

Healing rituals: A culturally responsive and empirical approach

Presented at the Association for Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling Conference
Colorado Springs, CO
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Objectives

- Objective 1: Participants will be able to identify the common elements of healing ritual in secular and religious medical systems.
- Objective 2: Participants will understand the relevant counseling literature, theory and ethical codes related to traditional healing practices.
- Objective 3: Participants will understand developing research on the placebo effect and therapeutic activities.

Culturally Responsive & Empirical

- Responsive to the client's values, more than just accepting, working to understand the experiential basis
- Empirical in that we are honestly investigating, seeking ways to make sense of phenomena, and choosing methods for doing so

Ethical Standards

A.4.b. Personal Values Counselors are aware of—and avoid imposing—their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Counselors respect the diversity of clients, trainees, and research participants and seek training in areas in which they are at risk of imposing their values onto clients, especially when the counselor's values are inconsistent with the client's goals or are discriminatory in nature.

ASERVIC Competencies

2. The professional counselor recognizes that the client's beliefs (or absence of beliefs) about spirituality and/or religion are central to his or her worldview and can influence psychosocial functioning

Defining Ritual

Cole, V. L. (2003). Healing principles: A model for the use of ritual in psychotherapy. *Counseling & Values*, 47(3), 184.

- "...a structured set of actions defined collaboratively by the therapist and client to effect a psychological transition from one state into another."
- Kaptchuk (2019): evocation, enactment, embodiment and evaluation in a charged atmosphere of hope and uncertainty

When is it ethical to use healing rituals in counseling?

When is it not ethical?

Blending two worlds

- Training as a healer and shamanism
 - Penn & Teller -BS!
 - Go sit outside - attunement
- Counselor training
- Integration

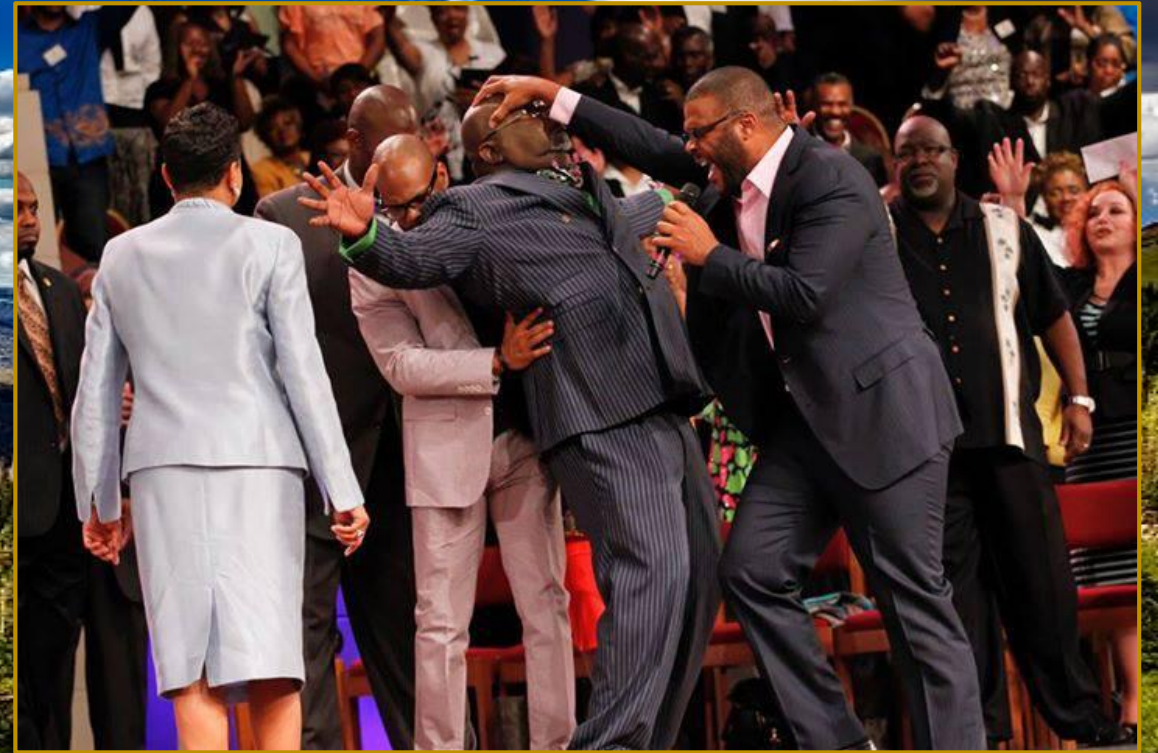
Placebo studies (empirical)

- <http://programinplacebostudies.org/>
- Kaptchuk, T. J. (2011). Placebo studies and ritual theory: A comparative analysis of navajo, acupuncture and biomedical healing. *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, 366(1572), 1849

Placebo studies (empirical)

- Kirsch, I. (2019). Placebo effect in the treatment of depression and anxiety. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*.
 - Meta-analysis of published and unpublished drug studies
 - Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HAM-D)
 - Drug response: 10.1, Placebo response: 8.3, Diff: 1.8
 - When patients had only a 1.8 difference on the HAM-D they subjectively reported no change
 - The subject difference is due to the placebo effect *of the drug* rather than the actual effect

Christian Faith Healing



Native American Healers



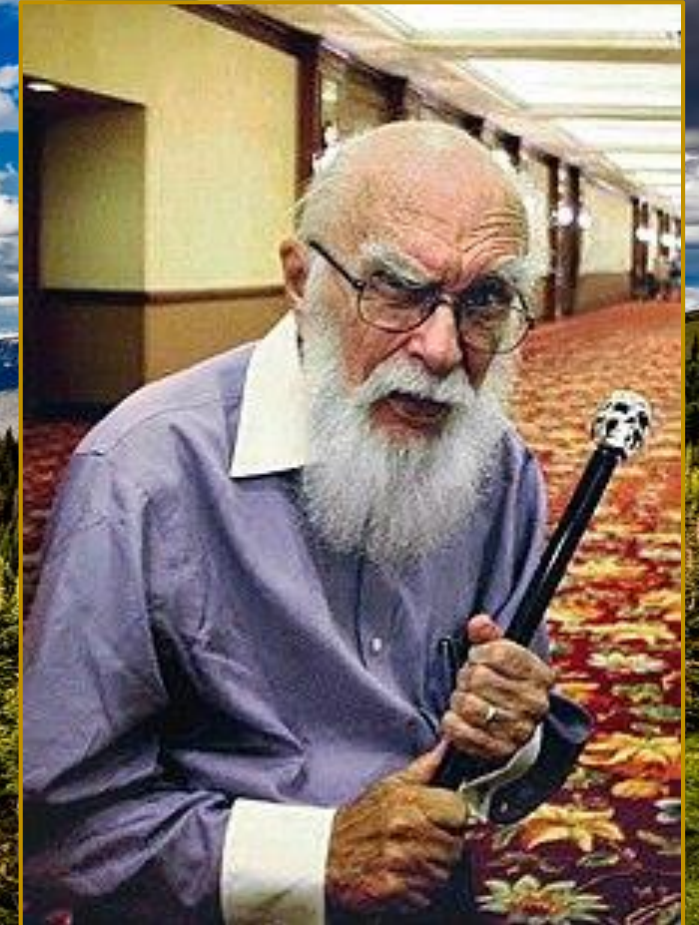
Going to therapy...

- Think about what you are going to talk about...brings up all your anxiety and insecurity...
- Try to arrive on time
- Greet the therapist, usually the same way
- Some amount of small talk
- Get into the session
- Spill your guts
- Cry a lot
- Process the interaction
- Pay

Skepticism/Science as Faith

“Yes, I'm a materialist. I'm willing to be shown wrong, but that has not happened — yet. And I admit that the reason I'm unable to accept the claims of psychic, occult, and/or supernatural wonders is because I'm locked into a world-view that demands evidence rather than blind faith, a view that insists upon the replication of all experiments — particularly those that appear to show violations of a rational world — and a view which requires open examination of the methods used to carry out those experiments.”

— James Randi



Analysis

- Traditional religions identified the placebo effect and utilized it in healing rituals along with physical intervention
- Later religions and practitioners (faith healers) existed on a spectrum from sincere belief to intentional fraud
- “Scientific” skeptics conflate some instances of intentional fraud with all placebo-driven healing
- People continue to experience healing through the placebo effect anyway

Questions

Is James Randi's position values-based or value-free?

Would a counselor be ethical if s/he adopted and presented a similar worldview?

Application to Counseling

- Multicultural competence
- Community service center
 - Client raised in a faith healing community
 - Hesitant to disclose
 - Felt shame for not meeting religious ideal
 - With acceptance, he worked to integrate perspectives

Contact

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