



**CASSANDRA VIETEN: INSTITUTE OF NOETIC SCIENCES-IONS**

*The Institute of Noetic Sciences, IONS is a progressive international science-based organisation researching connections between mind-body-spirit-health and more. Cassandra Vieten PhD was IONS president in 2017, and in 2018 published the following blog on IONS website, “Spiritual Competencies in Mental Health Care.”*

*Vieten makes strong links between mental health-consciousness-spirituality, especially concerning emotional, mental and psychological well being. IONS as an organisation provides new levels of scientific understanding towards this new paradigm of mind-body-spirit research. Members, and the general public can have access to published research online through 'IONS Earth Centre Retreat', online webinars and regular e-newsletters, or published blogs.*

*Dr Edgar Mitchell a former USA astronaut, scientist, and member of NASA space team's first moon landing founded IONS. For seekers of Truth or probers I highly recommend subscribing, joining as a member, starting a local IONS community group and accessing the latest resources on science-consciousness, mind, body, spirit, online publications. An extract from Cassandra Vieten's blog on “Spiritual Competencies in Mental Health Care” appears below.*

*—Philip Crouch, Tasmania, 2020*

**CASSANDRA VIETEN: BACKGROUND**

‘An important part of IONS mission is to encourage society’s institutions to pay more attention to the connection between science and spirituality to ease suffering and promote thriving. As part of this, we have been engaged in a collaborative effort to help providers and policy-makers in the field of mental health care recognize the importance of spirituality in most people’s emotional and psychological lives.

The field of mental health (psychology, psychiatry, social work, and counselling) in general has tended to shy away from spiritual or religious aspects of clients lives. William James, widely recognized as the father of the field of psychology, believed that spirituality was an essential aspect of people’s psychological well-being. But the later movements of psychoanalysis and behaviourism rejected religion and spirituality as “patently infantile” and “foreign to reality,”

- (1). with cognitive behaviorist Albert Ellis going so far as to call spirituality “childish dependency...spirit and soul is horseshit of the worst sort.”
- (2). In modern times, there has been a push for the field to become more scientific and evidence-based, with the mistaken assumption that this means exclusion of the spiritual and religious dimensions of people’s lives.



**In fact, hundreds of studies show a consistently positive relationship between spiritual and religious beliefs and practices, and psychological and emotional well-being.**

Because of their training, most mental health providers don't know this. They do not receive training in how to inquire about spirituality or religion as a routine part of taking a client's history, nor in how to harness spiritual and religious resources to help people recover from psychological disorders or difficulty adjusting to life's circumstances.

Spiritual and religious background, beliefs and practices are rarely addressed in mental health assessment and treatment, even though they are strongly related to psychological well-being for most people.

**CASSANDRA VIETEN, IONS: SPIRITUAL COMPETENCIES IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE**

Over the last decade, and with the help of my colleagues, I have led the charge to convene focus groups of mental health providers, conducted two large-scale surveys, published two peer-reviewed papers on the link between spirituality and mental health – **Spiritual and Religious Competencies for Psychologists and Competencies for Psychologists in the Domains of Religion and Spirituality**. We have also co-written a book titled *Spiritual and Religious Competencies in Clinical Practice: Guidelines for Psychologists and Mental Health Professionals*.

We were recently awarded a grant from the Templeton Foundation through Bowling Green University in collaboration with researchers at Baylor University and the University of Maryland to conduct a large-scale survey of mental health care professionals and patients to inform spiritual competency curriculum development.

**This project is designed to catalyze better training in spiritual and religious beliefs and practices among mental health providers.** We will survey a diverse national sample of 1200 mental health care professionals, another sample of 1000 mental health clients, and work together to create an introductory training program for mental health providers.

I presented this work last year at the American Psychological Association meeting in Washington DC, and also presented it at the American Psychiatric Association this last month in New York City.



Through your support, IONS is making a difference in how the field of health care incorporates these important dimensions of people's lives. Our goal at IONS is to help people understand how the inner world is just as important as biology, genetics, and environment in helping people have a sense of belonging, purpose, and well-being.

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- 1) Freud, Sigmund. 1962. Civilization and its discontents. New York: W.W. Norton.
  - 2) Ellis, A. (2001). Albert Ellis on REBT [Video]. Interview by M. Heery. Retrieved January 26, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Edgar Mitchell on the Nature of the Universe:  
*"The universe is a self-organizing, intelligent, creative, trial-and-error learning, participatory, interactive, non-locally interconnected and evolving system"*



**Suggested resources:**

IONS: Spiritual Competencies in Mental Health Care, 05June2018

<https://noetic.org/blog/spiritual-competencies-mental-health-care/>

IONS: <https://noetic.org/>

Freud, Sigmund. 1962. Civilization and its discontents. New York: W.W. Norton.

<https://www.wwnorton.co.uk/books/9780393304510-civilization-and-its-discontents>

Albert Ellis on REBT [Video]. Interview by M. Heery. Retrieved January 26, 2015

<http://www.psychotherapy.net/video/albert-ellis-rebt>

