

# New Irish research into Spirituality, from a shamanic perspective, offering forgiveness to self and others, and it's place within a counselling setting.

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# My PhD Research

investigates the meanings of spirituality among accredited counsellors practicing a new energy therapy technique, which brings a spiritual aspect based on shamanic principles into a counselling session.

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# PRESENTATION FORMAT

- Traditional Counselling and it's Evolution to Holism
- What is Celtic Shamanism?
- Energetic Spiritual tools specifically the Energy Therapy Technique (ETT)
- Forgiveness as a key criteria for restoration to holistic health
- Researching from the Counsellor's perspective
- Final stages – Master Themes and Conclusions

*“The art of medicine consists  
of amusing the patient while  
nature cures the disease”*

**Voltaire - French philosopher, historian, writer**



# BACKGROUND

- In ancient times spirituality and healing were one. A divergence between the two became part of Western culture when the medical world took a scientific approach to healing concentrating on curative medicine and the world religions focused on the spiritual with increasing onus on the theological (Bennett, 1982; Porter, 1995). Since the 1960's there has been an increase of interest in what could be termed the secular sacred – spiritual practices that are not linked to specific religions but focus on personal empowerment (Cosgrove et al, 2011; Brockman, 2016).
- Both in Ireland and internationally, counselling psychotherapy has become increasingly popular as a means to redress life issues and learn new behaviors designed to sustain the optimum changes made mentally and emotionally during treatment. However, many find this approach somewhat limiting if seeking a connection with a sense of their spirituality (Cooper & McLeod, 2011; MacKinnon, 2012). One of the emerging paradigms in counselling psychotherapy, transpersonal psychology and the integration of the spiritual is that of shamanism and related energy therapies (Wilber, 2001; Feinstein, 2008).



# CURRENT SITUATION

- Reflecting the research literature ((Koenig et al, 1999; Sorajjakool & Lamberton, 2004), the quarterly magazine of the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, has increasingly published articles on this phenomenon and the integration of holistic related techniques and practices. Certain forms of counselling today have and are evolving to restore the spiritual-healing oneness paradigm, as a central honouring of the human condition for holistic health (Wells et al, 2016). Shamanic therapy is one way of honouring that in a simple, empowering way with energy as a currency of spirituality (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). Many modern Counselling approaches including Psychosynthesis, Hypnosis, Process Orientated and Psychodynamic Psychotherapy as well as Jungian, Energy Psychology and Integrative therapy borrow from ancient shamanic and esoteric philosophies.



# THE REQUIREMENT FOR 'SECULAR' SPIRITUAL TOOLS

- Counsellors frequently find difficulty with their own response to a clients' practices tailored to their own beliefs in an attempt to use their religion/spirituality (R/S) knowledge to make meaning of their issue ( Verbeck et al, 2015).
- When Mastropieri et al, (2015) introduced what they referred to as 'spiritual visualization' (SV) into interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT) they found that this improved their clients coping mechanisms of depression and anxiety.
- Healing techniques grounded in the manipulation of the human energy field are common across worldwide indigenous esoteric practices as well as modern complementary therapies. Both contact and noncontact methods are utilised to bridge the gap between the internal world of the client and the external environment where the issue originated.
- The key principle for holistic healing practices with the individual is based on the premise of the potential impact of disturbances in human energy field. The therapist uses specific techniques with the aim to transmit, remove, balance and draw in pure healing energies as a conduit of Spirit that enables the client's systems to be restored to harmony (Levin, 2011).
- These healing modalities include Traditional Chinese Medicine's Acupuncture, Reiki and Shamanic Energy Healing (Money, 2000).
- Interventions by the counsellor of a spiritual nature may bring challenges if the technique is not a good fit (Martinez et al, 2007).
- Currently, the Health Service Executive (HSE) in Ireland is investigating 'multi-faith' spiritual support delivery in healthcare in particular chaplaincy service provision (Timmins et al, 2017).



# THE 'SECULAR SACRED' WORKS WITH ALL FAITHS AND NO FAITHS



Native  
Peoples



Buddhism



Hinduism



Independent  
Spiritual  
Paths



Christianity



Judaism



Goddess  
Religions



Islam



Shintoism



Unknowns  
& All  
Others



Zoroastrianism



Taoism



# DEFINITION OF CELTIC SHAMANISM

The Shaman was and is today regarded as a person of empowerment; one who 'journeys' back and forth successfully through territories of consciousness to retrieve insight from the spiritual realms. Both male and female hold the ability to bring harmony to the living energy systems of the individual human, their community, animals, plants and the greater world. These methods of healing, divining and problem-solving through sensitivity to energy and the ability to balance it, have become known as Shamanism. In these islands, this is informed by the sacred sites, weather, land, myths and legends which inform the yearnings of the 'Celtic soul'.



# SHAMANIC PRACTITIONERS/THERAPISTS



Peruvian Shamans  
– traditional



Celtic Shamanic  
therapists -  
modern



# KEY ASPECTS OF SHAMANISM incl. CELTIC

- **TRANSPERSONAL/SPIRITUAL/ESOTERIC**  
with direct connection to God/Goddess/Spirit/Source

Jeff Levin, 2008, Esoteric healing traditions: a conceptual overview. *Explore* Vol. 4 p.101 Elsevier.

- **NOT A RELIGION BUT A PATH OF MYSTICISM**  
of direct revelation in deep connection with Nature.

Frank MacEowen, 2004, *The spiral of memory and belonging: a Celtic path of soul and kinship*, p.201. New World Library.

- **EMPOWERING**

“...dealing with the big questions as to ‘ultimate reality’ of life and death.”

Cosgrove et al, 2011 *Ireland's new religious movements*, p.22. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.



# THE HUMAN ENERGY FIELD



- In the West there is evidence from archaeologists, sociologists, psychologists e.g. Carl Jung, and researchers of mythology e.g. Joseph Campbell, and Mircea Eliade, that all traditional cultures had a belief in the role of energy as part of their universe or cosmology.
- Energy healing techniques of an intuitive and subjective nature survive in a number of forms today. The problem is again they do not meet the western standards of empirical evaluation and evidence based results in order to be taken seriously by western medical schools of thought.
- This is not to say they have no basis for truth or results but they fail to be the focus of serious attention or consideration by the scientific or medical fraternity

Richard Boyd, 'The Concept of Human Energy Fields. Body Mind Psychotherapy Energetics Institute, Perth, W. Australia 2015



# THE BIOPSYCHOSPIRITUAL MODEL

- In the early 1990's, psychiatrist George Engel, (1997) called for the need for a new medical paradigm, the 'biopsychosocial model' which is a broad view that attributes disease outcome to the interface of human biology, psychology and sociology countering the traditional biomedical model crediting disease to mainly biological factors only. Moreno, (1992) took this a step further, stating that human health not only depends on the individual but also on their relational links with others, spiritual beliefs and the cosmos. As a psychotherapist and phenomenologist using Judeo-Christian religious knowledge and thought psychology, his theories and psychodrama included creativity and the energy field of the clients. This heralded the rise of what has become known as the 'biopsychospiritual' field - the inclusion, or more correctly the re-entry of spirituality, but this time in a secular context spearheaded by the nursing profession (McSherry 2010; Egan et al, 2017).
- Contemporary understandings of spirituality are expressed in terms of energies – Yoga, Acupuncture, EFT, TAT (Heelas & Woodhead 2005). This 'psycho-spiritual' development has equivalence and is corroborated by scientific innovations, mainly in quantum physics and advanced mathematics (MacKinnon, 2012).



# THE ENERGY THERAPY TECHNIQUE (ETT) WITH ROOTS IN CELTIC SHAMANISM

- In shamanic energy healing and other energetic approaches it is believed that issues begin at the energetic level and percolate to the psycho-emotional and physical levels. If the blockage can be removed at the most basic level of the energetic then the client is released of unresolved patterns including ancestral, familial and relational to accelerate personal growth assuming they have also gained insight into any affinities for the type of situation/behaviours that may have led to the issue originally.
- I have very successfully used this technique for the last 7 years illustrating that a person, often with no previous spiritual, holistic or shamanic training, can, with intent, be safely and promptly assisted to find healing resources from non-ordinary reality (in shamanic terms altered states of consciousness).
- The technique includes simple visualisation and short specific breath work, to empower the client to self heal with the counsellor guiding them gently and easily.
- The ETT is transpersonal rooted in shamanic studies.
- It is used within a counselling psychotherapeutic session.
- The ETT is a 40/50 minute technique which brings an energetic/spiritual aspect into a mental-emotional model.
- It aims to assist clients breakthrough energetic blockages holding them back and preventing them from moving forward with their lives in a simple, fast and empowering way.



# FORGIVENESS AS A KEY CRITERIA FOR RESTORATION TO HOLISTIC HEALTH

- Using the ETT counsellors have found that a key moment occurs when the client as their 'adult self' standing beside their 'younger self' observes, not relives, the scene of the original wounding. As part of the protocol, they have an opportunity to release, 'rant and rave' to the perceived protagonists silently and privately. Then crucially the counsellor invites them, if appropriate, the chance to gift full or partial forgiveness.
- Finally, the counsellor asks if there is any need for the client to forgive themselves in the scene. This is often a key insight i.e. a child thinking erroneously that they have been culpable for their parents break-up, siblings death etc. Witnessing them offer self forgiveness is frequently a highlight for the counsellor to witness and a significant turning point in the client's self healing.



# RESEARCH ORIGINALITY



To date there is no written documentation of an overt shamanic energy healing spiritual technique used in a counselling psychotherapeutic model in an Irish context by counsellors or their clients wishing to engage with their innate sense of spirituality within a therapeutic session. This is unique and original work within the biopsychospiritual field and undertakes new ground within this sphere.



# DISCUSSION MASTER THEMES

Currently completing the final Chapter write up stage based on these Master Themes:

1. **Developments in Meanings of Spirituality** – 6 Yes, 4 No, 3 No Change.
2. **Evolution of Counselling to Holism** – clients and counsellors seeking this.
3. **Speaking the Unspoken** – paucity of language re spirituality with clients.
4. **Spirit in Clinic: Clinic in Spirit** – the 4 layers of trust and responsibility.
5. **Presence of Spirit** – light, brightness, palpable feeling, privilege, witnessing.
6. **Energies of Spirit** – the dynamics of holistic counselling in action.
7. **Empowered Reawakening** – counsellor/client reactions to energies of spirit.



# COUNSELLOR QUOTES

- 'I feel fulfilled, I feel I have really showed up to help these people to move on' C.1 P.7, L.19-20.
- 'I am not sure there was a change in meaning as such probably a change in confidence, in "oh, yes this can be used"' C.2. P.7 L. 39-40 .
- 'It's feeling that shift or change, that movement within the self...by bringing the element of Spirit or that flow into it.' C.3. P.5. L. 26-27.
- 'I think just having that sense of gratitude, of, I'm just part of something that is much bigger than me.' C.3. P.7 L. 1-4.
- 'I think it has developed, deepened something within me. It is hard again to define it.' C.3 P.7 L. 17-18.
- 'I trust what happens in the room and I trust the person sitting in front of me and all the more [spiritual help] that is in the room.' C.3. P.9 L.6-7.
- 'I probably was more hiding the spiritual part because people might think that's a bit whacky whacky. Whereas now, it is all of it... rather than something apart.' C.4. P.9 L.32-34.
- 'I would have felt a very close connection with the client. I would've felt our two energies were...understanding each other.' C.5 P.4 L.28-30.
- 'I've become a lot more aware.' C.5 P.6 L.7.
- 'Woke it up, shook it up... hasn't changed drastically.' C.6.P.7.L.14.
- 'I suppose it is more real to me...now it's not just mine for me, it's mine for everyone, yeah, that choose to work with me in the spiritual level.' C.6. P.6. L.10-12.
- 'I started to trust my own intuition.' C.7 P.5 L.11.
- 'it actually has helped me to realise that Spirituality is not something that just happens now and again.' C.9 P.6 L.30-32.
- 'It's ever-evolving... it's demystifying.' C.11 P.10 L.27.
- 'I'm transformed, I'm a different person.' C.13 P.17 L.9.



# CONCLUSIONS

- There is a paucity of language to describe Spirituality for both counsellors and their clients. All 'dance' around the terminology to broach the subject safely.
- While the meanings of Spirituality may not have developed for every counsellor, all 13 were moved by the presence of Spirit in their clinic space. They spoke of the effect of empowered awakening in their clients and that ultimately they were no longer solely responsible for 'holding' the session.
- A need is emerging for effective training in secular Spirituality in core counselling and psychotherapy courses. Also workshops to cater for those who have trained in previous years. This will create a domino effect requiring supervision in this burgeoning field. To develop the levels of trust required for spiritual work technique inclusion, training needs to widen its remit to embrace a more holistic (body, mind and spirit) approach.



**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING**



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