

**Allegheny County Coalition for Recovery
Committee:** Collaborative for Recovery Dialogues
Dialogue: Spirituality Trialogue
Date: 11/8/18

PRESENT:
11 Providers
5 Clergy
6 Consumers

Total only 14 people present but several identified as more than 1 of the 3.

Listing by primary identification given in the dialogue opening round circle:

Providers
6 (1 identified secondarily as a consumer)

Clergy
4 (1 identified secondarily as a provider; another identified as provider and consumer)

Consumers
4 (3 of which identified secondarily as providers. One of these was noted during the dialogue to also be a clergy under the definition. The 4th was noted in post-trialogue conversation to be studying to become a provider.)

THOSE PRESENT BY "PRIMARY" (FIRST IDENTIFIED) ROLE:

6 Providers
4 Clergy
4 Consumers

*These notes identify participants by their role(s) using **P**, **C** and **t***

P = "provider"

Defined here as a person who works in a behavioral health setting and/or is credentialed to work in mental health.

t = "clergy"

Defined here as a Christian religious leader either of a congregation or in the role of missionary or deacon.

C = "consumer"

Defined here as a person with lived experience in either mental illness. and/or drug addiction

Each participant is identified by their roles using P, C and t. The first role self-identified is listed first with any additional roles listed as they were self-identified.

TRIALOGUE BEGAN: The facilitators and then the notetaker introduced themselves and introduced which of the roles they represented. It then went around the room with all the participants introducing themselves and their role(s). One of the facilitators and the notetaker identified themselves with more than one role (consumer and provider). Their sharing this set the tone and many of the participants identified themselves as having more than one role. **It was later stated that the willingness of people to share more than one self-identification when applicable made other participants feel more comfortable and helped create an atmosphere where there was much honest sharing.**

QUESTION ONE:

What is spirituality?

CP "that aspect of yourself that provides life"

PC "a relationship and connection to Christ" - not the rituals but the relationship

CP "the triangle: mind, body and spirit - if those things are defiled you can't function as a human being"

PC "spiritual substance. Feel good. Do good to feel good."

tPC "that which is beyond the physical." beyond the material

P "self care, self love - where you stand in your purpose."

Pt "existence that goes beyond the physical and the material."

Spirit can be "ugly and yippy... People can talk about God like he works for them... there has to be some ethics for it to work for me."

t "the peace that passes understanding... brings stability in the ever-changing world around"

tPC the Tree of Life Massacre was an experience of Horror. "Back to the universal do unto others what you would have done to you or simply don't do to others what you don't want done to you."

"spiritual is an essence - religion is starting to get the container."

Pt "power that is greater than me which has an existence that we tap into"

CP "when your mind is messed up your body is messed up, your spirit is messed up"

QUESTION TWO:

Does spirituality play a role in recovery?

P "we are more in common than we really believe... when the person sits across from me I connect spirit-to-spirit."

CP "religion was entrapment... I wasn't able to heal"
"spirit is abstract... spirit is energy... it is the energy in us."

PC "nobody teaches us how to empower our spirit"
"I have to lower some walls and be vulnerable... And the spirit comes in after those people... We are all a lot alike. We all need love."

PC "foundation of faith has brought about my recovery."
"I went through a period where religion alienated me... A clergy person said I didn't deserve forgiveness and condemned me. Because of that condemnation "I self-medicated and self-harmed."

QUESTION THREE:

Are there barriers that prevent spirituality?

P "Trauma!"

Pt Faith used to be called religious preoccupation and thus was considered mental illness symptomology. Today your faith can be part of your recovery.
"faith has a place in your recovery."

t "religion is when people and their spiritualities come together." This isn't synonymous with institutions. "Institutions may fail."

P "people can still heal vicariously through others"
"God aligns certain people in your life"

QUESTION FOUR [paraphrased]

Do you approach spirituality, or does someone you know approach spiritually, different than what we've been talking about?

CP "my spirituality came from being in the church... It's God who kept me... It's been put into me to pray with others."

t "God is bringing them to you because you've got something to share."

P "people aren't clueless to needing help. People are scared... Because people are judgmental."

QUESTION FIVE:

Does stigma get in the way of talking to your spiritual leader/clergy?

t parishioners don't share usually, not because I judge but of "what they perceive... what culture has put on them."

t "Church culture creates Pretenders and people get hurt."

REOCCURRING THEMES

During the second question more than one participant shared that a clergy person had condemned or otherwise harmed them in such a way that it harmed their recovery or temporarily prevented recovery. Talk returned to this in the second half during which time one clergyperson said "when one person [clergy] blows it, all suffer - all clergy look bad."

Conversation on isolation versus community led to several members of the triologue openly agreeing on the importance of other people in one's life – even when specifically MY journey it is personal and yet within community.

Conversation on being a “non-traditional” either as a clergyperson or as a provider was broached multiple times. Participants talked about how self-disclosure can be helpful to another by connecting spirit-to-spirit and/or creating a safe space in which to be imperfect.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TRIALOGUE and final thoughts:

PC "Church culture and the culture of getting help. Differences and common threads. In some church cultures if you just have a strong enough faith you will get better... But it's dialogue like this... Realize a lot what you have in common."

tPC "the 12-step program starts out with 'we'."

" clergy and counselors need to help themselves in order to help others."

If clergy modeled self-disclosure others would be more able to reach out "heart speaking to heart."

Pt "the greatest gift I get from this is sharing and listening."

t "I've learned a lot from those who are in recovery."

P "really an eye opener" hearing about people's different views on spirituality... And about a wider definition of recovery.

P non-traditional. Being willing to have transparency in order for us to heal and to grow. Non-traditional eliminates barriers. Disclosure can be good.

PC "people would rather see a sermon than hear a sermon"
This is important and I am "happy to be part of the conversation."

C "I'm not alone in my spirituality... Probably powerful enough to carry me along for several days."

t "transparency... Share my personal struggles, people resonate with that."

AFTER THE OFFICIAL FACILITATED TRIALOGUE CONCLUDED:

Many participants stayed for some time after the trialogue officially ended and seats were vacated. There was talking and a bit of eating/packing of food. People expressed finding the trialogue **helpful/rewarding/eye-opening**. There was some **thanking** of specific individuals for their input including at times positive comments on that input and/or explanation of its personal impact. There was even some **networking**.