

Presentation Topic:

Spiritually Sensitive Social Work: Evidence and Theory Base for Promoting Harmony of Self, Society, and World

Plenary Speaker:

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Abstract:

In the past 20 years, a movement for spiritually sensitive social work practice has emerged, initially in the United States and more recently in several countries around the world. Spiritually sensitive social work addresses the spiritual goals and aspirations of clients and their communities in a holistic manner and culturally appropriate manner. It respects the full variety of religious and nonreligious expressions of spirituality. In this context, spirituality refers to the human search for a sense of meaning, purpose, fulfillment, and connectedness in relationship with self, other people, the universe, and the ground of being, however understood. In this sense, spirituality is a universal feature of persons and cultures.

This presentation will offer an overview of a framework for spiritually sensitive practice with an emphasis on the ways spirituality can be a resource for promoting wellbeing and harmony within oneself, in societies, and in the world. Although the focus is on social work, the framework draws on an extensive body of empirical evidence, theory, and practice guidelines from social work, psychology (especially transpersonal theory and positive psychology), resilience studies in health and mental health, and cross-cultural religious studies. The presentation includes the following sections: brief historical overview of the international movement for spiritually sensitive social work; definitions of spirituality and religion; guiding base of professional values and ethics; spiritual development theory and implications for mental health; guidelines for spiritual assessment; suggestions for a range of spiritually focused helping activities; issues of conflict and potential for harmony related to spiritual diversity; considerations of applicability and limitations for cross-cultural application; resources for international collaborations on spiritual diversity in social work.

The presentation will be based on the forthcoming second edition (with Oxford University Press) of a widely used text, *Spiritual Diversity in Social Work Practice: The Heart of Helping*, by Edward R. Canda and Leola D. Furman (1999, Free Press). The second edition has significant new material including a wider interdisciplinary and international view. Numerous related resources can be found at the presenter's homepage ([www.socwel.ku.edu/canda](http://www.socwel.ku.edu/canda)) and the online Spiritual Diversity and Social Work Resource Center located there.

## Objectives:

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the historical development of the international movement for spiritually sensitive social work.
2. Define spirituality and religion for social work purposes.
3. Understand guiding professional values and ethics.
4. Understand spiritual development theory and implications for mental health resilience.
5. Apply practical guidelines for spiritual assessment.
6. Identify a range of spiritually focused helping activities at micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.
7. Consider issues of conflict and potential for harmony related to spiritual diversity.
8. Reflect on issues of applicability and limitations for cross-cultural application.
9. Access resources for international collaborations on spiritual diversity in social work.

## Presenter's Biography:

Dr. Edward Canda is Professor and Director of the Office for Research on Spiritual Diversity in Social Work at the University of Kansas (KU) School of Social Welfare. He was director of the KU Ph.D. Program in Social Work for the previous 8 years. Dr. Canda's graduate studies were at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, Korea (Fulbright Graduate Fellow), University of Denver (M.A. in Religious Studies), and The Ohio State University (MSW and Ph.D. in Social Work). For more than 25 years, Dr. Canda has been active in promoting understanding of spiritual diversity in social work through developing national and international collaborations, conducting research, and formulating a theory base. Dr. Canda founded the USA based Society for Spirituality and Social Work in 1990. He has more than 100 publications and numerous presentations in more than 15 countries on related topics. Dr. Canda's teaching focuses on human behavior theory, practice with spiritual diversity, qualitative research methods, and study abroad in Korea. He is particularly committed to collaborations with colleagues in South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong. His current efforts focus on interdisciplinary and international networking to promote local and global understanding among helping professionals regarding spirituality as a resource for individual and community wellbeing. Dr. Canda has received many awards, most recently, the 2008 International Scholar Award from the University of Kansas. Dr. Canda's books, publications, and many other resources on spiritual diversity in social work and health can be found at [www.socwel.ku.edu/canda](http://www.socwel.ku.edu/canda)