

Western Seminary Counseling Program Spiritual Competencies

1. Culture, Worldview, and Counselor Self-Awareness

The MA Counseling program at Western Seminary is predicated upon a Christian religious worldview that emphasizes the importance of one's spirituality or personal connection to God through Jesus Christ. We believe that the Bible is factually true and authoritative from God communicating the truth of the Gospel; that Jesus died and by God's power came back to life to conquer evil and to provide forgiveness as a means of restoring relationship with God. We recognize both the similarities and the differences between these beliefs and those of other major world religions, including agnosticism and atheism. We deem it important to respect the client's beliefs, spirituality, and religious views as distinct from our own beliefs.

From a Christian worldview, the Gospel provides the power for personal transformation, including the continued character development of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, which we seek to demonstrate in the counseling setting toward our clients. We believe that all people are made in the image of God and deserve respect and dignity regardless of their age, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, national origin, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or socioeconomic status. As professional counselors, we maintain an awareness of how our values may differ from those of our clients and how these differences may impact the counseling process. We recognize the limits of our competency and maintain information regarding appropriate consultation and referral resources.

2. Human and Spiritual Development

From a Christian worldview, we understand a connection between our physical/emotional development and our spiritual development. We strive to emphasize the importance of personal and spiritual growth and transformation for human development. We seek to understand, explore, and apply various models of spiritual development as appropriate.

3. Communication

We seek to communicate with clients in a manner that is sensitive to and consistent with their values, spirituality, religion, and worldview. We aspire to respond with competence to spiritual and religious matters, both offering support and challenge as is clinically appropriate.

4. Assessment, Diagnosis, and Treatment

As Christian counselors, we believe that a client's spiritual and/or religious orientation can contribute in a positive manner or can be a barrier toward health and well-being. Assessment, diagnosis, therapeutic goals, and treatment must be clinically appropriate taking into account the client's spiritual and religious worldview. The counselor should inform the client at the outset of counseling of his or her Christian worldview and the integration of that worldview into the theory and approach to counseling, while also being appropriately inclusive of the client's values and beliefs.

Competent Christian counselors are self-aware and knowledgeable in Biblical theology, counseling theory, diverse worldviews, current research data, and evidence-based treatment approaches to be applied with a sensitive, respectful, and therapeutically sound approach that incorporates the spiritual, physical, and psychological perspectives of the client.