

Spirituality and spiritual crises

Handbook on theory, research and practice



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Focus of the handbook

The focus is on possible problems and crises which may arise in the context of spiritual development, orientation and practice.

The DSM-IV V-Code "religious or spiritual problem" also receives special regard, for it constitutes a major interface of the topic to the psychiatric and psychological mainstream.

Definition: Spirituality and religiosity

Spirituality and religiosity can be understood as the reference to a higher reality that transcends the individual personality. This higher reality is conceived of and designated differently, depending on the respective religio-cultural contexts.

The term "**religiosity**" increasingly refers to the participation in the beliefs and practices of an organized church or religious institution, whereas "**spirituality**" is more and more associated with an individual and experiential approach to a transcendent dimension, that can also be independent from a specific religious membership.

Working definition „spiritual crises“:

Psychological problems and crises related to the spiritual-transpersonal and transcendent dimension of human being:

- The triggers of the crisis are spiritual exercises or practices.
- The contents of the crises are related to transcendence or an ultimate reality (relation to transcendence).
- The phenomena turn out to be „spiritually transformative“ in terms of a respective change of the previous self- and worldview.
- The phenomena of the crisis are an expression of an underlying process of spiritual development or the development of human consciousness towards „transpersonal“ levels of self-development (spiritual development, evolution of consciousness).

Key Issues

- How did the topic "crises of spiritual development" and the concept of "spiritual emergency" develop in the history of psychology? Who were the relevant protagonists and what were their positions and motives?
- Of what relevance is the topic for our contemporary society and the health-sciences?
- What types of clinically relevant problems and crisis-prone processes of spiritual development have been described?
- How can such clinically relevant problems be evaluated in terms of diagnosis and differential diagnosis?
- Which individual and contextual factors predispose to problematical courses in the context of spiritual development and practice and which protective factors can be deduced as a consequence of this?

Key Issues

- Which scientific-empirical findings are available concerning the topic?
- Which general procedures are indicated when treating people with such problems and which specific clinical strategies have been developed?
- Which institutional resources are available for the understanding of spiritual crises and the support of the people concerned (clinics, counseling and information centres, networks, online resources)?
- In what way is the topic of spiritual crisis reflected in the larger picture of society?

Contents

- I. Historical and contextual background
- II. Theoretical models
- III. Types of spiritual and religious problems
- IV. Research
- V. Diagnostics and treatment of spiritual and religious problems
- VI. Societal perspectives
- VII. Resources: (Appendix: Literature / online resources / networks / institutions / clinics)

I. Historical and contextual background

1. Spirituality and exceptional experiences in the context of academic psychology [Niko Kohls]
2. The concept of spiritual emergency – developmental history and current relevance [Liane Hofmann]
3. The V-Code "religious or spiritual problem" in DSM-IV and 5 [David Lukoff]
4. Roberto Assagioli as a central forerunner of the subject – an appraisal [Ulla Pfluger-Heist]
5. Psychotherapy and spiritual guidance [Liane Hofmann und Patrizia Heise]

II. Theoretical models

6. (Stage-)models of spiritual development [Anton Bucher]
7. Foundations for a differentiation of spiritual crises based on Wilber's integral consciousness-model [Wulf Mirko Weinreich]
8. The heroes journey – a depth psychological-mythic model [Patrizia Heise]
9. A psychophysical model approach for the understanding of exceptional experiences [Wolfgang Fach]

III. Types of spiritual and religious problems

10. Spiritual crises: general features, triggers and risk factors [Liane Hofmann & Patrizia Heise]
11. Crises of faith: Changes and re-orientation-processes on a religious path [Michael Utsch]
12. Initiatory crises and the concept of “plus-healing” [Hartmut Kraft und Maria Kraft]
13. Mystical experiences [Renaud van Quekelberghe]
14. Spiritual crises in form of the dark night of the soul [Susanne Jacobowitz]

III. Types of spiritual and religious problems

15. Near-death experiences [Eugenia Kuhn & Wilfried Kuhn]
16. Kundalini-experiences and other vegetative-energetic disorders [Liane Hofmann]
17. Negative effects of meditation [Michael Tremmel & Ulrich Ott]
18. Traumatic experiences and consciousness transformation [Ursula Wirtz]
19. Problems in the context of meditative-contemplative guidance – experiences and guidelines of a centre for spiritual paths [Alexander Poraj]

IV. Research

20. Empirical research on spiritual crises [Liane Hofmann, Patrizia Heise & Michael Tremmel]
21. General problems associated with the investigation of spiritual crises [Wilfried Belschner]

V. Diagnostics and treatment of spiritual and religious problems

22. General guidelines for supporting people undergoing spiritual crises [Liane Hofmann & Patrizia Heise]
23. Differential-diagnosis of spiritual emergency and psychosis [Edgar Harnack]
24. Possibilities of out-patient crisis accompaniment [Patrizia Heise]
25. A mindfulness-based approach for supporting people in spiritual crises [Catherine G. Lucas]

V. Diagnostics and treatment of spiritual and religious problems

26. Inpatient treatment of spiritual and religious disorders [Dorothea Galuska & Joachim Galuska]
27. Counseling and psychotherapy for people with exceptional experiences [Wolfgang Fach & Martina Belz]
28. Philosophical counseling in the context of spiritual crises [Hans Gerding]
29. The Spiritual Emergence Network (SEN), Germany [Pieter Loomans]

VI. Societal perspectives

30. Worldviews and images of man, concepts of health and disease and culture-specific perspectives [Renaud van Quekelberghe]
31. The crisis of society and the need for an undogmatic, enlightened spirituality [Harald Walach]
32. Characteristics, functions and problems of modern spirituality [Katharina Ceming]
33. „Wirklichkeitskrisen" – a knowledge-sociological analysis [Michael Schetsche]

Appendix

Resources:

Literature/ journals

Online resources

Networks (research and self-help)

Institutions/ clinics/ counseling centers

Target groups

- Practitioners from the fields of psycho-social care and the health professions, especially psychotherapists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors and pastoral care providers;
- Persons with scientific interest in the topic, scientists investigating issues around spirituality, spiritual development, spiritual crises and exceptional experiences;
- Providers of wholistically oriented psychotherapy, of psycho-spiritual-methods or bioenergetic approaches (e.g. yoga teachers, meditation teachers, retreat-masters, body-workers).

Target groups

- Relatives and laypersons supporting people in spiritual crises;
- Interested laypersons, persons with a spiritual orientation, persons concerned.

Specifics of the volume

- Aims at a comprehensive treatment of the issue of spiritual development and its possible crises;
- Builds a bridge from theory building to scientific findings to practical approaches and societal perspectives;
- Overview on relevant theoretical models, empirical findings and treatment approaches.

Specifics of the volume

- First handbook and multiple-authors-work from the German-speaking countries;
- To take the local religio-cultural, societal and health policy framework conditions into account – as far as possible – primarily German-speaking experts are represented (furthermore also international authors);
- Up-to date, scientifically based and oriented.

Specifics of the volume

- Covers and integrates a wide variety of perspectives: represented are different theoretical perspectives, scientific disciplines, as well as social groups, that usually tend to operate separately; thereby aims to do justice to the complexity of the topic and to foster synergetic effects;
- A broad spectrum of practice-tested and well-established approaches of counseling and treatment in this field are extensively described.

Many thanks for your kind attention!