

**Addressing Spiritual Diversity in
Professional Social Work Practice:
Principles and Ethical Guidelines with Examples**

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Addressing Spiritual Diversity in Professional Social Work Practice: Principles and Ethical Guidelines with Examples¹

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Introduction

This monograph provides a summary of principles, ethical guidelines, and examples for inclusive spiritually sensitive social work (ISSSW) that addresses diverse religious and nonreligious forms of spirituality in an inclusive, respectful, and collaborative manner. This specific framework for spiritually sensitive social work was developed by the author and colleagues in the United States and inspired by collaborations with social work scholars and practitioners primarily in North America, Europe, and East Asia (Canda, Furman, & Canda, 2020).³ The ISSSW approach to professional social work honors the principles and ethical standards set out by the US-based National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as well as the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). While ISSSW originated in the United States, it is humbly offered to be critically considered, adapted, or discarded in whatever ways are appropriate to practice in other countries. Crisp's (2017) edited volume gives examples of how social work is addressing religion and spirituality in many countries.

First the terms 'spirituality' and 'religion' will be defined. Then core principles for ISSSW will be presented. Next, guidelines for ethical decision making about using spiritually oriented helping practices will be addressed.

¹ This manuscript was developed in conjunction with the conference, **Les spiritualités dans le travail socio-éducatif (Spiritualities in Socio-Educational Work)**, under the direction of Mael Verat, Amandine Kervella, and Daniel Verba, scheduled for January 27-28, 2022 to be held in person and remotely, at French National Academy for Youth Protection and Juvenile Justice (ENPJJ), Roubaix, France, with the support of the Interdisciplinary Research Institute on Contemporary Social Issues (IRIS) and in partnership with the Psychology Laboratory of the Pays de la Loire (LPPL). A French language version of this work is forthcoming as a chapter within the book, **Les spiritualités dans le travail socio-éducatif (Spiritualities in Socio-Educational Work)**, edited by Mael Verat and Daniel Verba (Toulouse, France: ÉRÈS, 2022). The French version is not controlled by this manuscript's Creative Commons copyright.

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³ Please see Canda, Furman, and Canda (2020) for a thorough presentation of the ISSSW framework.

Examples will be given related to assessment, the helping relationship, and therapeutic mindfulness.

Defining Spirituality and Religion

There are numerous definitions of spirituality and religion extant in the scholarly literature of social work and allied helping professions. However, there are themes shared commonly across these definitions. The following definitions were derived from analysis of these themes and have been shown to be congruent with the ideas of most social workers revealed through national surveys conducted from 2008 to 2011 in Aotearoa New Zealand, Norway, the United States, and United Kingdom (Canda, Furman, & Canda, 2020). These surveys have shown that it is common for many social workers to recognize both similarity and difference between the terms ‘spirituality and religion’.

In these definitions, ‘spirituality’ refers to a universal aspect of human culture and experience that includes diverse religious and nonreligious expressions. These terms and definitions are intended to provide clarity for scholarly and professional discourse and research, but they are not intended to be imposed on particular clients, communities, cultures, or other contexts. These concepts are to be used, adapted, or replaced by other terms according to relevance and usefulness in social work with particular clients⁴ and contexts. The terms themselves are not as important as the themes associated with them. The most important principle guiding use of the terms and definitions is to connect with their underlying themes in whatever ways fit the beliefs, customs, comfort level, and familiarity of the clients. The following definitions are from Canda, Furman, & Canda (2020, pp. 96-98).⁵

Spirituality is a process of human life and development:

- focusing on the search for a sense of meaning, purpose, morality, and well-being;

⁴ I use the term ‘clients’ within the framework of the strengths perspective on social work, which recognizes service users as the primary determiners of service priorities and as respected partners in the helping process (Mendenhall & Carney, 2020).

⁵ Please see chapter 3 of this book for extensive explanation of the rationale for these definitions, their flexible use, consideration of alternative terms and definitions, and more detailed presentations of operational and holistic conceptualizations.

- in relationship with oneself, other people, other beings, the universe, and ultimate reality however understood (e.g., in animistic, atheistic, nontheistic, polytheistic, theistic, or other ways);
- orienting around centrally significant priorities; and
- engaging a sense of transcendence (experienced as deeply profound, sacred, or transpersonal).

Spirituality includes private and public components and may express in religious and nonreligious forms. Spirituality can manifest in ways that promote health, well-being, and justice but it can also be distorted in ways that inflict unhealthy experiences of shame, guilt, blame, harm, and trauma for individuals as well as systemic discrimination, oppression, injustice, and violence. Religions are often criticized for damaging expressions, but nonreligious worldviews and ideologies can also be damaging. In keeping with social work's commitment to promote individual well-being, social justice, and environmental justice, social workers are enjoined to help clients to maximize the benefits of spiritual perspectives and practices that may be relevant to them and also to help clients to heal from damaging experiences and to overcome and change structural injustices. Professional ethical standards for competence mean that social workers need to be prepared through education and training to address both the helpful and harmful expressions of spirituality.

Religion is a systematic and organized pattern of values, beliefs, symbols, behaviors, and experiences that involves:

- spirituality;
- a community of adherents;
- transmission of traditions over time; and
- individual and community support functions (e.g. material assistance, emotional support, or political advocacy) that are directly or indirectly related to spirituality.

The term 'faith' is also sometimes used by clients, their communities, and social service providers. This term frequently refers to a person's commitment to religious beliefs or sense of personal relationship with the divine and is sometimes used as a synonym for religion. The term faith is used most often in theistic religious traditions.

There are many advantages to distinguishing the concepts of spirituality and religion for social work purposes. When spirituality is acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of diverse human persons and cultures, the themes of ‘meaning, purpose, morality, connectedness, significant life priorities, transcendence, and profundity’ can be explicitly recognized and addressed within social work’s commitment to a holistic understanding of the person. Spirituality can be connected with holistic, growth oriented, and liberatory theoretical perspectives on human behavior and development such as existentialism, humanistic psychology, positive psychology, transpersonal theory, post-traumatic growth, positive aging and gerotranscendence, positive youth development, deep ecology and ecofeminism, capabilities theory, social constructionism, critical theory, empowerment, and anti-oppressive theories (Cheon & Canda, 2010 a & b; Nelson-Becker & Canda, 2008; Nelson-Becker, Canda, & Nakashima, 2006; Robbins, Chatterjee, Canda, & Leibowitz, 2019). The themes of spirituality can be considered regarding what is different and similar between diverse religious perspectives, especially those in communities where social work occurs. They can also relate to worldviews that do not separate spirituality from daily life and experience of community/nature/land interconnectedness, such as is common in many Indigenous cultures.

In recognition of professional commitment to honor human diversity, it is important to consider spirituality and religion in relation to people’s intersectional identities including but not limited to age, caste, color, culture, race, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, generational status, immigration/refugee status, legal status, marital status, political ideology, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, Indigenous nation status, civil status, language, nationality (or lack thereof), socioeconomic status, family structure, and whatever other characteristics are significant to those social workers serve.⁶

The distinction between the concepts of spirituality and religion allows for adaptability to trends in many countries toward people not affiliating with religious institutions. Many people identify as spiritual but not religious. Many people who identify as nonreligious or as atheist or agnostic still explore beliefs and practices related to the themes of spirituality through various approaches such as study of philosophies and religions, and practices of prayer, meditation, mindfulness, ritual,

⁶ This list is adapted from the CSWE’s Spring 2021 draft for Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards: [https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Information/2022-EPAS/EPAS-2022-Draft-1-April-2021-\(2\).pdf.aspx](https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Information/2022-EPAS/EPAS-2022-Draft-1-April-2021-(2).pdf.aspx) and the IFSW Global Standards.

yoga, subtle energy work (e.g., tai chi or reiki), astrology, and divination (e.g., by Tarot cards or I Ching). Further, many clients who social workers may encounter in health and mental health settings participate in mutual aid recovery groups that are spiritually oriented but not tied to specific religious institutions, such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Another advantage is cultural adaptability. For example, during my teaching of courses on spirituality and human service in Japan, colleagues and students often noted that these definitions are helpful because they make it clearer and more comfortable for many Japanese people to relate to the themes of spirituality without adhering to what they see as Western cultures' tendency to view religion in terms of exclusive membership and theistic beliefs, since very few Japanese people adhere to theistic religions. Hence, translators of the second edition of the *Spiritual Diversity in Social Work Practice* book chose to transliterate the English term 'spirituality' into Japanese *katakana* form in order to avoid confusion with common translations of spirituality which confound the concept with religious or theistic notions.⁷

As another example, during my teaching and consultations in the Czech Republic, the distinction between spirituality and religion has been helpful for different reasons. Although the region of the Czech Republic historically has had strong Christian influence, and for centuries had a strong predominance of Catholicism, the Czech Republic now has one of the highest demographic levels of people identifying as nonreligious, atheist, or agnostic. While many Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) based social services are delivered by Caritas (aka Catholic Charities) agencies, most clients are not Catholic or religious. Therefore, some Czech social workers are now adapting ISSSW to the Czech context since it is open and respectful to both Catholic and nonreligious perspectives on spirituality (Dolezel, 2017).

Core Principles and Values

The IFSW Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (<https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/>) promotes social work as a profession and discipline that "... facilitates social

⁷ Canda, E. R., & Furman, L. D. (2010). *Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of helping, second edition*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Published in Japanese translation by Minerva Ghobo, Kyoto, Japan, 2014, trans. Katsunobu Kihara, Yoshiharu Nakagawa, & Miwa Fujii.)

change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.” ISSSW upholds this vision and principles. It expands this vision to include well-being, flourishing, and justice for human beings, for all beings, for the total planetary ecology, and for anywhere humans go beyond the earth (Banerjee & Canda, 2012; Canda, Furman, & Canda, 2020).

The Global Statement opposes harmful discrimination toward people based on characteristics of diversity, including religion and spiritual beliefs (section 3.1). It promotes a view of people as whole persons, including biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions (section 7). ISSSW focuses on practice that prevents and responds to harmful discrimination on the basis of religion and spiritual beliefs and that promotes holistic approaches that assess and respond to the role of spirituality, if any, in clients’ presenting challenges, in their goals and priorities for service, and in their beliefs and social-cultural life contexts.

Analysis of 22 national Codes of Ethics as of 2019 (Canda, Furman, & Canda, 2020; <https://www.ifsw.org/global-social-work-statement-of-ethical-principles/>) showed that most countries’ codes include standards broadly consistent with the Global Statement. Eighteen prohibit bias or discrimination based on religion and/or spirituality, 12 promote respect for religion and/or spirituality, 20 mention religion or creed, 6 mention ‘spiritual’ or ‘spirituality’, 6 refer to ‘belief’, and 12 mention affirmation of the IFSW Global Statement. For example, the 1994 French Code of Ethics article 2 (CODE DE DÉONTOLOGIE) includes a statement against bias or discrimination on the basis of religion.⁸

ISSSW takes a strengths perspective on spirituality (Canda, 2020c). It helps clients to utilize spiritual inner strengths (e.g., self-reflection and insight, self-transcendence toward commitment to fulfillment of self and others, resilience qualities and behaviors, capacity for post-traumatic growth) and environmental resources (e.g., religious or nonreligious spiritual group and community based supports; participation in well-being promoting practices such as prayer, meditation, ritual, and justice advocacy movements based in spiritual groups; sustainable living and economies; and experiences of loving relationship with places, plants, animals, and the entire web of life).

⁸ <https://www.ifsw.org/code-de-deontologie/>

This presentation of ISSSW emphasizes its general approach to professional social work that is inclusive of diverse religious and nonreligious perspectives of clients and human service organizations (HSOs). ISSSW can be adapted for use in secular governmental and nongovernmental HSOs as well as religiously affiliated HSOs. In any case, the principles and ethical guidelines can be articulated and implemented in ways that are congruent with a specific HSO as well as with professional social work standards. Examples of religiously based approaches to social welfare that I have been involved with include Buddhist, Christian, and Confucian traditions (e.g. Canda, 2000a, 2000b, 2016, 2020b; Canda & Phaobtong, 1992; Canda & Gomi, 2019; Canda et al., 2006; Furman et al., 2011; Furman et al., 2011; Inagaki et al., 2020). Another option would be for an HSO to adapt and utilize relevant aspects of ISSSW without adhering to the entire framework. The most important consideration is how to best benefit clients and their communities.

Guidelines for Ethical Decision Making

These principles are at a high level of abstraction. In order to make the ISSSW framework clear for concrete social work practice, this section will discuss guidelines for addressing spirituality and the next section will offer examples.

When professional social workers consider addressing spirituality in practice, the preceding principles should be considered. For example, the priority should always be on what is congruent with particular clients' beliefs, goals, interests, and comfort level. If spirituality is congruent then it can be an explicit focus of helping, according to the client's intentions for particular situation of service. If spirituality is not relevant to the client, then it should not be addressed. It is only possible to ascertain relevance through holistic assessment, which will be explained in the next section.

If spirituality is not relevant for explicit attention, it can still shape the helping relationship in an implicit manner, so that the helping relationship is holistic and affirming of the whole person of the client. Implicit spiritual sensitivity will be explained also in the next section.

The social worker's own religious or anti-religious biases or other biases should not drive practice. Social work should always be conducted in a culturally responsive and humble manner. The social worker needs to establish sufficient competency in spirituality as relevant to particular client populations, issues, and helping practices. This includes the ability to refer to and/or collaborate with people who are respected and appreciated by the client according to their spiritual

perspective, such as clergy, lay religious leaders, members of faith communities and spiritual support groups, shamans, and other culture-specific healers and helpers.

The ethical principles of non-coercion and informed consent, indicate that it is generally best to begin to approach the topic of spirituality with clients through the least intrusive open-ended assessment of interest, comfort, and readiness. Then, the social worker can follow the client's direction as to whether to discontinue any further discussion and use of spirituality or to move on to more explicit spiritually based activities.

Chapter 10 of the Canda, Furman, & Canda book offers a detailed framework for ethical decision making about possible explicit and implicit use of spiritually based activities. This can be summarized as follows.

If a client has not expressed interest in including spirituality (religious or nonreligious) within the helping process, it could still be appropriate for the social worker to utilize their own private spiritually based practices to help them prepare for their work or to process stress and vicarious trauma related to their work. For example, some social workers find it helpful to engage in private prayer, meditation, mindfulness practices, yoga, therapeutic relaxation, or journaling, and to receive spiritual counseling or mentoring. It can also be appropriate to apply qualities of a spiritually sensitive relationship in work with clients, without making explicit reference to religion or spirituality (to be discussed). Finally, it could be appropriate to include open ended assessment of the client's spiritual interests, if any, during early formation of the helping plan, in order to determine whether it is appropriate to address spirituality directly or through referral. However, any other engagement with spirituality runs the risk of inappropriate and biased steering or coercion. Religious proselytization is certainly not an appropriate activity for professional social workers, because this violates client self-determination. This is especially egregious when clients are in vulnerable physical or mental conditions and when they require assistance for food, housing, or safety. Making religious participation or conversion a prerequisite for provision of services is a clear violation of client self-determination and the principle of freedom from coercion based on religion or any other ideology.

If a client has expressed interest in addressing spirituality, then this calls for several further social work activities. Assessment would need to continue in order to determine exactly what this could appropriately entail and how this should change over time as the helping process continues. The social worker also needs to

honestly and humbly ascertain one's competency to either engage in the spiritually based helping activity with the client or to refer to others who are competent. This is a matter in which professional supervision and mutual support among colleagues can be especially helpful. Further, special attention should be given to strengthen the spiritually sensitive qualities of the helping relationship.

Several findings from our international surveys of social workers' views about addressing spirituality in practice highlight these ethical considerations. More than 75% of responders in Norway, United States, Aoteroa New Zealand, and United Kingdom agreed or strongly agreed that "spirituality is a fundamental aspect of being human" (Canda, Furman, & Canda, 2020).⁹ This implies that it would be ethical and congruent with our profession's commitment to holistic practice to address spirituality. In contradiction to this, at least 20% of responders in the European countries stated that "integrating religion and spirituality in social work practice conflicts with social work's mission" or "ethics". Unfortunately, 46-76% of responders in all countries indicated that they had received no content on religious or spiritual issues in their social work education. Although it is possible that the situation might have changed since the time of the surveys, these indications of uneven preparedness among social workers to address spirituality raise concern about competence.

Spiritually Sensitive Practices

When social workers are sufficiently prepared and clients are interested, there are many spiritually oriented helping practices that could be employed. In this section, first a range of possible activities will be mentioned and then three more specific applications will be presented.

More than half of the survey respondents in Norway, United Kingdom, and Aotearoa New Zealand identified that it is appropriate to help clients to consider ways that their religious/spiritual support systems are helpful or harmful; to discuss the role of their religious or spiritual beliefs in relation to their significant other; to help them reflect on their beliefs about what happens after death; and to help them clients consider the spiritual meaning and purpose of their current life situation. More than half of US respondents in 2008 also agreed with the appropriateness of these activities. In addition, US respondents approved of praying privately for a client; helping clients develop rituals as a therapeutic intervention; meditating to prepare for working with clients; recommending participation in a religious or

⁹ Based on the national surveys conducted in Norway in 2011, United States in 2008, Aotearoa New Zealand in 2006, and United Kingdom in 2000.

spiritual support system or activity; using or recommending religious or spiritual writings; participating in a client's religious/spiritual ritual as a practice intervention; encouraging regular religious/spiritual diary-keeping or journaling; helping clients assess the meaning of dreams; using religious or nonsectarian spiritual concepts; and referring to or collaborating with religious helpers or leaders.¹⁰ This list offers a range of possibly appropriate activities, with the proviso that social workers' use of these or other helping activities should be determined by the ethical guidelines discussed above.

Spiritual Assessment. As previously explained, spiritual assessment should be done initially in an open-ended manner as part of holistic assessment, in order to determine whether the client is interested, ready, and comfortable to include spirituality in the helping process. If spirituality is relevant to the client, then it should be assessed whether it would be included directly in the social worker's helping activity, whether referral to another resource would be appropriate, or whether the client prefers just to have some suggestions and referral to resources in order to pursue this on their own.

There are many methods for spiritual assessment available, such as implicit assessment, brief explicit assessment, spiritual genogram and ecoregram, spiritual development timeline, and differential assessment of spiritual crises versus severe mental disorders (Canda, Furman, & Canda, 2020).

Implicit spiritual assessment involves asking questions that are open-ended, nondirective, and exploratory, without using terms that are explicit about religion or spirituality. These are useful in many contexts because they do not presume any beliefs and terminology for clients or social workers involved. Responses by clients determine decisions about whether and how to pursue spirituality further.

The following are examples of implicit strengths-oriented spiritual assessment questions. Note that these are only examples. Questions should be phrased to fit the situation and the perspective of the client. Also, the following questions focus on utilizing spirituality in a positive growth-promoting manner. But sometimes clients would like help in dealing with negative experiences of distress, inappropriate blaming, ostracism, discrimination, or oppression that come from religious or other spiritual experiences and groups. In that case, it is necessary to adapt assessment questions to identify the nature of negative experiences, how they affect the clients' view about including or excluding spirituality in helping, and whether the client would like assistance in exploring possibilities for spiritual

¹⁰ Note that some options for activities were included in the US survey but not in other surveys.

practices and resources that could be used as strengths in dealing with negative prior experiences and developing new positive experiences.

- What are important sources of strength and resources that help you to cope with times of difficulty or crisis?
- What gives you hope?
- What helps you feel good about your life?
- When do you feel most positive about yourself?
- What brings a sense of meaning and purpose to your life?
- What situations help you feel peace, joy, and satisfaction with life?
- What brings inspiration to your life?
- Who are your most important mentors and why?¹¹

These questions help open a conversation even when the subject of spirituality has not yet come up. When responses indicate interest in spirituality, or if a client brings up the subject of spirituality on their own, it is helpful to ask open-ended follow-up questions. It is important to move the conversation (or multiple conversations over time) toward identification of specific examples that can allow moving toward actions that would support achieving the client's goals. For example,

- Please say more about how you use spirituality (or religion, faith, or some specific spiritual activity mentioned by the client). Please give examples.
- Would you like to utilize your spirituality to help address your current situation? If so, let's discuss a specific plan for how to do this.
- Would you like to take this action on your own or would you like me to play a role in helping to accomplish this?
- Would you like help to identify and access any supports, resources, or information that could help you take this action?
- If you would like me to be involved in helping you to utilize spirituality to achieve your goals, please tell me more about what I should keep in mind about your beliefs and interests as we work together.

Infusion of Spiritual Sensitivity into Practice. Spiritually sensitive practice does not necessarily require using explicit religious or nonreligious spiritual activities and terminology. In fact, when assessment indicates there is no interest in

¹¹ For resources on strengths-oriented spiritually sensitive assessment and practice, see <https://www.researchgate.net/project/Strengths-Perspective-and-Transilience-in-Health-Mental-Health-and-Social-Work>.

including spirituality, then it would be spiritually sensitive not to address it. However, the helping relationship itself can and should have qualities of spiritual sensitivity. Within ISSSW, spiritually sensitive practice is a way of being and relating, not just a matter of applying certain skills and techniques or talking about spirituality. Infusion of spiritual sensitivity is relevant to all fields of social work, even those focused on provision of basic needs in which explicit discussion of spirituality is often not relevant, because spiritual sensitivity supports the fundamental value of respect for whole persons.

Research into effective therapeutic alliance in helping relationships has identified qualities that enhance likelihood of clients' reporting favorably about the process and outcomes of helping. Sometimes these are referred to as 'common factors' (Canda, Furman, & Canda, 2020). Social work helping activity goes far beyond clinical or psychologically therapeutic work, such as counseling, since it encompasses many kinds of work at micro, meso, and macro system levels. However, the 'common factors' are relevant to all settings of professional practice. Therapeutic relationship qualities with strong empirical support include:

- collaborative style of alliance
- reaching consensus and collaboration on treatment goals
- conveying empathy with the client
- expression of positive regard and affirmation for the client
- creativity and flexibility, including adaptability to cultural contexts and open-mindedness to religious views of clients
- obtaining clear ongoing feedback from clients about level of satisfaction and progress

Further, Canda, Furman, & Canda (pp. 275-310) present a detailed discussion of qualities of HSO cultures that can impact effectiveness of spiritually sensitive practice along with a method for organizational evaluation.

Therapeutic Mindfulness. Therapeutic mindfulness refers to a set of meditative practices, derived from Buddhism, applied in professional human service settings, including social work, health, mental health, and education. These practices focus on cultivating mental qualities characterized by clear awareness of self and environment in the present moment and gentle, nonjudgmental acceptance of experience. This frees a person from detrimental habits and triggers of reactions and opens a space in mind for choice-based behaviors. Practices are often combined with Cognitive Behavioral Therapies, resulting in evidence-based practices such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment

Therapy, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, and various adaptations for work with children in school settings. These therapies have been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of stress, depression, and anxiety and for reducing suicidal ideation and harmful behaviors. They are often applied within the context of holistic approaches to social work that promote bio-psycho-social-spiritual well-being.

These therapeutic practices are commonly removed and adapted from Buddhist contexts in order to make them accessible and comfortable to a wide range of religious and nonreligious clients. In Buddhism, mindfulness is referred to as *sati* (Pali) or *smṛti* (Sanskrit). However, Buddhist mindfulness practices are used within a larger context of beliefs, ritual, meditation, lifestyle regimens, and moral precepts for the purpose of promoting enlightenment and living in a compassionate, nonviolent way. Therapeutic mindfulness may relieve some kinds of suffering, which is a goal congruent with Buddhism, but it does not necessarily promote enlightenment. Rather, there is a risk of distorting or even contradicting Buddhist values if the practices are used to strengthen egocentrism, to reduce resistance to harm and oppression, or to promote a commercial market agenda for profiteering. There is also the danger of misappropriation of Buddhist practices within hegemonic and colonialist approaches to professionalism, which is part of a larger ethical concern about cross-cultural misappropriation and exploitation by social workers or other professionals (Inagaki, Kikuchi, & Gohori, 2020).

Based on the previous discussion of principles and ethical guidelines for spiritually sensitive practice, it is important for social workers to consider when and how to utilize therapeutic mindfulness practices.¹² Considerations include:

- Accruing thorough training in particular practices to ensure competence.
- Engaging in spiritual assessment to clarify whether the practices would be relevant, comfortable, and congruent for the client.
- Determining whether it is appropriate to discuss the Buddhist origins of the practices with the client.

¹² For a more detailed presentation, view: Canda, E. R. (February 18, 2021). *Culturally and ethically appropriate use of Buddhist derived mindfulness practices in professional social work*. North America Session on Indigenous Social Work Education and Practice, 5th International Academic Forum 2021 (online), Asian Research Institute for International Social Work, Shukutoku University, Japan. This session also includes presentations by Dean Michael Yellow Bird of University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work (on neurodecolonization) and Prof. Nicole Ives, McGill University School of Social Work (on Indigenous social work education programs), Canada. Video available at: <https://youtu.be/LcngpMMF9i0>. Canda presentation is 3rd.

- If so, present the Buddhist origins in a knowledgeable, respectful, and humble manner.
- If not, present the practices in ways that are consistent implicitly with Buddhist values, such as reducing suffering while promoting compassion for all people and all beings.
- Refraining from self-aggrandizing or commercialized profiteering behavior.
- Obtaining guidance, permission, and encouragement from Buddhist teachers.
- Demonstrating respect and appreciation for Buddhist traditions and communities.
- Supporting and/or collaborating with Buddhist temples, human service systems, and other formal or informal Buddhist support systems when possible.

Conclusion

Most of this monograph has focused on direct clinical practice and administration. Yet the macro context of spiritually sensitive practice is critical. So we conclude by re-emphasizing that ISSSW affirms and extends IFSW principles mentioned in the section on Core Principles and Values. ISSSW promotes full human development for individuals, families, and communities including provision for people's basic physical, mental, and social needs; people's freedom to pursue spiritual development and transpersonal experiences; and social policies and arrangements to support compassion and justice for all people, all beings, and all ecosystems locally and globally, and everywhere. ISSSW prioritizes the vulnerable in services, seeking the elimination of suffering, inequities, violence, discrimination, and oppression, with special attention to the ways that religious and nonreligious spiritual groups and communities impact clients beneficially or harmfully. ISSSW supports people's rights to freedom *of* religion and freedom *from* religion and it promotes mutual understanding and cooperation among religious and nonreligious groups and their broader communities.

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