

# Questions Asked During Live Webinar Broadcast on 7/24/19



## *Rise in Recovery: The Science of Addiction and Spirituality of Healing*

Presenter: Kimberley Berlin, LCSW, CSAC, MAC, SAP, CCTP

If my clients are not interested, what scientific studies can I offer to break the...I'm not interested in spiritual stuff...mind block a client can have?

A:

### **A Review of Scientific Research on Spirituality**

[Rajesh Ratnakar](#), [Shreekumar Nair](#)

First Published July 1, 2012 Research Article

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2278533720120101>

National Public Radio has done a special series entitled, "The Science of Spirituality" – episode of particular interest are "Prayer May Reshape Your Brain .. and Your Reality".

<https://www.npr.org/series/104257486/the-science-of-spirituality>

Spirituality as a Scientific Construct –

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0117701>

This is more for you to read and absorb – and then share that knowledge with clients.

What Happens in the Brain During a Spiritual Experience

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322092.php>

What Happens to the Brain During Spiritual Experiences?

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/06/what-happens-to-brains-during-spiritual-experiences/361882/>

This is an article about Dr. Andrew Newburg who I referenced in my presentation. His work is outstanding, and very accessible.

We Now Know What a Spiritual Awakening Looks Like Inside the Brain.

<https://bigthink.com/philip-perry/we-now-know-what-a-spiritual-awakening-looks-like-inside-the-brain>

Scientists Found Spiritual Part of Our Brains – Religion Not Required.

<https://qz.com/1292368/columbia-and-yale-scientists-just-found-the-spiritual-part-of-our-brains/>

Brain Regions Involved in Spiritual Experiences

<https://www.sciencealert.com/scientists-just-identified-spiritual-heart-human-brain-neural-cognitive-parietal-lobe>

Article on "How Enlightenment Changes Your Brain" by Andrew Newburg, MD

<https://medium.com/s/spirits-in-your-brain/how-does-neuroscience-explain-spiritual-and-religious-experiences-3ef8c2f50339>

### **Follow up to the first question, how can you encourage use of spirituality to professionals who may have their own reservations but have clients who are actively spiritual?**

A:

My personal opinion and approach to working with clients is “start where the client is”. If a client is engaged in spiritual practices, then as a therapist I have a duty to engage with them at that level, no matter what my own personal orientation. I have many deeply Christian clients whose beliefs diverge from mine. However, I keep a Bible in my office for the express purpose of reaching for it and looking up a citation they may give during a session in order that we can discuss it – or expand on it. Clients respect the fact that I am willing to look outside of my own religious orientation and speak specifically to a spiritual orientation. From the spiritual base there is never any conflict. From a religious base there is often conflict.

### **I'm curious o hear what you think of the work of Susan Blackmore and Patricia Churchland?**

A:

I've looked at their work. It's outside of the realm of my own research as I focus specifically on addiction and recovery. I respect them both for what they bring to the body of knowledge.

### **What are your thoughts on Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention?**

A:

I happen to be writing an article on MBRP for publication in November. I am a strong supporter of MBSR and any use of Mindfulness in the healing of body, mind and spirit. The work of Alan Marlatt is genius. We lost a major contributor to addiction and relapse prevention when Marlatt died. Sarah Bowen, PhD, at Pacific University is continuing in his footsteps.

### **How to introduce spirituality to resistant/ atheist clients?**

A:

When a client tells me they are atheist or agnostic – I ask them to tell me more. I ask a lot of questions to understand their reasons, rationale, and resistance. Then I ask them to describe one of their most precious memories where they felt joy. Then a memory when they were in nature and felt awe. A memory when they had an amazing thing happen to them for which there was no explanation.

Eventually, I ask them if they have ever felt “connected” to nature, the stars above, the cosmos outside of our known universe, the ocean, rivers, lakes, mountains, etc.

With almost no exception, the answers are usually “Why, yes, I have.”

After three or four examples that a client give, I ask them if they felt it was in any way an experience that made them feel greater than who they are as mere mortals.

Eventually, I ask them what they think the difference is between “spirituality” and “religion”. Listen carefully to the answer – and then I give them this quote:

“Religion is for those who believe in hell, but spirituality is for those of us who have been to hell and come back.”

That conversation inevitably clarifies that there can be a spiritual experience without a belief in God.

### **How do you handle the exclusivity of some religious perspectives in clients?**

A:

As mentioned above – if a client has a particular orientation that would be considered “dogmatic” in it’s views, I respect what they convey to me. If they are Christian, I try to speak to them at that level. If they are Muslim, from that level. Similarly, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. If we are unable to “start where the client is” then we are doing them a disservice, in my opinion. We have to check our beliefs at our own front door and leave them there when working with clients in this field. I may not necessarily believe the same was as a client, and often I don’t – but I always express respect for their views, and I ask a lot of questions to try to better understand where they are coming from, and how to then reflect back to them using their own orientation. I have had experiences where a Pentacostal client comes in, takes one look at my office filled with Buddhas and Eastern Religious iconography, and declared that I am “the Devil’s consort”. My response has always been “Tell me more about that.” Or, “I’d like to learn more about your views....”

### **Thank you for this presentation, I engage our Moms with a mindfulness group weekly, I am excited to use the breath techniques you have shared today. My engagement with the moms centers around using mindfulness several times daily to recenter and find steadiness. Do you think that it would be beneficial to increase the group experience to more than once a week?**

A:

Yes! Twice a week and add breath exercises to begin! Try five to seven minutes of the three-part breath before the meditation – or use Nadi Shadana (Alternative Nostril) breath. Calming, relaxing, and centering. I highly recommend watching the YouTube video’s of Kia Miller who is a highly respected teacher (and from whom I received my Yoga Teacher Training).

Breath Series: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nG1GTh\\_bPU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nG1GTh_bPU)

### **Where in NJ can you access neurofeedback practices? Also, is neurofeedback for emotion regulation covered by insurance?**

A:

I Googled Neurofeedback for NJ and found that there is a “New Jersey Institute for Neurofeedback” located in North Brunswick Township. I would highly recommend starting there to find out what they might offer.

Also listed was the “BrainCore Neurofeedback Therapy in Manasquan and Eatontown, NJ.

As I understand it, whether insurance will cover Neurofeedback is dependent entirely on the insurance carrier, the provider, and the rationale for Neurofeedback therapy.

### **How often do you find it is best for clients (or maybe asking for myself) to practice the breathing techniques/ meditation? I try every morning and find it so hard to stick with it!**

A:

Sticking with it can be challenging. I find that often, we are setting a bar too high for ourselves. Try 10 minutes of meditation a day – at a set time of the day – usually early morning before anyone is awake – and 5 minutes of breathing. 15 minutes is a lot easier to “stick with” than 30 or 60 minutes, and according to research at MIT and Harvard, is found to have a significant positive effect. I have found it is more about the discipline and commitment to the practice than length of time. Something happens to us when we consistently engage in spiritual practices (meditation, prayer, breathing, etc.) which is expertly described in Daniel Goleman’s book “Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain and Body”.

### **How do you start an interaction with clients who perceive "spiritual" as "religious"?**

A:

As mentioned above – I ask a lot of questions! Be curious about your clients beliefs – where did they come from? – what did their parents believe? – friends? – significant events in their lives that could have influenced beliefs (death of a family

member can either result in belief that there is no God, or that God helped them through it).

### **The initial brain images of substance use are from what imaging technique/method?**

A:

The images are from the Amen Clinic, Dr. Daniel Amen. They were shared with me by the clinic in order for me to be able to illustrate the effects of substances on the brain. If you go to their web site, there is a gallery of images. Their web site is:

<http://amenclinics.com>

### **What consideration, if any that you may be aware, have been taken of other than now alleged neurological centers such as the neurocenters within the "gut", etc. and their tie-in with the brain? (i.e. impact of practices such as fasting, diet modification, etc.)**

A:

Personally, I ascribe to these theories and include nutrition in my private practice with my clients. The research is very clear that sugars, caffeine, processed foods are not healthy to consume, particularly in recovery. I personally have not delved into the research on this topic – other than an awareness of the veracity of the topic – but I would imagine that there are many articles on the topic.

I personally believe that fasting, juicing, reducing or eliminating sugar from the diet, and elimination of all processed and “junk” foods including soda’s is critical for a healthy body and a healthy brain.

Dr. Amen has conducted a lot of research on this topic and I encourage you to visit the Amen Clinic web site:

<http://www.theamenclinics.com>

### **How would you differentiate between the mind and the brain?**

A:

**Big Question!** Dr. Daniel Siegel recently wrote a book entitled, “The Mind”, which is a heavy read, but I recommend it as the foundation of the answer to your question.

Mind is where the consciousness resides – separate but interrelated to the brain.

### **Could this be considered diversity in counseling?**

A:

I’m not sure. I’ve never considered it to be as it is “universal” without being ascribed to any one particular culture, race, gender, etc.

### **Do you have a recommended bibliography from your research?**

A:

I am attaching a bibliography to be included with these questions.

### **What long term studies exist regarding the success of this treatment with clients?**

A:

Yes – many, many studies have been conducted. Too many to list here. I recommend doing a scholarly search from major research study sources (university based). Daniel Goleman’s book “Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain and Body” (with Richard J. Davidson) discusses numerous long-term studies in this field. They are both the forerunners of mindfulness studies back in the early 1970’s.