The Nature of Coping: A Caregiver Perspective

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Objectives

- Describe potential “red flags” in the use of religious coping
- What are the challenges that might be faced when using religious coping
- Challenges to Caregiver Coping
- Opportunities for Growth as a Caregiver
Styles of Religious Coping

From Kenneth I. Pargament
Self-directing Style of Coping

- After I've gone through a rough time, I try to make sense of it without relying on God.
- When I have difficulty, I decide what it means by myself without help from God.
- When faced with trouble, I deal with my feelings without God's help.
- When deciding on a solution, I make a choice independent of God's input.
- When thinking about a difficulty, I try to come up with possible solutions without God's help.
- I act to solve my problems without God's help.
Deferring Style of Coping

- Rather than trying to come up with the right solution to a problem myself, I let God decide how to deal with it.

- In carrying out solutions to my problems, I wait for God to take control and know somehow He’ll work it out.

- I do not think about different solutions to my problems because God provides them for me.

- When a troublesome issue arises, I leave it up to God to decide what it means for me.

- When a situation makes me anxious, I wait for God to take those feelings away.

- I don't spend much time thinking about troubles I've had; God makes sense of them for me.
Collaborative Style of Coping

- When it comes to deciding how to solve a problem, God and I work together as partners.
- When considering a difficult situation, God and I work together to think of possible solutions.
- Together, God and I put my plans into action.
- When I feel nervous or anxious about a problem, I work together with God to find a way to relieve my worries.
- After solving a problem, I work with God to make sense of it.
- When I have a problem, I talk to God about it and together we decide what it means.
Four Methods of Coping (Pargament)

- Preservation - persist in our usual approach & significance.
- Reconstruction - Usual pathway to significance is blocked, new approach is found leading to significance.
- Re-valuation - Ends may need to be transformed, but means stay the same.
- Re-creation - Both ends and means need to be changed (e.g., 12-Step model)
## Four Methods of Coping (Pargament)

### Destinations of Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation of Ends</th>
<th>Transformation of Ends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conservation of Means</strong></td>
<td><strong>PRESERVATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pathways to Significance</strong></td>
<td><strong>RECONSTRUCTION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformation Of Means</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Potential Areas of Conflict In Religious Coping
Religious Red Flags in Coping with Negative Life Events

Problems of ends: Wrong direction

- I have decided to turn away from God and live life for myself alone.
- I have lost interest in God, other people, myself, and everything else.
- I have decided to stop taking care of myself and focus only on what God wants for me.
- I realize that the world is not important to me and I have decided to spend all of my energies serving God.
Religious Red Flags in Coping with Negative Life Events

Problems of means: Wrong road

- I believe that God is punishing me for my sins.
- I know God will make the situation better if I just wait long enough.
- I am not bothered at all because the situation is God's will.
- I pray that God will punish the real sinners.
Religious Red Flags in Coping with Negative Life Events

Problems of fit: Against the wind

- My family or friends speak to me about religion in a way I do not agree with.
- I disagree with the church’s view about why this event happened to me.
- I feel that God is not being fair to me.
- I question whether God really exists.
What to do?

- If the client is open to it, refer to chaplain
- Empathically understand, but suggest there could be other ways of thinking about it . . .
Challenges and Spiritual Struggles

- Scrupulosity – striving to be faithful
- Struggles with faith when ends not achieved
- Differences between the patient and the faith community
- Differences between patient and family
Religious Coping - Conclusions - Pargament 2002

- Some forms of religion are more helpful - internalized, intrinsically motivated, secure relationship
- Advantages & disadvantages in all forms
- Helpful to socially-marginalized & embedded
- Valuable in stressful situations that push people to the limits of their resources
- Efficacy is tied to the degree to which it is well integrated into an individual’s life
- [Note: “Red Flags” - Pargament, 1997 & “Spiritual Struggles” Exline, 2005]
Role of Religion/Spirituality as an Orienting System

- Role of religion as a resource / Assessment of coping style
- Naturally occurring religious/spiritual experiences (individual/community based)
- Relationship of present difficulties within religious/spiritual ontological context
Caregiver Stress, Coping, and Sanctification
Caregiver Stress and Coping

- We are affected by stress
- Be mindful of the stressors – caregiver capacity and what you can realistically achieve (recall secondary appraisal)
- Reinforce your own global life meaning . . . Remind yourself of the good that you bring into the world everyday.
- Physical and emotional care
- Manage your multiple caregiving roles
“I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will really be happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

Albert Schweitzer
“When it comes to psychological well-being, what people are striving for – the content of their aims and ambitions – does matter. Not all goals are created equal, and not all goal attainment is equally healthy (p. 49) . . .
Meaning and Life Satisfaction

‘the good life’ is not one that is achieved through momentary pleasures or defensive illusions, but through meeting suffering head on and transforming it into opportunities for meaning, wisdom, and growth, with the ultimate objective being the development of the person into a fully functioning mature being” (Emmons, 1999).
Meaning and Life Satisfaction

In other words . . . Assisting others to have the best quality of life is a noble goal and one that can bring deep satisfaction . . . More so than other careers or jobs.
Sanctification

- Think for a moment about the meaning of life . . . About your purpose.
- Think about the opportunities you have to live out that purpose.
- Before you enter a family member’s or resident’s room reflect on your purpose.
- When you touch the door hold that meaning in mind.
Please Watch the separate presentation:

“The Nature of Coping-Q&A Session”

Thank You