

Shogaku Zen Institute
Spirituality-based Counseling,
Buddhist Psychology
and Mindfulness-based Therapy
Summer 2019
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2,500 years ago, the Buddha described how the mind worked and the effects these mental processes have on one's life. Buddhist psychology describes perception, consciousness and feelings in ways that match contemporary psychological findings and approaches. One of the most important tasks in the Sangha is to help members understand their lives in the context of their personal, spiritual and social worlds. This course will introduce students to the theory and practice of spiritual counseling, mental health counseling and mindfulness-based therapies. A primary contribution of students in this program will be their capacity to bring their Buddhist values and principles to the work with clients. This course will embrace multiple ways of knowing and will focus our attention as counselors on the principles of wellness and recovery, resiliency, social justice and multicultural realities. All students, faculty and guest speakers will be encouraged to expand the definitions of counseling, mental health and wellness in order to include the rich diversity of individuals, families and communities who make up our Sangha.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Theoretical: Buddhist teachers attempt to help community members make use of meditation instruction to work through their own difficulties or unhappiness. This course provides training on how to help students/congregants. Together we will create a definition of “spiritual counseling” that is attuned to your practice, to effective outcomes and to dignity and safety for your clients.

Contextual: Buddhist teachers have taken a vow to “save all beings”. Does this apply in our roles as counselors? In this course you will define your scope of competency and determine who are appropriate clients for spiritual counseling and who are not.

Ethical: Spiritual counseling is not a licensed activity in most states. However, our commitment to the safety and healing of our clients require an understanding of the law, ethics and morals of counseling. By the end of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the legal and ethical foundations their practice. Important topics in this section will include: appropriate boundaries, the importance of having a psychological consultant.

Clinical Knowledge: Students will demonstrate knowledge and application of the practice of spiritual counseling and with the concepts of mental health recovery; strength-based treatment; Buddhist psychology and mindfulness-based interventions. Students will be able to design and evaluate culturally and linguistically competent care.

CLINICAL SKILLS: Students will demonstrate through role play techniques, weekly discussions and presentations, their skills in:

- The impact of self & no-self in counseling students and congregants.
- The importance of mindful awareness for the counselor. This self-awareness is critical in ensuring patient safety and effective clinical results. Watching your mind, observing another. Knowing when you are becoming too reactive.
- Working with difficult emotions and behaviors.
- Identifying and working with transference and countertransference. The role of projection in the delivery of counseling services.
- How to work with suicidal behavior or thoughts and how to get the help the client and the counselor need.
- How to effectively work with students/congregants who wish to engage the teacher/priest inappropriately. Flirtatious and/or intrusive behaviors will be role played so students and teachers can see how to respond with healthy boundaries.