Spiritual Experiences and Mental Health

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August 21, 2017
Agenda

- Who Is
- The Role that Sp. Exp. play in mental health
  -- John (35), Clara (28) and Marcelo (30s, Brazil)
- Define: Spiritual Experience, Spiritual Emergence, Spiritual Emergency
- Parameters for self-care
- Caring for others in SE
- How a Spiritual Emergence Coach can help
- Summary
Who is?

- Academic/Educator
- Exec. Director, IMHU.org = Integrative Mental Health for You
- Author x7...PhD dissert. in SEY
- Researcher, Brazil, 2001-2012
- Personal: life-experiencer
- Meditator + grandma + live in VT
Spiritual Emergency

imhu.org/store

Spiritism
Spiritual Experience (any age)

- Experience of new higher perspective, new dimension that is expansive, out of ordinary
- Beyond social conditioning, ego, & 5 senses
- This is the domain of **INTUITION=6TH SENSE**
- Examples:
  - Visions of greater reality; yours/others’ future...
  - Communication with spirit guides, higher power
  - Sensing reality of others...feeling One with others
  - Inner knowing of other times/ places/people as in a past life experience
  - Profound inspiration: poetry, music, technology, etc.
John’s Story

• Highly Sensitive Person (HSP): Take away parents’ pain. Trauma? Empath, healer, in service. Spiritual experience = clairsentient + little ego + inspired by love

• Marriage: Take away wife’s chronic back pain

• Trauma in wartime -> PTSD, depression, anxiety, guilt, isolating

• Treatment from Veterans Care: Drugs and more drugs (+ketamine)

• What was missing: Relationship, peer support, knowledge/respect for HSP, mentoring regarding his sensitivities (gifts) and how to use them properly. Shamanic tradition...”No one listens...they just label me with illness”

• Now: After 72 treatments of microdoses of K...living situation...what he sees as his goal

• Resources he draws on: Point of Return, medical intuitive, peer support, holistic counselor with map of journey
Spiritual Emergence (SE)

• The universal desire and intention for inspiration, higher consciousness, aka awakening, enlightenment, identifying with Wisdom Self, Love, Peace...Engage “gifts”
• Identifying more with “soul” and less with “ego”
• Choose to participate in communities + about “soul”
• *SE can happen without a crisis*...and often does!
• Experience: unusual energy/ dreams/ visions/messages
• Ancient cultures: those immersed in this process are considered to have gifts as a shaman or spiritual healer. Have teachers/ consistent social support
• Western 1st world culture: +/- maps, few teachers, little social support...”Are you involved with a cult?”
Deliberate Spiritual Emergence Practices

Research on Meditation and Hatha Yoga

- Less chronic pain
- Less quick to be reactive/ triggered
- Less depression and anxiety
- Less addiction to alcohol, cigarettes and substances
- Reduce stress
- Access to deep peace
- Enhance overall wellbeing & quality of life

Prayer Group/ Participation in Spiritual Gatherings

- Decrease isolation, increase meaning and purpose
- Less depression and anxiety

= Positive addition to mental healthcare
Spiritual Emergency

• Also called:
  – Psycho-spiritual crisis
  – Transformational crisis
  – Evolutionary crisis
  – Personal Crisis/Identity Crisis
  – Sometimes confused with “nervous breakdown,” “psychosis,” or “mania”
A *Spiritual Emergency* refers to a period of disorientation and dysfunction which may follow intense spiritual experiences—demands *integration*.

If managed appropriately, the person can find meaning in the experience and subsequently function at a higher level.
What is Experienced in SEY

• Spiritual experiences are mixed with psychological baggage that needs clearing
• Chaotic and absorbing from both sides
• Person feels overwhelmed
• Inadequate cognitive framework (map)
• Demand for integration—but where/how, etc
• Acute phase: Can’t work/ family duties
“The problem is I can’t tell the difference between a deeply wise, intuitive nudge from the Universe and one of my own bone-headed ideas!”
Story of Clara

28 years old, trauma?, HSP: artist, writer, cares deeply for others, wants to be more like Christ and be a Christian Minister

Is able to be in personal contact with Christ and Holy Spirit: deep prayer, study of Bible, family Bible study every night, follows “God’s Will” and direction.

Also hearing voices: feels she is being sexually assaulted, taunted, told to hurt herself or others, night and day. “They are telling me I am crazy.” Contradicts.

Unable to work as negative entities disturb her...hand/arm gestures...stories. “Hurricane in 3rd eye” Brain-image: medium.

What does she need: peer support, community of meaning, help to sort out psychological baggage and discern where voices come from and what they mean, Eleanor Longden’s video on her transformation/ hearing voices. Mentoring in discernment to manage sensitivities.
Angel Gabriel Visits Mary
Verroccio and Leonardo da Vinci, 1472-1475
St. Francis Borgia Exorcising

by Francisco de Goya, 1788
Devil Plays Man’s Head like a Saxophone, 1144
Over Here
No, this way
“To listen to your instincts, press one.”

“To listen to your intuition, press two.”
Spiritual Emergence Process

• Does not need a crisis
• A zig-zag and a gradual path—rarely straight path
  – “COEX systems”...undigested
  – Never purely spiritual...always has bumps and turns
• An expanding sense of self and consciousness
• Ultimately, one feels more united with God (higher power) and higher Self*...teachers needed to make this transition to a new identity successfully.
• Quality of support over time is essential as it can take time.

*Note: This may truly be the goal of life on earth.
Story of Marcelo

• No trauma in growing up. Well to do Catholic family in Sao Paulo.

• Job, close friends, family all in place.

• Depression...hearing voices...feeling things crawling on his body...irritable...could not work...self-absorbed

• Conventional hospitalization & anti-psychotics

• Spiritist Hospital with Spiritist Treatments: energy work/ medical intuitives

• Outcome: minimize pharmaceuticals, training, service to others, community of meaning, channel, medium
Molting: we outgrow prior ID

When serpents change their skin: time out...
Not part of an illness...just natural growth
Positive Outcome of SEY: Transformation

• SEY can shift a person from a position of fear, stress, confusion, and self-absorption to an identification with deep peace, ease, and more compassion with a persistent desire to be of service to others.
SEY Can Be Confused with Pathology

When spiritual crisis is at its most intense...
  – A person can be very self absorbed, “in own world”
  – Not able to work or attend to family duties
  – Have very unusual experiences that seem “out of touch with conventional reality” to most people

Confusion...
  – Is that indicative of psychosis or mental illness?
  – Should the symptoms be suppressed?
  – Should medication be used?

Educated assessment necessary—as in any crisis
  Assess safety and support needs in short term
What’s Needed?

Team approach (Culturally sensitive)
✓ Medical check
✓ Assess trauma history, psychological and social stressors (John)
✓ Does the person have access to a supportive environment?
✓ If not: what is available in the community?
  (John: Point of Return and their psychiatrists, Peer Support, Community Classes in Yoga and meditation, playing with his son, nutrition & micronutrients)

Spiritual Emergence Coach—as part of team (peer or licensed pro)
  see IMHU.org/coaching/Directory
✓ Authentic relationship (respect boundaries and LISTEN)
✓ Belief in Positive Outcome
✓ Tolerant of Altered States of Consciousness (ASC) + Lived Experience
✓ Non-judgmental
✓ Knowledgeable about Spiritual Emergence phenomena + care
5 online webinars: “How to Effectively Support Someone in Spiritual Emergency”
+Supplementary videos, articles, personal reflection, dialogue with facilitator and other students...ONLINE...September 13-October 11, 2017

2-Day LIVE Practicum
Experiential learning about leading support groups for those in SE or SEY
Practicums available in UK, EU, Boston, MA and CA.

Audience: All are welcome!
Those wanting to be certified need to have some prior positive experience leading some kind of support groups

IMHU.org/courses/spiritual-emergency
Self-Care

✓ Medical Check: Nutritional deficiency, methylation issue, organic problem?
  William Walsh, PhD: “Nutrient Power”...Integrative Psychiatrist=ideal

✓ History of Trauma: What helps YOU clearing after-effects...EMDR? Tapping?

✓ Support Network: Ask friends to support you in specific ways,
  eg. Food, shopping, tea-time. Consider residential treatment

✓ Surround yourself with supportive photos, music, poetry, books, etc.
  (Clara: jewelry, T-shirt has large cross, practicing the presence of God.)

✓ Sleep: be sure to get adequate 7-9 hours

✓ Access to nature...moderate exercise in fresh air

✓ Food: stay away from sugar, alcohol, excessive stimulants like coffee, rec. drugs

✓ Cautious use of psychiatric medication...
Food is Important: avoid sugar, stimulants, alcohol
Resources

Residential care:

“Center for Spiritual Emergence” in Asheville, North Carolina
Brazil Spiritist Hospital in future will have English-speaking ward.

Books to Educate yourself and your loved ones:

Grof, S. & Grof, C.: Spiritual Emergency
Grof, S. & Grof, C.: The Stormy Search for the Self
Bragdon, E: The Call of Spiritual Emergency
Bragdon, E: A Sourcebook for Helping People with Spiritual Problems
Razzaque, R.: Breaking Down is Waking Up

Spiritual Emergence Networks/ Spiritual Crisis Networks
USA, Canada, Australia, UK, and more opening in Europe and Africa
SpiritualEmergenceNetwork.org” for listings.

Integrative Mental Health for You, IMHU.org
Courses on phenomena associated with Spiritual Emergence and Emergency as well as courses on an integrative approach to mental health issues.
Summary

• Valuable spiritual experiences (e.g. clairsentience/ clairaudience) can be a component of mental disturbances. These spiritual experiences may indicate gifts/ talents to be developed.

• It is often the visionaries, artists, poets, musicians, healers and empaths, aka Highly Sensitive Persons, who have these gifts.

• Intense spiritual experiences may bring up old psychological baggage that needs to be healed.

• Peer support people and mental health providers need to be more aware of the landscape of spiritual experiences and more competent in providing the appropriate care.

• “Spiritual Emergence Coaches” can offer educated and skilled peer support. They are available on IMHU.org/coaching/Directory.

• IMHU welcomes all interested people to learn more about Spiritual Emergence and Emergency through its online webinars and certification program.
Be gentle with yourself as we move through these intense energetic times. You are meeting parts of yourself you've been at war with and you're emerging into someone new.

~Tiffany Stiles~
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• Foundation for Energy Therapies, Inc. (FET)
  – FET is a not for profit, charitable organization (501c3)

  -- DBA: “Integrative Mental Health for You” to offer 26 courses online + on location, IMHU.org/courses
    e.g. One week tours to Spiritist Psychiatric Hospitals & Certification as a Spiritual Emergence Coach

• Free newsletter with updates: IMHU.org/blog
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We do not have a hotline.
We offer educational courses  (partial scholarships available)

Emma Bragdon offers fee for service consultation.

EmmaBragdon.com/personal-coaching
Experience

Pick a partner to share with. Sit with them.

Share a spiritual experience you had....Then, share:

1. Did you think it meant you were crazy?
2. Did you have anyone to talk to whom you felt safe with?
3. What helped you integrate the experience and give it meaning?
4. In what ways did the experience change you?   
   —or contribute positively to your life?

Integrative Mental Health for You