

3-S Group #3: Spiritual Self Awareness

Materials Required

1. Meditative Video Segment, and the equipment required for playing the video
2. “Tardiness” door sign to be placed on the door at the end of the video: “Entrance to the group room is not be permitted once the video has finished. The video has finished. Please join us next week.”
3. Wall Posters prominently displayed – In large letters ...
 - a. Commitment: “Today I renew my commitment to my spiritual path.”
 - b. The Ten Spiritual Qualities (the Paramis) – the Spiritual Self’s Muscles: “generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, tolerance, truth, strong determination, loving kindness, and equanimity”
4. Timer (for meditation and other timed exercises)
5. Pencils and notepaper for each participant.
6. Tape (to adhere poster paper to the walls, as needed)
7. Paper and easel board with marker for recorder
 - a. Pre-prepared sheet for Addict Self characteristics (see experiential component)
 - b. Pre-prepared sheet for Spiritual Self characteristics (see experiential component)

Therapeutic Goals

1. To provide a therapeutic context for a cognitive shift from habitual activation of the addict self-schema to increased activation of a spiritual self-schema that has as its focus doing no harm to self and others
2. To increase awareness of the automaticity of schematic processes, such as the addict self-schema.
3. To provide an opportunity for the creation of new cognitive scripts and behavioral action sequences that are consistent with the individual’s spiritual/religious faith. This session provides the opportunity for ...
 - a. the practice of meditation on the in-and-out breath (to increase the ability to focus the attention and still the mind).
 - b. the practice of mindfulness in interpersonal contexts (specifically when communicating with others).
 - c. the acknowledgement of addict self characteristics that need to be abandoned.
 - d. the identification of pre-existing, and aspired to, spiritual qualities.
 - e. the experience of commonality in the goals and aspirations of group members regardless of spiritual/religious beliefs.

Begin Group

1. Video

A commercially available meditation video of tranquil nature scenes is played to mark the beginning of each 3-S group session. The purpose of playing a meditative video at

this time is to provide a buffer, or transition period, during which group members can begin to detach from their often chaotic lives, in readiness for the activation of their Spiritual selves through the practices of meditation and mindfulness. The video also provides a “tardiness window.” Out of respect for the group, punctuality is expected of group members. However, if group members are unavoidably detained, they will be permitted to enter the group room late only during the playing of the video. Once the video has finished, the group room door is closed, the tardiness sign is placed on the door (see list of required group materials) and any late members will not be permitted to enter. They will, of course, be encouraged to return, on time, the following week. Repeated lateness should be discussed with the client during individual sessions.

Geoff Bridgford, “Malibu Rain,” *Eversound Expressions*, Eversound (2002) (3.55 minutes)

2. Welcome

At the end of the video the therapist places the “tardiness sign” on the outside of the group room door and welcomes all members to the 3-S group [Note: ground rules for the group, if any, (e.g., time management strategies used, policy regarding eating/drinking during group, etc.) may be reviewed at this time.]

Therapist script:

Welcome to Spirituality Group Therapy.

3. Introductions

Immediately following the welcome, the therapist asks group members to introduce themselves, by standing and saying their first names. [Note: as new group members may be added each week, it is important to have all group members introduce themselves every week.]

Therapist script:

Let’s begin by introducing ourselves. One at a time, please stand and say your first name; then remain standing. [Therapist begins]. Hello, my name is

4. Commitment

Following the introductions, while group members are still standing, they are asked to renew their commitment to their Spiritual path by reading aloud the words on the Commitment Statement Poster [“Today I renew my commitment to my Spiritual path”] that is displayed prominently on the front of the group room (see list of required group materials). Group members are then seated.

Therapist script:

While we are still standing, let’s renew our commitment to our Spiritual path by together reading the Commitment Statement aloud. [Therapist

points to Commitment Poster]. All together ... Today I renew my commitment to my spiritual path.

5. Overview of 3-S development program philosophy: The therapist provides the following overview each week:

Therapist script:

Each of you are here today because you have made a commitment to abandon the addict self that has caused such suffering in your lives, and to develop instead your Spiritual self which will provide you with access to the peace and happiness of your true Spiritual nature. I know I don't have to tell you that although the addict self promises you relief from suffering, it is actually taking you on a path that leads to unending physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering. You all know that once it takes over – once it goes on automatic pilot – your welfare and the welfare of loved ones is of no importance to the addict self: it can easily convince you that absolutely nothing else matters except getting high. The goal of this program is to help you to see the addict self for what it is – a habit pattern of the mind that causes tremendous suffering. You will learn how to interrupt its habitual scripts – those “tapes” that play over and over in your head that urge you to use drugs just one more time, or to engage in other behaviors that can cause harm to you or others. These include sharing drug paraphernalia and having unsafe sex both of which can transmit HIV and other infections that can cause even greater suffering in your lives. In this program you will learn how to recognize the voice of the addict self and to stop it before it can harm you or others. You will do this by seeking refuge and strength in your true Spiritual nature. In this program, we view you as your Spiritual nature. That's the real you, not the addict self. Over the years of addiction, you may have come to doubt that you even have a Spiritual nature, or you may feel that it is now inaccessible to you. At this point, just have faith that it is still there; that it is always there. Your true Spiritual nature may be temporarily hidden from view, but trust that it is there. All you need is a way to access it – a path – that's your Spiritual path. However, in order to develop or strengthen this Spiritual path you will need a Spiritual self that has strong spiritual muscles – [therapist points to the parami poster – see list of required materials] – your Spiritual self's muscles are these 10 spiritual qualities that the addict self has tried to destroy. Together we will help you strengthen those spiritual muscles so that your Spiritual self stays strong and so that access to your Spiritual nature is available to you in every moment of every day. Just like strengthening physical muscles,

strengthening your spiritual muscles takes training and practice. Each week we will practice meditation and do mindfulness exercises together that will help you to stay on your Spiritual path and access your Spiritual nature, but you also need to practice between groups. To get the most out of these group sessions, you will need to make the effort to quiet your mind, to focus your attention, and to listen carefully to what I and the other group members are saying.

6. Agenda: The therapist provides group members with the agenda for the session. Providing an agenda aids in keeping the group focused and facilitates time management.

Therapist script:

Today we are going to begin as we always do by practicing meditation on the in and out breath. We will do this for five minutes. We will then work on some new material for about 30 minutes. After this we will end as we always do with a discussion and review, and our spiritual stretch.

7. Meditation Practice

Each group session provides an opportunity to practice meditation on the in- and out-breath (*anapanasati*). This brief 5-minute practice session is primarily for the purpose of reviewing the technique, for providing rationale for its use as a means by which the automaticity of the addict self is reduced and the spiritual self is accessed, and for encouraging daily practice. Group members are encouraged to practice daily for longer periods (e.g., 30-60 minutes daily).

Meditation on the in- and out-breath (*anapanasati*) with rationale and step-by-step instructions:

Meditation Rationale:

Therapist Script:

- *Our minds have a center or resting place – a peaceful stillness that is available to each of us where we can go to experience our true Spiritual nature. Some people may experience this stillness as their Spirit, or God or their Higher Power. Whatever way you experience it, just know that it is always there within you.*
- *Habit patterns of the mind (like the addict self) cause the mind to wander away from its center – this stillness. In fact, the addict self thrives in the wandering mind. When we don't have mastery of the mind – when we let the mind jump here and there out of control, it can very easily get carried away by the addict self.*

- *We begin each group with meditation practice because it is through meditation that we begin to take back control from the addict self and give it to the Spiritual self.*
- *Meditation trains the mind to return to its center – it provides an **anchor**. Just like an anchor on a boat stops the boat from drifting away on the tide, your meditation anchor prevents your mind from being swept away by emotional storms and strong currents of craving and aversion. In other words, it prevents the addict self from taking control of your mind..*
- *When you practice meditation **every day** you are creating a new habit pattern of the mind so that whenever your mind tries to wander away from its Spiritual home, for example towards addict thoughts, you are quickly able to pull it back before the addict self takes over.*
- *In our meditation practice we focus on the in and out breath because as long as we live, the breath is always there. When you meditate on the breath, it might help you to think of what you are doing as connecting with your Spirit. In fact, the Latin derivation of the word ‘spirit’ is breath. So you can think of your meditation on the breath as your connection with your spirit which is your anchor in all of life’s storms.*

Meditation Instructions:

Therapist script:

When you practice meditation at home, you will need to choose a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. If you wish you may sit crossed legged on a cushion on the floor, you may kneel, or you may sit in a chair with your back straight. You should feel comfortable, but not so comfortable that you fall asleep. While meditating, it is important to remain alert.

Let’s do this now:

[In a slow, calm voice, the therapist narrates the first 1-2 minutes of the 5 minute practice]

- *Remain seated in your chairs. Sit with your back straight, feet flat against the floor, hands on your lap.*
- *Now close your eyes* [Therapist checks that client is comfortable doing this in session. Clients who are uncomfortable closing their eyes are instructed to close their eyes half-way and to focus on an object within their vision. As clients’ comfort levels increase over the course of treatment, clients are encouraged to close their eyes more and more, and to do their daily at-home practice with their eyes closed.]
- *Just breathe normally through your nose.*
- *As you continue breathing normally through your nose, begin to focus your attention on the sensations in and around your nostrils, and on your*

upper lip just below your nostrils, that are caused by the breath passing in and out. You may feel a slight tickle, or a feeling of warmth or coolness, or heaviness or lightness.

- *Just keep your concentration fixed there – **this area is your anchor** – the place you will always return to -- observe the changing sensations you experience in that area as the breath passes over your ‘anchor.’*
- *At the beginning of every breath, commit yourself to noticing everything you can about the sensations caused by just that one breath. Then do the same for the next breath -- committing yourself to your practice, just one breath at a time.*
- *If thoughts arise, gently, but firmly, bring your awareness back to your anchor, and again commit yourself to remaining focused on the in and out breath, one breath at a time.*
- *...Pause briefly (e.g., 5 seconds) to give group members opportunity to experience the breath...*
- *Again, focus all your attention on the changing sensations around your nose and upper lip that are caused by the breath as it goes in and out. Notice whether the breath is long or short? Does the air pass through one or both nostrils? Is the air cool or warm?*
- *If your mind wanders again, just note ‘mind wandered away’, and immediately return it to your anchor. No need to get discouraged, it is the mind’s nature to wander, and your job to train it, so just keep bringing it back. Gently, but firmly bring it back. Just as you would train a young child not to stray away from home, you patiently train your mind to stay close to its Spiritual home.*
- *If you are having difficulty bringing your mind back, you can try counting your breaths, just up to 10, but don’t get caught up in counting. The goal is to stay focused on your ‘anchor’ not on numbers.*

We’ll continue meditating on the in- and out-breath in silence for another 4 minutes. I will let you know when the time is up.

At end of 4 minutes, therapist asks client to open their eyes.

Meditation practice feedback

Therapist ensures that each group member has understood the technique. The following are examples of questions to pose to the group in the event that group members are having difficulty with their practice:

Therapist script:

Open your eyes.

*How was that for you today?
Were you able to keep your attention focused on your anchor?
Could you experience your breath? Where did you feel it?
Did you notice if the air moved through one nostril more than the other; or if the breath was long or short, or if it was warm or cool?
What sensations did you feel (e.g., tickle, tingle, pressure, perspiration, etc.)?*

[Note: If any group member is not experiencing any sensations, expand the area of concentration to include the entire nose as well as the area between the nostrils and the upper lip.]

Therapist script continued:

*Did you experience the monkey mind? It is very persistent, isn't it?
Can you see how it could get you in trouble if you are not aware of where it has wandering off to?
Were you able to bring your attention back to your anchor each time it wandered away?
It takes a lot of practice, doesn't it?*

[Note: As needed, therapist explains that it is not uncommon for individuals to have difficulty returning the mind to the anchor, and that continued effort to bring the mind back to the anchor has lasting benefits even if the mind wanders away again.]

8. Presentation of new material with experiential exercise:

New material is provided experientially each week for the purpose of helping group members to increase mindfulness and to practice activation of the Spiritual self-schema. The therapist uses a technique that requires group members to attend carefully to the instructions as they are being provided. Instructions for all exercises are provided slowly and clearly, just once. After the instructions are given, group members are permitted one question in the event further clarification is necessary. If a group member still does not understand the instructions, he or she may ask another group member to repeat the instructions aloud to the entire group. This technique fosters mindfulness and group cohesion and cooperation.

New material: Increasing Spiritual Self Awareness

Therapist script:

Being on a Spiritual path requires that you abandon those qualities or characteristics that are inconsistent with your Spiritual path and identify those qualities or characteristics that are consistent with your Path. For example, it is not possible for someone with hatred in their heart to travel a Spiritual path of love and compassion. So, before you can take steps along your own Spiritual path, you need to figure out where you are right now in terms of personal characteristics and qualities, where you want to get to, and what obstacles are standing in your way. We will begin today with the

characteristics of the addict self because it has become so automatic over the years and can readily take control without you even being aware of it. It is therefore very important that you can recognize when it arises and relinquish those undesirable characteristics. The next step is to identify those qualities and characteristics of the Spiritual self that you already have and those that you can aspire to that will keep you on your Spiritual path. Once you have done that, you are ready to take steps along your path. Remember, no one can take these steps for you. It is not enough to say, “Okay, God, I’m ready for you to carry me along the Path now.” No, you have to take the steps – you have to enact those qualities in your daily life. No one else can do this for you.

Today’s exercise will help us to become more aware of the qualities and characteristics of the addict self that need to be acknowledged and then abandoned, and those that are consistent with our Spiritual paths and therefore need to be strengthened. It will also help us to get to know each other better, and to become more mindful in our interactions with others, and to realize how much we all have in common. Remember to listen carefully to the instructions.

Exercise #1: Addict Self Awareness [3 minutes):

Instructions to therapist:

On an easel located in front of the group members, therapist displays the following page (prepared in advance of group)

The Addict Self

Instructions: List below the characteristics or qualities of someone who is addicted to drugs, craving drugs, coping drugs, doing drugs, or withdrawing from drugs.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Therapist script:

Instructions to group:

As a group, you will describe the addict self – you will list the characteristics or qualities of someone who is addicted to drugs, craving drugs, coping drugs, doing drugs, and withdrawing from drugs.

One member of the group should volunteer to write the characteristics of the addict self generated by the group on the board. Each group member should contribute at least one (different) characteristic.

You have 3 minutes starting now. We will refer back to this sheet later in the exercise.

At the end of 3 minutes, therapist calls 'time'. Therapists thanks the group and asks the volunteer to return to his/her seat.

Exercise #2 (Part I): Spiritual Self Awareness

Instruction to therapist:

Therapist divides group into pairs (In the event of an odd number, 3-S therapist serves as a member of a pair.)

Therapist designates one member of the pair ‘the speaker’ and the other member of the pair is designated ‘the listener’

Therapist script:

Therapist’s instructions to speakers:

Speakers, when I tell you to begin, you will have two minutes to describe your Spiritual self to your listener.

*You will describe to your partner the kind of person you are when you are on your Spiritual path and the kind of spiritual qualities you want to develop. **BE SPECIFIC. PROVIDE A DETAILED DESCRIPTION.***

Therapist’s instructions to listener:

Listeners, I want you to listen very carefully to your partner’s description of his or her Spiritual self. You may ask your partner questions or to be more specific.

Speakers, you have 2 minutes to describe your Spiritual self to your partner starting now.

At end of 2 minutes, therapist calls ‘Time’.

Exercise #2 (Part II): Spiritual Self Awareness

Therapist script:

Instructions to listeners:

Now each of the listeners, in turn, will introduce your partner’s Spiritual self to the rest of the group. You will say:

‘Group, I’d like to introduce you to (name) ...’s Spiritual self. When .. (name) ... is on his/her spiritual path she/he isand she/he wants to become more’

Therapist allows 1-2 minutes for each listener’s introduction.

Exercise #2 (Part III): Spiritual Self Awareness (2 minutes)

Same as step 2, except the listener is now the speaker and the speaker is now the listener.

Therapist script:

Now switch roles with your partner. The speaker becomes the listener and the listener becomes the speaker.

Therapist's instructions to speakers:

Speakers, when I tell you to begin, you will have two minutes to describe your Spiritual self to your listener.

*You will describe to your partner the kind of person you are when you are on your Spiritual path and the kind of spiritual qualities you want to develop. **BE SPECIFIC. PROVIDE A DETAILED DESCRIPTION.***

Therapist's instructions to listener:

Listeners, I want you to listen very carefully to your partner's description of his or her spiritual self. You may ask your partner questions or to be more specific.

*Speakers, you have 2 minutes to describe your Spiritual self to your partner **starting now.***

Exercise #2 (Part IV): Spiritual Self Awareness (Time approximate: 1-2 minutes per listener)

Same as step 3.

Therapist script:

Instructions to listeners:

Now, as before, each of the listeners, in turn, will introduce your partner's Spiritual self to the rest of the group. You will say:

'Group, I'd like to introduce you to (name)... 's Spiritual self. When .. (name)... is on his/her spiritual path she/he isand she/he wants to become more

Therapist allows 1-2 minutes for each listener's introduction.

Exercise #2 (Part V): Spiritual Self Awareness (3 minutes)

Instructions to therapist:

Therapist tears off the Addict Self description sheet and tapes it to the wall where it can be seen. On the sheet below it is written the following (prepared in advance of group):

Spiritual Self

Instructions: List below the Spiritual characteristics or qualities of individuals in this group.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Therapist script:

Instructions to group members:

The group will now elect one group member to summarize, with assistance from the other group members, the group's Spiritual self qualities and aspirations.

The elected group member will write these Spiritual qualities and Spiritual aspirations on the board.

You have 3 minutes starting now.

At the end of 3 minutes the therapist calls Time and asks the group member to return to his/her seat.

Therapist tapes the sheet of Spiritual self qualities next to the sheet of addict self qualities in readiness for the next segment.

Therapist summarizes the qualities of the spiritual self and contrasts them with the addict self [2 minutes]

Therapist script:

Thank you for sharing your Spiritual selves with the group. Let's take a few moments to experience all the wonderful qualities that are in this room right now, your own and the other group members. Usually, we interact with each other's highly negative addict self qualities that are shown on the list here (therapist points to the group-generated list of addict self qualities), and we often don't even acknowledge each other's spiritual nature. Being on a spiritual path means not only acknowledging your own spiritual qualities, you also being able to appreciate the spiritual qualities of others and the goals that they have on their spiritual path. We saw today how similar our Paths are, didn't we? We may have different religious beliefs, but we all want the same thing. We all want to be happy. We all want to be peaceful. We all want to be free of suffering. None of us want to do harm to ourselves or others. Identifying our spiritual aspirations is an important first step. However, it is not enough to say, for example, that you want to be kind. You need to abandon all unkind thoughts, words, and deeds, and

practice instead having kind thoughts, speaking kind words, and performing kind deeds.

During the week when each of you are faced with decisions that could place your health, or the health of others, at risk, think about these wonderful qualities that you have identified today, and allow your Spiritual self to make the decision to stay on your spiritual path and to think, speak, and act in a manner that is consistent with your Path. You can do it. In any high risk situation, just take a moment to focus on your anchor, and access your Spiritual self – it knows what to do. Don't let the addict self take control. Instead, let these wonderful qualities express themselves. When you do this, you will experience great benefit to yourself, and those around you will benefit, too.

9. Questions and Answer Period:

Following the experiential presentation of new material, the therapist poses questions for group discussion in order to determine how well group members have understood the relevance of the new material to their daily lives, specifically, to the prevention of harm to self and others, and whether group members can identify the spiritual qualities that they demonstrated during the session.

Therapist script:

- A. How can what you learned today help you remain abstinent during the coming week?*
- B. How can what you learned today prevent the transmission of infections such as HIV?*
- C. Which spiritual muscles did you exercise today? [Therapist points to the poster].*

10. Summary:

Therapist provides a brief review of the entire session

Therapist script:

Today,

- *We practiced meditation on the in- and out-breath and mindfulness in order to begin taking back control from the addict self and to strengthen the spiritual self.*
- *We learned that this takes strong Spiritual muscles and that a rigorous training program with daily practice is needed to keep them strong.*
- *We learned that effective communication requires speaking and listening mindfully.*
- *We learned that we have to recognize the negative characteristics of the addict self and replace them with Spiritual qualities.*

- *We learned how similar our Spiritual paths are.*

In a few minutes the group will be over. Until we meet again next week, keep reminding yourself of your true nature. Once you are back into the routine of daily life, it can be easy to lose sight of who you really are. Just remember, you are not your addict self – the addict self is that habit pattern of mind that lies to you over and over again promising you relief from your suffering when in fact it just causes more and more suffering. Don't forget that. Remind yourself of your Spiritual nature and its capacity for love and compassion, and enact it in your daily life. I know you can do it. Just keep practicing your meditation daily and try to be more mindful in everything that you do. When you practice, you are strengthening your spiritual muscles and making your Spiritual self stronger and your addict self weaker. Each step you take on your Spiritual path, no matter how small, takes you closer to your goal. You have taken several steps today. Well done. Let's end as we always do with our Spiritual stretch.

11. The Spiritual Stretch.

The Spiritual Stretch is shown in the Appendix. Its purpose is for group members to renew their commitment to staying on their Spiritual path throughout the day in their thoughts, words, deeds, and perceptions, and to be open to the experience and expression of their Spiritual nature in all their daily activities. Group members stand and, in while in various postures, recite the following the affirmations

Therapist script:

Please stand, and repeat after me:

- 1. Today I take my Spiritual path (hands raised above the head, palms together).*
- 2. May my thoughts reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of forehead, palms together);*
- 3. May my words reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of mouth, palms together);*
- 4. May my emotions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of chest/heart, palms together);*
- 5. May my actions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands in front of abdomen, palms together);*
- 6. May my perceptions reflect my Spiritual nature (hands outstretched to side, fingers pointing towards the ground);*
- 7. May I be open and receptive to my Spiritual nature (hands outstretched to side, fingers pointing towards the sky);*

8. *I am my Spiritual nature (back to starting position with hands raised above the head, palms together).*

12. End.

Therapist script:

It was good to see you all today. See you next week.