

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

Mary Ellen Roberts, DNP, APN-c, FAANP, FAAN
 SETON HALL UNIVERSITY - South Orange, New Jersey

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.

The 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
 - 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 holistic health from 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, and ritual. Utilizing the (GEM), students learn about the spiritual components of caring for patients. Students write a two part reflective journal, (one part on the change they want to make and the one on spirituality in the context of Lonergan) the journal includes reflections on that week's spirituality discussion (guiding questions are posted separately). This reflection encourages the change they are looking for and helps them to discover their authentic self.

Reflective Journal

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. This will lay the foundation for future discussion.

- How do you define spirituality and what does spirituality mean to you?
- In what ways do you think spirituality affects health and healing?
- Do you believe in a mind-body-spirit connection? If not, what are some of the ways in which you can support clients who do?
- How do the following six essential elements of spirituality encourage change in a person? How will examining these methods help you to change and discover your authentic self in promoting a health behavior change?
 - o Self, others, and God (or Higher Power)
 - o Meaning and Purpose
 - o Hope
 - o Relatedness/connectedness
 - o Beliefs and belief systems
 - o Expressions of spirituality

Response to Week 1 & 2:

"I feel 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/or 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.

Reflective Journal

Response to Weeks 3 & 4

"Spiritual health is an individual concept of peace and harmony and a deeper connection with self, others and Higher Being. Spirituality and health are interconnected (Trivieri, 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."

Weeks 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. It 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 towards nursing. But many wrote about personal and family gratitude. 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 who they are matters in their careers in nursing.

Weeks 7 & 8

This week you will look at your own understanding of spiritual beliefs and how they affect our change. This is a crucial first step. The following are questions for you to respond reflect on 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.

Reflective Journal

Belief System

- What are the spiritual or religious beliefs within your family of origin?
- What are your early experiences of spirituality and/or religion?
- What religious or spiritual images and stories are meaningful to you?
- What experiences in health care have challenged or contributed to your spiritual beliefs?
- What experiences in your personal life have challenged your beliefs or provided opportunities for spiritual growth?
- What is your spiritual belief system now?

Strengths for Spiritual Care

- What spiritual or religious rituals are meaningful to you?
- What unique qualities that you possess that can help you meet the spiritual needs of your patients/clients?

Response to Weeks 7 & 8

" Reflecting on spirituality made me discover my authentic self and by being fully conscious of one's self, of own thoughts and feelings and having that deeper understanding of own being, cultural roots, set of values and belief, I am able to discern factors that may be barriers to attain healthy behavior and the different factors affect how individuals think and act in accord to their own conscience, set of beliefs and influences. Recognizing my own authentic self, knowing own strength and weakness humbles me to accept diversity, make decisions and actions conscientiously."

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 situations. 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."