aspects of healing, spirituality, spirituality and health. And other exercises to recognize the relationships between spirituality and health. In this module you will explore the characteristics of spirituality including the underlying concepts and definitions of spirituality. This will lay the foundation for future discussion.

Week 1 & 2: In this module you will explore your individual topic for personal change, in addition you will explore the characteristics of spirituality including the underlying concepts and definitions of spirituality. You will examine these methods to change and discover authentic self in promoting a health behavior change.

- Self, others, and God (or Higher Power)
- Meaning and Purpose
- Hope
- Relatedness/connectedness
- Beliefs and belief systems

Expressing spirituality Response to Week 1 & 2:
“T is felt that the six essential elements (self, others, and God, meaning and purpose, hope, relatedness/connectedness, beliefs and belief systems, and expressions of spirituality) can encourage change in a person, but I believe that the response to each of these elements is very individual. Perhaps someone feels that the element of hope is more influential to change in a person but another feels that human connectedness is most influential. It is important to respect individuality when interpreting the six essential elements of spirituality. This resonates with me through my role as a nurse, in order to provide individualized healthcare, I must consider and respect my patient’s spiritual belief system.”

Week 3 & 4: In this module you will explore the relationship between religious beliefs, religious practices, and an individual’s health. An important part of that exploration is an understanding of the major spiritual elements and rituals how will these relate to your individual change.

How does the definition of spirituality relate to the values of health care? What is spiritual health and how can care providers support their own or another’s spiritual health? Caring for the “whole person” includes paying attention to and nurturing the person’s religious and for spiritual needs. How does this affect your ability to care for yourself? Take a moment to reflect on your views and ways that they can help you care for yourself and promote a change.

Response to Week 3 & 4: Spiritual health means an individual concept of peace and harmony and a deeper connection with self, others and Higher Being. Spirituality and health are interconnected (Tocci, n.d.). Health care providers can help support their own and another’s spiritual health by means of prayers, meditation and gratitude. Many individuals greatly benefit from prayers. Prayers are personal conversation we have with God, often stating what we need or what we ask for as a divine intervention. Meditation has been proven to have multiple health benefits including relief from stress, improvement of immune and cardiovascular function, decrease pain and help with relaxation. Gratitude produces a feeling of joy and self-acceptance. Being grateful for what we have instead of what we do not have will help us during difficult times such as dealing with feelings of fear, anger and emotional difficulties.”

Week 5 & 6: In this module you take a closer look at the practice of rituals not only from a spiritual point of view but from a concrete way of thinking on how rituals can help you make a change. It is important for you to gain an understanding that rituals can help awaken our spiritual self and help us to connect with our inner core, other people, nature, and everything in our world. Jeane T. Napolitano (2005) will be important for you to create rituals and to provide examples of why rituals work as a healing force.

In addition to your reflective journaling you are to write a gratitude journal this week. Each day you need to write down at least 5 things for which you are grateful. In addition, share your experience of writing the journal (along with any changes it created in your perspective related to your personal change).

Response to Weeks 5 & 6: The gratitude journals were varied. Many students wrote about their gratitude to their family and friends. Some wrote about the health and how being healthy gave them the energy to become healthier and how they felt when they thought of others. They also commented on the value of journaling. Some students commented that at first they thought this was just an exercise, but then realized that it really was helpful in defining themselves and in rediscovering why spirituality and how they are matters in their careers in nursing.

Week 7 & 8: This week you will look at your own understanding of spiritual beliefs and how they affect their change. This is a crucial first step. The following are questions to respond reflect and respond to.

This is very personal and should not be included in your journal. In your journal you will reflect on how your change is going and what strategies you are using to make the change.

Response to Weeks 7 & 8: “Reflecting on spirituality made me discover my authentic self and by being fully conscious of who I am, of my thoughts and feelings and having that deeper understanding of core being, cultural roots, set of values and belief, I feel able to discern factors that may be barriers to attain healthy behavior and that different factors affect how individuals think and act in order to their own conscience, set of beliefs and influences. Recognizing my own authentic self, knowing own strengths and weaknesses humble me to accept diversity, make decisions and act in conscience.”

Conclusion
Integration of nursing theory, science and practice may be achieved through self-transcendence.

This reflective journal on spirituality and the aspects of Lonergan’s philosophy was developed based on an integration of the functional specialties looking at all aspects of the student as a person, clinical professional and the integration of spirituality. Students were successful and many commented on the positive experience of journaling and how much they had learned about themselves personally and as a professional. Many also said that they would continue the journals beyond the class requirement.

Student Response: “This journal meant a lot to me. My journey to motherhood was not easy, the health promotion and spiritual journal helped me cope with the stressful situation. It also helped me prevent postpartum depression. When I had my son early, I knew it wouldn’t be easy leaving him in the NICU every night but I thank God for all the blessings that come in different forms, the nurses there were angels.”