

# World Religions

## The Commonalities

**Recognizing and integrating into one's practice the notion that different folks find the 'Divine' in multiple settings.**

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Open International Interfaith Ministry



# Definitions

Religion ...

... consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto.

*William James - "The Varieties of Religious Experience"*

# A Four-Part Description:

"The Sacred Paths" - Theodore M. Ludwig

- Religion is human involvement with what is considered to be the realm of the sacred.
- It is expressed in thought, action and social forms.
- It constitutes a total system of symbols with deep meaning.
- It is a path of ultimate transformation

# Religious Diversity in Canada

*Statistics Canada, 2001 Census*

- Majority still consider themselves Christian
- Significant growth in number of those who consider themselves *Christian with no specific denomination*
- Some growth in certain Orthodox groups

# Diverse Faiths in Canada

*Statistics Canada, 2001 Census*

- Most world religions are present, often in relatively small numbers
- The fastest growing are:
  - ▶ Muslim
  - ▶ Buddhist
  - ▶ Hindu
  - ▶ Sikh

# New “Old” Religions

*Statistics Canada, 2001 Census*

- Although the numbers are small, each representing only 0.1% of the population, the fastest growing religions in Canada are:
  - ▶ Neo-paganism (includes Wicca) and
  - ▶ Aboriginal Spirituality

**There are unifying principles and beliefs shared by all traditions, even though each one has its own language and understanding of the unseen dimensions and spiritual life.**



- An understanding of the basic tenets and beliefs of the client's tradition is a valuable addition to your "Counsellor's Tool Box."

# Some 'Spiritual' Tools

For the Counsellor's Tool Box

- An open mind
- Discernment
- Meditation/prayerfulness
- Affirmations
- Empathy/Clairsentience
- Energy Healing Modalities
- Understanding of the World Religions



# Commonalities of world religions

- The Golden Rule
- Expressed in the PEI Interfaith Ministry and the Open International Interfaith Ministry as:  
*“The paths are many, the truth is one:  
Love thy neighbour.”*
- And expressed in other religions



## *The Golden Rule as Stated in 21 Traditions*

- 1. **Bahá'í World Faith:** *"Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not."*
- 2. **Brahmanism:** *"This is the sum of Dharma [duty]: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you". Mahabharata, 5:1517 "*
- 3. **Buddhism:** *Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."* Udana-Varga 5:18
- 4. **Christianity:** King James Version. *"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."* Luke 6:31
- 5. **Confucianism:** *"Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you"* Analects 15:23
- 6. **Ancient Egyptian:** *"Do for one who may do for you, that you may cause him thus to do."* The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, 109 -110 Translated by R.B. Parkinson.
- 7. **Hinduism:** This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you. Mahabharata 5:1517



## *The Golden Rule as Stated in 21 Traditions*

- **8. Humanism:** *"Don't do things you wouldn't want to have done to you,"* British Humanist Society. <sup>3</sup>
- **9. Islam:** *"None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."* Number 13 of Imam "Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths." <sup>5</sup>
- **10. Jainism:** *A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.* "Sutrakritanga 1.11.33"
- **11. Judaism:** *"...thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*, Leviticus 19:18 *"And what you hate, do not do to any one."* Tobit 4:15
- **12. Native American Spirituality:** *"Respect for all life is the foundation."* The Great Law of Peace.
- **13. Roman Pagan Religion:** *"The law imprinted on the hearts of all men is to love the members of society as themselves."*
- **14. Shinto:** *"Be charitable to all beings, love is the representative of God."* Ko-ji-ki Hachiman Kasuga
- **15. Sikhism:** *"No one is my enemy, none a stranger and everyone is my friend."* Guru Arjan Dev : AG 1299



## ***The Golden Rule as Stated in 21 Traditions***

- **16. Sufism:** *If you haven't the will to gladden someone's heart, then at least beware lest you hurt someone's heart, for on our path, no sin exists but this.*" Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, Master of the Nimatullahi Sufi Order.
- **17. Taoism:** *"Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss."* T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien.
- **18. Unitarian:** *"We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent of all existence of which we are a part."* Unitarian principles.
- **19. Wicca:** *"An it harm no one, do what thou wilt"* (i.e. do what ever you will, as long as it harms nobody, including yourself).
- **20. Yoruba:** (Nigeria): *"One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts."*
- **21. Zoroastrianism:** *"Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others."* Shayast-na-Shayast 13


Adapted form the Cooper Institute

# Commonalities of World Religions

Other beliefs in common

- Faith in a Greater Reality which is the source of inspiration, the source from which people find hope, learn to grow, to reach their full potential
- Every person has the inherent possibility to tap into the Greater Reality to reach their full potential





**Assessing clients' God image means that counsellors inquire not only about a belief in God but also about what kind of God clients believe in.**

**It is important to know if a client's God is loving, benevolent, merciful, forgiving, involved, and accessible or if their God is vengeful, aloof, punishing, or impersonal.**

# Commonalities of World Religions

Beliefs in common (continued)

- There are many ways to tap into the Greater Reality
- Feeling separate or disconnected from the Greater Reality leads to suffering
- Spiritual practices which are essential to the spiritual life

# Commonalities of World Religions

Spiritual practices common to all religions include:

- The practice of compassion
- Service to others
- Meditation and/or prayer
- The use of music and/or chanting
- Spiritual healing
- Pilgrimage



# Commonalities of World Religions

In all religions:

- The spiritual life requires humility, gratitude and a sense of humour
- Spiritual practice is an integral part of one's life and extends into all aspects of life

# “Show and Tell”

- Prayer beads
- Crystals
- Singing bowl
- other examples

# Spiritual Healing

Energy work and vibrational healing

“Much of our knowledge of such ‘unconventional energy systems’, sometimes referred to as ‘subtle-energy systems’, comes from the sacred and spiritual knowledge of the Far East and India.”

"Vibrational Medicine" - Richard Gerber, M.D.

# Spiritual Energy Systems

- Qi or Chi - literal translation is "air" or "breath"; frequently translated as "energy flow"; active principle forming part of any living thing.
- Ki - Japanese equivalent of qi.
- Prana - vital, life-sustaining force of living beings; vital energy, comparable to the Chinese notion of qi (chi); Sun and sunshine are held to be a source of Prana.

# Traditional Chinese Medicine

The principle:

- The body has natural patterns of qi that circulate in channels called meridians.
- Symptoms of various illnesses are the product of disrupted, blocked, or unbalanced qi movement through the body's meridians, as well as deficiencies or imbalances of qi.

# Traditional Chinese Medicine

The practice:

- TCM often seeks to relieve these imbalances by adjusting the circulation of qi in the body using a variety of therapeutic techniques, including:
  - ▶ herbal medicines
  - ▶ special diets
  - ▶ physical training regimens (e.g., qigong)
  - ▶ massage to clear blockages, and
  - ▶ acupuncture, which uses small diameter metal needles inserted into the skin and underlying tissues to reroute or balance qi.

# Questions or comments ? *Thank you*

- I'll be glad to answer questions at the end of the Panel Presentation
- You can contact me at [revsandi@interfaithministry.com](mailto:revsandi@interfaithministry.com)
- Some interesting books:
  - ▶ *The World's Religion*, Huston Smith
  - ▶ *The Roots of Consciousness - The Classic Encyclopedia of Consciousness Studies*, Jeffrey Mishlove, PhD
  - ▶ *Gifts of the Spirit - Living the Wisdom of the Great Religious Traditions*, Philip Zaleski and Paul Kaufman
  - ▶ *Cosmic Cradle - Souls Waiting in the Wings for Birth*, E. & N. Carmen
  - ▶ *Children's Past Lives*, Carol Bowman
  - ▶ *The Art of Integrative Counselling*, Gerald Corey