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Article 17

**Spirituality and Wellness in Baby-Boomers:
A Mini Course for Experienced Counselors
and Counselor Educators**

Mary Finn Maples

In 1998, Tom Brokaw, of NBC fame, wrote a book entitled: *The Greatest Generation*. The text described the lives of the World War II veterans, who became parents of those children known today as baby boomers. Maples (2002) referred to these boomers as the “Silver Tsunami” because they represented the greatest generation (in numbers) born between 1946 and 1964: 76,000,000 of them. Lo and behold! On October 15, 2007, the first born of those babies, Kathleen Casey-Kirschling, dubbed by Dana Milbank in the Washington Post (2007) and the Social Security Administration website ([http://www.ssa.gov/pressoffice/pr/baby boomerfiles-pr.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/pressoffice/pr/baby_boomerfiles-pr.htm)) as the “oldest baby-boomer,” filed for Social Security Benefits. She was born at 12:01am, January 1, 1946. The first unique fact about her is that she applied *online*. The second unusual fact about the baby-boomers is that they are still “boomers” but no longer “babies” as the *youngest* “baby” boomer will turn 44 in 2008, and in 2007 they were turning 60 at the rate of 8,000 per day.

Volumes have been written about the uniqueness of this generation (Cesar & Miranti, 2001; Lewis, 2001; Maples, 2002, 2006, 2007a; Maples & Abney, 2006; Musick, Traphagan, Koenig, & Larson, 2000; Myers, 2003; Myers & Schweibert, 1996). According

to Maples and Abney, baby-boomers are unlike their parents and grandparents in the following ways:

- Baby-Boomers are in greater physical health than the generations preceding them (cited in Zapolsky, 2003).
- Baby-Boomers are more highly educated with different quality of life expectations that come with exposure to higher levels of education.
- Baby-Boomers (the Silver Tsunami) hold worldviews vastly different because they were raised in a country at relative peace and have not been exposed to a global war. Moreover, these worldviews have encouraged them to expand their attention to views of their own spirituality, allowing them to focus as well on their physical, emotional, mental and financial health. Mass media, technological advances and extensive personal and professional travel have had a broadening educational and knowledge-building impact upon them. Combined with the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population being in between baby-boomers and those 85+ (the “Silent Generation” – 1929-1945), it is no wonder that the mass media are appealing to older persons.
- Baby-Boomers, in general, have not experienced the same struggles and deprivations wrought by the Second World War and the Great Depression as their parents and grandparents did.
- They are more likely to experience change in family structure and are more likely to have an alternative family structure than earlier generations.
- They are taking better care of themselves physically, financially and spiritually.
- Technology has allowed this well-educated generation to see the world as it *can be*, rather than it is currently (Guggenheim, 2006).
- Fifty-two percent are women, including the highest percentage of unmarried women in history (Maples & Abney, 2006, p. 3).

Why a Mini-Course?

In addition to the volumes noted above about the uniqueness of baby-boomers, there have been a considerable number of publications citing the growing interest of this generation in their spirituality. Not to be confused or equated with religion (Blazer, 1991; Chesser, 2003; Langer, 2004; Maples, 2007; Myers, 2003; Wilber, 2007), spirituality is described as: that intangible essence which brings and maintains meaning in one's life. It is greater and more encompassing than religion, through religion can be seen by choice, as an aspect of spirituality. Spirituality is simultaneously global, yet deeply personal and intense. It is always present, but not necessarily consciously acknowledged. Finally, it is that essence which separates human beings from other species of the animal world (Maples, 2007b, Spirituality and the Silver Tsunami section).

Because counselors, counselor educators and counseling graduate student interns are encountering questions, concerns and issues regarding spirituality and its impact on physical and mental wellness from clients, a weekend, 15 hour, one semester credit graduate course on emerging issues addressing the relationship between wellness and spirituality in baby-boomers was first taught by this author in 2004. With urging and encouragement from attendees at several ACA, ACES, AADA convention presentations in recent years, and in order to extend research and knowledge in this area, the following six hour mini-course was presented as a Pre-Convention Learning Institute for ACA on March 27, 2008 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Learning Institute Plan and Schedule

Mini-Course Plan

9:00-09:20	Introductions, Program Objectives, and First Assessment
9:20-09:45	Definitions, Discussions– Baby-Boomers' <i>Wellness</i> and <i>Spirituality</i>
9:45-10:15	Presentation, <i>Spirituality</i> and <i>Wellness</i> : Theoretical Models: Activity

Compelling Counseling Interventions

10:15-10:30	Conversation/ Coffee Break
10:30-11:15	<i>Spirituality and Wellness</i> in Baby-Boomers: Applications and Assessments; Activity
11:15-11:45	Fowler's Faith Stages – Related to Baby-Boomers
11:45-1:00	Lunch
1:00- 2:00	Presentation and Discussion of Dupey <i>Holistic Model of Spiritual Wellness</i>
2:00 3:00	Vignettes Dealing with Counseling Wellness and Baby-Boomers
3:00- 3:15	Break
3:15-4:00	Determination of Personal Definition and Model (or Adaptation) for Application to Counseling Baby-Boomers' Spirituality and Wellness – Sharing with Peers in Course
4:00-4:15	Question and Discussion Session
4:15-4:30	Review of Course Objectives – Participant Evaluation of Workshop

Rationale

This program, targeted to professionals experienced in working with baby-boomer clients, will enhance counselor knowledge regarding issues, concerns and problems related to baby boomer spirituality, or meaning in life. This meaning guides the physical, intellectual, career, emotional and social aspects of their lives which enable them to achieve the ultimate goal of holistic wellness (Maples, 2007b). It is anticipated that the participants in the course will also be members of the baby-boomer generation, so may have dual interest in the program.

Program Objectives

- To renew and explore with experienced counselors and counselor educators a variety of definitions and descriptions of Wellness and Spirituality, highlighting connections as they apply to the counseling field and to the baby-boomer client.

- To explore different models and theoretical orientations of Spirituality and Wellness that may be appropriate for use in counseling baby-boomers.
- To provide a series of activities that will bring about thought-provoking reflections and insights upon the participants' own spiritual and wellness essence.
- To expand upon the proven and potential applications of spirituality and wellness issues in counseling, attending to the needs of ethnically different clientele.
- To invite those participants from cultures outside the U.S. to share their views of the connection between spirituality and wellness as experienced in their cultures.
- To provide a series of potential assessment tools for use in the counseling relationship, recognizing the complexities involved in counseling baby-boomers from international venues.
- To encourage participants' sharing of their knowledge and experiences in working through spirituality with clients from the baby-boomer generation – many of whom are facing midlife challenges and issues.
- To provide a reasonable and viable baseline from which experienced counselors may approach or expand upon the relationship between spirituality and wellness with baby-boomer clients.

First Activity

Brief sharing of participants' definitions of spirituality and wellness to establish a common understanding and acceptance of the two words in order to facilitate professional work - and as experienced by participants in their counseling or teaching experiences with baby-boomer clients

Presentation: Spirituality and Wellness - Theoretical Models

Myers, Sweeney, and Witmer (2000) developed a model combining wellness and spirituality that included the following seven components called life forces: family, religion/spirituality, education, community, media, government, and business/industry.

They expanded these Forces into Life Tasks. They describe five Life Tasks: (1) Spirituality – oneness and the inner life, purposiveness, optimism and values; (2) Self-Regulation – sense of worth, sense of control, realistic beliefs, spontaneity and emotional responsiveness, intellectual stimulation, problem-solving and creativity, sense of humor, fitness and health; (3) Work – as a life-span task, psychological, economic and social beliefs; (4) Friendship – social interest and connectedness, social support, health and interpersonal relations; and (5) Love – intimacy, trust, cooperation and long-term commitment. This combination of Life Forces and Life Tasks evolved with an assessment tool entitled *The Wheel of Wellness Counseling for Wellness: A Holistic Model for Treatment Planning* (Myers et al., 2000).

Ingersoll's Seven Dimensions of Spirituality (as cited in Miller, 2003) takes a different but implicit approach to the spirituality, wellness partnership. He identifies the seven dimensions as: meaning, conception of divinity, relationship, mystery, play, experience, and dimensional integration.

Spirituality and Wellness Applications and Assessments

Several additional models of spirituality and wellness were discussed including the Purdy and Dupey Holistic Flow Model of Spiritual Wellness (2006). This model addresses the richness of the combination of spirituality and wellness in counseling the baby-boomer generation of clients. The components of their model include: personal energy/flow, beauty/body/religion, emotional, mind, companionship, and life's work.

For each of these aspects of the Flow Model of Spiritual Wellness, there are two activities requested of the participants (and, ultimately, clients) those of personal assessments, and obstacles that may impede progress by a baby-boomer client. These were introduced after the lunch break (see Figure 1).

The last model to be shared was Maples' Holistic Adult Development Model (1996) which is a counseling model used with baby-boomer clients for the past decade. It was originally developed

and published in her work with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the National Center for State Courts.

Figure 1: Holistic Adult Development Model



History of Holistic Adult Development Model

In 1978, when elected president of the American Counseling Association (ACA) (then the American Personnel and Guidance Association; APGA), I asked the then executive director of APGA what he considered to be the main responsibilities of the president. He mentioned three: (a) determine a theme for the annual convention; (b) develop an “inspirational” topic for sharing with members during the many speeches delivered around the country, and (c) try to continue to save the Association money. I had served as Treasurer of APGA in 1977-78. The Model (Figure 1) addresses the second charge. It was originally called “the Superstar Self” and “Recipes for an Effective Life” (RE=Religious/Esthetic; C=Career; I=Intellectual; P=Physical; E=Emotional and S=Social, as defined in Figure 3). The Model (Figure 1) depicts several configurations of an adult’s life (in this case, applied to those persons who are between the ages of 44 and 62).

Figure 2:
Spirit: Three Configurations



Figure 3: Definitions

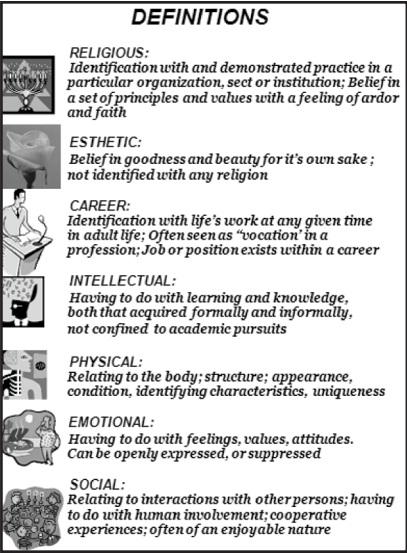


Figure 4: Chickering's Vectors of Adult Development



Figures 2, 3, and 4 define the various components within the Model (Maples, 1996). The results of the survey and definitions of the words used in the survey became the configuration represented in Figure 2, placed and defined in the center of the “Superstar Self.” Figure 2, for purposes of the model for counseling, more clearly defines “spirit” and “spirituality”. Figure 3 depicts and defines the “RECIPES” of the “Superstar Self”. Figure 4 describes Chickering and Reisser’s Vectors of Adult Development (1993). The Holistic Adult Development Model, complete with Chickering and Reisser’s Vectors, surrounding the three different “spirit” personalities, as well as the RECIPES of an effective life, described earlier, is used to assist adults in their journey through the counseling relationship.

The rationale for the Model at that time was that, in traveling and speaking, as ACA (then APGA) president, I found I was preaching to the choir. These counseling professionals, most of whom were baby-boomers, had taken time from their responsibilities and had, in many if not most cases, expended their own personal finances to attend these professional development activities, so I decided that counselors should be celebrated. The presidential theme became: “Counselors Need Caring, Too”. I used the model, with only the letters from the RECIPES (see History of the Model above). Years later, I conducted a study on the central theme of SPIRIT, by surveying several hundred counseling professionals. With those results I was able to determine the spirituality of the respondents into the three configurations in Figure 2. In order to create a more holistic model, Chickering’s Vectors of Adult Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) were included to surround the Model (Maples, 1996) in order to make it more effective and helpful in counseling baby-boomer adults.

Fowler’s Stages of Faith

To find a Spirituality/Wellness model that might naturally follow the discussion of Maples’ Holistic Adult Development Model, Fowler’s Stages of Faith (1981; 1995) were reviewed. Although Fowler (1981) covered six stages of faith, beginning with early

childhood, only the last two stages (Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith and Stage 6: Universalizing Faith) relate to Baby-Boomer Spirituality and Wellness outcomes of effective living. In 1995, Fowler revised his original book (1981) and renamed the Stages so that they were less complex and more “readable.”

To understand Fowler’s contribution, all six of the Stages are cited here with a brief description of each.

Stage 1 – Magical World

Ages 2-6, perceives the world through lens of imagination and intuition unrestrained by logic, e.g., lives in a magical world in which anything is possible

Stage 2 – Concrete Family

Ages 6-12 sees the world as a story – concrete, literal, narrative family of ritual and myth, e.g., “in the beginning, God created the...” Stage 2 collapses when teenagers use newfound power of abstract thought to deconstruct previous understanding of the world, e.g., risk of rejecting religious beliefs of parents, and identifying with surrounding secular culture

Stage 3 – Faith Community

Teenager to early adulthood and beyond, sees the world through the lens of the peer community, e.g., unconsciously “catches” faith, values, and ways of thinking from peer group or subculture; tends not to question the accepted ways of thinking, e.g., “If the Bible says...it must be true” or “If some group says...it’s the Truth” difficult dealing calmly and rationally with issues that touches on one’s identity

Stage 4 – Rational Constructs

Adulthood (if) traditional answers stop making sense, e.g., beliefs previously unquestioned are called into account; develop the capacity to step back (usually for the first time) and examine beliefs with reason; universe is reconstructed with self-chosen concepts; might experience deep disappointment/anger on finding some beliefs did not stand up to investigation

Stage 5 – Numinous (Supernatural/Mysterious) Universe

Mid-life or later it seems we have run up against the limits of rational thought e.g., the search for certainty can end in feelings of failure/despair; we come to live in a spiritual universe of mystery, wonder, and paradox, e.g., we might return to sacred symbol, story, tradition, liturgy, spiritual community, but no longer captured in a theological box. Fowler describes this stage as analogous to “looking at a field of flowers simultaneously through a microscope and a wide-angle lens” (Fowler, 1981).

Stage 6 – Selfless Service

Rare stage for many; identifies deeply with all humanity, and spends self in service of worldwide issues of love, and justice, e.g., Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Theresa.

Conclusion

The final segments of the mini-course were devoted to Purdy and Dupey’s Holistic Flow Model of Spiritual Wellness (2006) and several Baby-Boomer counseling vignettes for dyadic or triadic application.

Following this experience, participants were encouraged to take a few minutes to discuss various aspects of the mini-course with their dyad or triad partners which each might incorporate into his/her practice or teaching syllabi.

Finally, a quote from Woody Allen was cited to bring spirituality and wellness into conclusive perspective: “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve immortality by not dying”.

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