



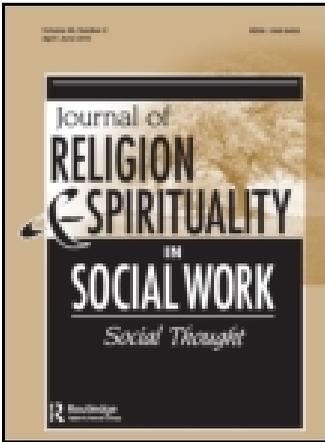
Book Review – Spirituality, Religion, And Faith In Psychotherapy: Evidence-Based Expressive Methods For Mind, Brain, And Body (By H. Land)

Reviewed by **Denise L. Levy, PhD, LCSW**

Abstract

A book review of *Spirituality, Religion, and Faith in Psychotherapy: Evidence-Based Expressive Methods for Mind, Brain, and Body*, by H. Land. Reviewed by Denise L. Levy in the *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, volume 34, number 2.

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Spirituality, Religion, and Faith in Psychotherapy: Evidence-Based Expressive Methods for Mind, Brain, and Body, by H. Land

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Book Review

H. Land (2015). *Spirituality, Religion, and Faith in Psychotherapy: Evidence-Based Expressive Methods for Mind, Brain, and Body*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, 470 pp., \$64.95 (softcover).

Health and mental health settings are embracing the use of expressive arts therapies as evidence-based, holistic treatment methods. Simultaneously, social workers, counselors, and clinicians are incorporating culturally and spiritually competent assessments and interventions in their work with people of faith. In her groundbreaking new book, Helen Land brings these topics together. *Spirituality, Religion, and Faith in Psychotherapy: Evidence-Based Expressive Methods for Mind, Brain, and Body* describes the use of various expressive therapies to address mental health needs related to spirituality, religion, and faith.

The book begins with a discussion of the impact of globalization on psychotherapy, highlighting the need for spiritually sensitive clinicians. Although this need is increasing, some therapists have been reluctant to address religion, spirituality, and faith with their clients due in part to their lack of knowledge and skills. Land's book addresses this knowledge gap and offers information about expressive methods to utilize for religious, spiritual, and faith issues in therapy. In Chapter 1, Land explains that expressive methods are well suited to treat issues in clients' sacred lives because they utilize all of the senses, allow for communication outside of the bounds of language, assist with meaning making, and promote connections. These connections may be within the client, between the client and therapist, and between the client and his or her sacred or existential world. Chapter 1 ends with a brief outline of the book and description of each expressive method discussed in the book.

In Chapter 2, Land defines what she calls the *sacred triad* of spirituality, religion, and faith. Religion is external to self, includes specific doctrines and rituals, and is associated with a group or community. Spirituality is part of the internal self, relates to an individual's worldview, and has to do with a connection to something that is transcendent and provides meaning in life. Faith refers to a belief in an idea or something greater than oneself. Individuals may identify with none, some, or all of these terms, and they may define these terms very differently. Land explains that it is important for clinicians to assess each of these dimensions of the sacred triad in order to best

understand our clients and their needs. In this chapter and in the Appendix, she explains how these three dimensions connect to the bio–psycho–social dimensions, and offers guidelines for assessment and treatment related to the sacred triad. Also, in the remaining chapters, Land provides examples of expressive methods that can be used to assess and address concerns related to the sacred triad.

Chapters 3 through 9 focus on specific expressive therapies: art therapy, music therapy, writing and poetry in therapy, drama and psychodrama, dance and movement therapy, sand-tray therapy, and guided imagery. Each chapter highlights the history of the particular expressive therapy method, with information about the founders, relevant organizations, and underlying theories. Land relates expressive methods to other well-known models or interventions such as play therapy, Winnicott's holding space, indigenous rituals, Jung's archetypes, and Gestalt's empty chair technique. In these chapters, Land also highlights some of the central concepts of expressive methods. These include the importance of the creative process, the use of potential or holding space as described by Winnicott, and Knill's concept of low-skill and high-sensitivity. Further, although the book is divided into chapters based on type of expressive therapy, Land both discusses and models the importance of integrating several different expressive arts modalities. Many of her case examples included two or more modalities such as music and movement, music and art, music and guided imagery, and movement and metaphor.

Notably, Land provides an extensive review of empirical research and neuroscience related to each expressive modality. This information is vital in an area of practice that some may dismiss or discount. In the sections on empirical research, Land reviews quantitative and qualitative studies using expressive methods with various populations and presenting problems. The literature supports the use of expressive methods with people across the lifespan who present with a variety of concerns and diagnoses. Research on some modalities, such as art therapy and guided imagery, is vast and compelling whereas the number of studies on dance and movement therapy and sand-tray therapy is just beginning to emerge.

In Land's discussion of the neuroscience of expressive therapies, she details the brain's response to traumatic experiences such as the loss of function in the areas of the brain responsible for speech and verbal communication. In order to process these events, recent developments in neurobiology point to the helpfulness of expressive therapies to give voice to traumatic experiences. Expressive therapies also help bridge the right and left hemispheres of the brain by using both sensory-based expression and verbal communication. Finally, there are some findings related to specific methods. Guided imagery, for example, strengthens the areas of the brain that are responsible for both empathy and concentration.

Book Review

In addition to discussing research and the latest neuroscience, Land provides information about the practical details of utilizing expressive methods. Using diverse case examples, chapters include specific information and instructions for implementing expressive therapies. For those unfamiliar with expressive methods, these sections are especially helpful. Land not only discusses potential materials to use, but she also provides sample questions to ask during assessments and interventions. The case examples include clients with diverse faith, religious, and spiritual backgrounds, including those who do not identify as spiritual or religious. Land describes her work with clients and provides photos of their sand trays and excerpts of their writings. With these case examples, the reader gains a better understanding of why expressive methods are used with these clients and how they are used.

In the final chapter, Land outlines common themes found in the previous chapters, including unifying mind, brain, and body through sensory-based expression and utilizing expressive methods to assist with affect regulation and mental health issues. She also presents several models of the expressive process, addresses resistance by clients, and discusses compassion fatigue. This focus on the process of expressive arts therapy and how it might impact clients and clinicians provides a nice ending to the book.

Given its comprehensive coverage of evidence-based practice, neurobiology, and use of expressive methods in therapy, this book is an excellent resource for clinicians and students, particularly those interested in addressing issues of religion, spirituality, and faith. Her new method for assessing the sacred triad is a major contribution to the field. The book is both broad and deep in scope, and will likely be a foundational text upon which future research and practice can build.

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