

Spirituality & Meaning

From Depletion to Depth — When Helpers Lose Their Soul

Resilience Intensives · Personal

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About this program

The Resilience Intensives program is designed specifically for substance use disorder clinicians and staff who face unique challenges in their daily work. This comprehensive program addresses personal resilience, professional career sustainability, intimate relationships, and community connections.

Through evidence-based assessments, reflective exercises, and practical tools, you'll build sustainable practices that honor both the demands of this vital work and your own wellbeing. Choose a module below to begin your journey from depletion to growth.

Getting started

Each module contains comprehensive reading materials, evidence-based self-assessments, and practical exercises. Your progress is automatically saved as you work through the content. Start with Time Management if you feel depleted and overwhelmed.

Part 1 · Reading · The Spiritual Wound: When Helpers Lose Their Soul

The Spiritual Wound: When Helpers Lose Their Soul

There is a particular kind of suffering that belongs almost exclusively to people who spend their professional lives in the territory of the human soul. Substance use disorder clinicians and treatment staff occupy this territory daily — they work at the intersection of despair and hope, brokenness and transformation, death and rebirth. They witness moments of profound grace alongside devastating relapse. They sit with people in the darkest rooms of their existence and are expected to carry a light.

And the occupational hazard that almost no one talks about openly is this: the light goes out. Not the clinical competence — that usually remains intact. Not the professional persona — that is often the last thing to falter. What goes out is something deeper and harder to name: the soul-sustaining connection to meaning, purpose, transcendence, and the felt sense that this work — that life itself — participates in something larger than individual suffering.

We work in a field built on spiritual foundations — the 12-Step tradition explicitly names a "spiritual awakening" as the mechanism of recovery. We encourage clients to develop a relationship with a Higher Power, to practice prayer and meditation, to find meaning in service. And yet many of us have neglected, abandoned, or lost our own spiritual lives in the process of serving others'. We have become tour guides to a country we no longer visit.

This spiritual wound is different from burnout. Burnout is exhaustion of resources. The spiritual wound is exhaustion of meaning — the depletion of the inner source from which purpose, hope, and existential resilience flow. A burned-out clinician is tired. A spiritually wounded clinician is lost.

Reflection Questions

1. Does the phrase "the light goes out" resonate with your own experience? When did you first notice a dimming of the spiritual connection, meaning, or sense of purpose that once sustained your work?

2. Have you experienced the irony of guiding clients through spiritual processes while your own spiritual life has diminished? What does that gap feel like?

3. How would you distinguish between burnout (exhaustion of resources) and spiritual wounding (exhaustion of meaning) in your own experience?

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how alive is your spiritual life at this moment? What would moving that number up require?

5. If your clients could see the state of your inner spiritual life, what would they see? Is that congruent with what you are asking them to build?

Part 2 • Reading • How We Lose It: The Forces That Drain Spiritual Vitality

How We Lose It: The Forces That Drain Spiritual Vitality

Spiritual erosion in helping professionals does not happen in a single dramatic crisis of faith. It happens gradually, through the accumulation of forces that slowly drain the inner reservoirs of meaning, connection, and transcendence.

The first force is vicarious existential trauma. The accumulated weight of suffering slowly erodes the clinician's ability to maintain a narrative that makes sense of it all. The second force is the exhaustion of spiritual resources without replenishment. The third force is the culture of secular professionalism. The fourth force is spiritual betrayal and disillusionment. The fifth force is the sheer weight of holding existential tension.

Reflection Questions

1. Which of the five forces has had the greatest impact on your own spiritual vitality?

2. When was the last time you actively replenished your spiritual reserves? What practices have you abandoned?

3. Has the culture of your workplace supported or suppressed your spiritual life?

4. Have you experienced spiritual betrayal or disillusionment? How has this affected your own relationship with spiritual practice?

5. How do you currently manage the tension between hope and reality in your work?

Part 3 • Reading • The Price You Pay: What Spiritual Depletion Costs You

The Price You Pay: What Spiritual Depletion Costs You

The consequences of spiritual depletion in clinicians are specific, observable, and compounding. They affect clinical effectiveness, personal wellbeing, relationships, organizational culture, and the fundamental sustainability of a career in this field.

The clinical cost: When you lose your own spiritual ground, you lose the most powerful tool in your clinical repertoire — the embodied conviction that transformation is real. The personal cost: Spiritual depletion produces the suffering of purposelessness. The relational cost: You relate to others from obligation rather than genuine presence. The existential cost: Without sustaining meaning, the cumulative exposure to suffering becomes unbearable.

Reflection Questions

1. Which cost resonates most — clinical, personal, relational, or existential? What is your spiritual depletion specifically costing you right now?

2. Have you experienced the "existential vacuum" — the inner emptiness that productivity cannot fill?

3. How has your spiritual state affected your clinical presence?

4. What has your spiritual depletion cost your closest personal relationships?

5. If you projected your current spiritual trajectory forward five years without change, where does it lead?

Part 4 · Reading · The Science of Spirit: What Research Reveals About Spiritual Practice and the Brain

The Science of Spirit: What Research Reveals About Spiritual Practice and the Brain

For clinicians trained in evidence-based practice, the spiritual dimension can feel professionally suspect. This reading presents the substantial body of neuroscience and clinical research demonstrating the measurable impact of spiritual practice on brain function, stress physiology, emotional regulation, and professional resilience.

Research shows that meditation changes brain structure, spiritual practice reduces burnout, and awe experiences produce measurable neurological benefits. Neglecting spiritual practice is not professional rigor — it is professional malpractice of the self.

Reflection Questions

1. Does the neuroscience evidence change how you think about spiritual practice as a component of professional sustainability?

2. When was the last time you experienced genuine awe?

3. If spiritual practice produces measurable brain changes that reduce burnout, what is actually stopping you from engaging in it?

4. How do you reconcile "evidence-based practice" with the spiritual dimensions of recovery work?

5. If you prescribed yourself a "spiritual wellness plan" based purely on research evidence, what would it include?

Part 5 • Reading • Spiritual Renewal: From Depletion to Depth

Spiritual Renewal: From Depletion to Depth

Spiritual renewal is not about finding your way back to the beliefs you had before clinical work eroded them. It is about finding your way forward — into a spirituality that is deep enough, honest enough, and resilient enough to coexist with everything you have witnessed.

The first step is radical honesty about where you are. The second step is giving yourself permission to redefine spirituality on your own terms. The third step is practice — regular, deliberate, non-negotiable spiritual practice. The fourth step is community. The fifth step is integration.

You did not enter this field to become spiritually empty. You entered it because you believed that healing is sacred work. That belief is still there. And it is asking you to come home.

Reflection Questions

1. Can you practice radical honesty right now — writing the unedited truth about where your spiritual life actually is?

2. What definition of spirituality feels authentic to you at this point in your life?

3. What spiritual practice could you commit to as non-negotiable, starting this week?

4. Who in your life could serve as a companion in spiritual renewal?

5. Write a statement of spiritual intention — not belief, but willingness.

Part 6 · Self-Assessment

Clinician Spiritual Vitality Self-Assessment

Rate each statement: 1 (Not at all like me) to 5 (Very much like me)

Your Spiritual Vitality Profile

Spiritual Erosion & Inner Emptiness ____ %

Meaning & Purpose Depletion ____ %

Spiritual Bypass & Inauthenticity ____ %

Active Spiritual Practice & Connection ____ %

Spiritual-Clinical Integration ____ %

Reading Your Scores

For Domains 1-3 (Spiritual Erosion, Meaning Depletion, Spiritual Bypass), higher scores indicate greater spiritual distress. For Domains 4-5 (Active Practice & Connection, Spiritual-Clinical Integration), higher scores indicate strengths. The gap between your depletion scores and your vitality scores reveals the urgency of spiritual renewal.

Spiritual Erosion & Inner Emptiness

I feel spiritually hollow — going through the motions of my work without a sense of deeper purpose or meaning

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I used to feel a connection to something greater than myself but that connection has faded or gone silent

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I find it difficult to access hope, faith, or transcendence even though I teach these concepts to my clients

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The suffering I witness in my work has eroded my belief that there is a benevolent order, purpose, or presence in the universe

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I feel spiritually hypocritical — recommending spiritual practices or Step work to clients while my own spiritual life is neglected

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have abandoned spiritual practices that once sustained me because I am too exhausted, disillusioned, or busy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I sometimes feel that this work has cost me my faith — not necessarily in God, but in the fundamental goodness or purpose of life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I experience a persistent inner emptiness that no amount of clinical success, recognition, or productivity seems to fill

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Meaning & Purpose Depletion

I struggle to articulate why I do this work beyond financial necessity or professional obligation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The original calling or mission that drew me to this field has become distant or unclear

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have difficulty finding meaning in the repetitive nature of clinical work — the same patterns, the same crises, the same outcomes

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I feel disconnected from the sense that my work matters in a larger, more-than-clinical way

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I avoid existential or spiritual questions in my own life even though I encourage clients to explore them

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I sometimes wonder if my work makes any real difference, and this doubt affects my engagement and energy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I lack a personal narrative about why suffering exists that helps me make sense of what I witness daily

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have not reflected on my own sense of purpose, calling, or vocation in a long time

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Spiritual Bypass & Inauthenticity

I use spiritual language or concepts to avoid dealing with painful emotions — my own or my clients'

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I default to platitudes like "everything happens for a reason" rather than sitting with the genuine darkness of suffering

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have adopted a spiritual persona at work that does not match my private inner experience

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I feel pressure to project spiritual confidence or serenity even when I am struggling, doubting, or angry

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I avoid questioning or criticizing spiritual frameworks even when they are clearly not serving a client — or myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I sometimes use my role as a clinician to feel spiritually superior or more evolved than my clients or colleagues

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have confused clinical expertise about spirituality with genuine spiritual practice — knowing about it has replaced living it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am uncomfortable admitting spiritual doubt, confusion, or struggle to colleagues, supervisees, or clients

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Active Spiritual Practice & Connection

I have a regular spiritual practice — however I define it — that I engage in consistently, not just during crises

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I experience moments of genuine awe, wonder, gratitude, or transcendence in my daily life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have a sense of connection to something larger than myself that sustains me through the difficulties of this work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am able to hold the tension between suffering and meaning — acknowledging both without needing to resolve the paradox

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I regularly engage in activities that nourish my soul — time in nature, meditation, prayer, music, contemplation, service

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I have a community of people with whom I can authentically explore spiritual questions and experiences

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am growing spiritually — my understanding, practice, and experience are deepening rather than stagnating

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My spirituality is a genuine source of resilience, not just a coping mechanism or professional tool

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Spiritual-Clinical Integration

I can navigate conversations about spirituality with clients from diverse backgrounds without imposing my own beliefs

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I am comfortable with the spiritual dimensions of 12-Step work and can guide clients through Step work authentically

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I recognize and address spiritual distress in my clients as a legitimate clinical concern

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I understand the difference between healthy spirituality and spiritual bypass — in myself and in my clients

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

My own spiritual life informs and enriches my clinical work without crossing ethical boundaries

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I model spiritual humility — the willingness to sit with mystery, uncertainty, and not-knowing — in my clinical relationships

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I can hold space for clients' anger at God, disillusionment with religion, or existential despair without defensiveness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

I believe that addressing the spiritual dimension of recovery is essential, not optional, and I am equipped to do so

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Assessment Reflection

1. Which domain scored highest in the depletion categories (Spiritual Erosion, Meaning Depletion, Spiritual Bypass)? What does this reveal?

Your reflection...

2. How do your Active Practice and Clinical Integration scores compare to your depletion scores? What does the gap tell you?

Your reflection...

3. Which specific items did you rate as 5? These are your most acute spiritual wounds.

Your reflection...

4. Were any of your answers surprising? Did the assessment reveal something you had not consciously acknowledged?

Your reflection...

5. Based on this assessment, what is the single most important step you need to take to begin restoring your spiritual vitality?

Your reflection...

Part 7 • Exercise 1: Spiritual Autobiography — Your Journey Map

Spiritual Autobiography

Mapping Your Journey — From Origin to Now

Why This Matters

You cannot understand where you are spiritually without understanding where you have been. Your relationship with spirituality has a history — shaped by family, culture, trauma, education, professional experience, and personal seeking.

Childhood (0-12)

What were you taught about spirituality, God, or the meaning of life? Who were the spiritual influences — positive and negative — in your early years?

Key turning point or defining moment from this era:

Describe the moment...

What did you gain or lose spiritually during this era?

Name both gifts and costs...

Adolescence (13-18)

How did your relationship with spirituality shift during adolescence? Did you rebel, deepen, question, or abandon what you were taught?

Key turning point or defining moment from this era:

Describe the moment...

What did you gain or lose spiritually during this era?

Name both gifts and costs...

Early Adulthood (19-29)

What spiritual seeking, exploration, or crisis occurred in your young adult years?

Key turning point or defining moment from this era:

Describe the moment...

What did you gain or lose spiritually during this era?

Name both gifts and costs...

Professional Formation

How did entering the helping profession affect your spirituality?

Key turning point or defining moment from this era:

Describe the moment...

What did you gain or lose spiritually during this era?

Name both gifts and costs...

Current Season

Where are you spiritually right now — honestly? What do you believe, practice, question, and struggle with?

Key turning point or defining moment from this era:

Describe the moment...

What did you gain or lose spiritually during this era?

Name both gifts and costs...

Autobiography Synthesis

1. Looking across your entire spiritual timeline, what is the arc of the story?

Synthesize your spiritual story...

2. What thread connects your earliest spiritual experiences to your current spiritual state?

Synthesize your spiritual story...

3. Where on this timeline did the most damage occur?

Synthesize your spiritual story...

4. What is the next chapter of your spiritual autobiography? If you are the author, what do you want to write?

Synthesize your spiritual story...

Part 8 • Exercise 2: Defining Your Spirituality — Beyond Borrowed Language

Defining Your Spirituality

Beyond Borrowed Language — Finding Your Own Words

The Problem with Borrowed Language

Many clinicians use spiritual language they inherited without examining whether it captures their genuine experience. This exercise helps you find your own language.

Words That Don't Work Anymore

1. What spiritual words or concepts have you used that no longer feel authentic?

Be ruthlessly honest...

2. Why have these words lost their power?

Be ruthlessly honest...

3. Are there spiritual words you actively avoid because of negative associations?

Be ruthlessly honest...

4. Have you ever said something spiritual to a client that you did not genuinely believe?

Be ruthlessly honest...

Finding Your Authentic Language

For each spiritual dimension below, write what is actually true for you — in your own words.

Connection

Do you feel connected to something larger than yourself? If so, what would you call it?

Write in your own words...

Meaning

Do you believe life has inherent meaning or purpose? Where does your sense of meaning come from?

Write in your own words...

Transcendence

Have you experienced moments of going beyond ordinary consciousness?

Write in your own words...

Practice

What activities or rituals connect you to your deepest self or to something sacred?

Write in your own words...

Community

Where do you find genuine spiritual companionship?

Write in your own words...

Suffering

What do you believe about the existence of suffering? Does it have meaning?

Write in your own words...

Death

What do you believe happens after death? What do you hope? What do you fear?

Write in your own words...

Your Spiritual Definition

Write a personal definition of spirituality authentic to your current experience.

For me, spirituality is...

Part 9 · Exercise 3: Spiritual Wound Inventory

Spiritual Wound Inventory

Naming What the Work Has Taken

Why This Matters

The reading draws a clear line: burnout is exhaustion of resources; the spiritual wound is exhaustion of meaning. A burned-out clinician is tired. A spiritually wounded clinician is lost. Wounds like this rarely arrive in one crisis. They accumulate through five forces — the weight of other people's suffering, giving without replenishing, a professional culture that leaves no room for the soul, betrayal and disillusionment, and the long strain of holding hope and reality at once. This inventory names the specific wounds, where they came from, and what they have cost, so that renewal has something real to work with. Go at your own pace. If this stirs up old harm from a faith community or a painful loss, bring it to your own therapist, spiritual director or a trusted support rather than carrying it alone.

Naming the Wound

Write the unedited truth. Nobody else needs to read this.

1. The reading says the light goes out. Where has it gone out for you — faith, hope, meaning, wonder, a sense that the work matters?

Be specific and honest...

2. When did you first notice the dimming, and what did you put it down to at the time?

Be specific and honest...

3. Where have you become a tour guide to a country you no longer visit — guiding clients toward something you no longer practice or feel?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much of what you feel is exhaustion of meaning, rather than simple tiredness?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Five Forces

Rate how much each force has worn on your spiritual life.

1. Vicarious existential trauma — the accumulated suffering you witness wearing down any story that makes sense of it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

2. Exhaustion without replenishment — giving from a well you no longer refill

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

3. The culture of secular professionalism — a workplace where the soul has no place in the conversation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

4. Spiritual betrayal and disillusionment — by a faith community, a leader, a program, or life itself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

5. The weight of holding existential tension — hope and harsh reality, every working day

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

6. Which force has weighed on you most? Describe how it shows up in an ordinary week.

Be specific and honest...

Where the Wounds Came From

1. Which clinical moments left a mark on your sense of meaning — a death, a relapse, a family you could not help, a story you could not un-hear?

Be specific and honest...

2. Has a person, community or institution you trusted spiritually let you down? What happened, and what did it take from you?

Be specific and honest...

3. Which wounds were there before this work, and how has the work pressed on them?

Be specific and honest...

4. What questions about suffering or purpose did you stop asking because they had no answer?

Be specific and honest...

What It Has Cost

The reading names four costs. Write what each one looks like in your life right now.

1. Clinical — has your embodied conviction that transformation is real grown thinner in the room?

Be specific and honest...

2. Personal — where do you feel the emptiness that productivity and recognition do not fill?

Be specific and honest...

3. Relational — where do you show up from obligation rather than presence?

Be specific and honest...

4. Existential — how heavy has the cumulative exposure to suffering become to carry?

Be specific and honest...

5. How urgently does your spiritual life need attention?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

What Is Still Alive

1. What has survived all of this — a value, a practice, a moment of grace, a reason you still show up?

Be specific and honest...

2. Where did you last feel even a flicker of meaning or connection, however small?

Be specific and honest...

3. Which wound do you most want to tend first, and what would tending it look like?

Be specific and honest...

4. Who could you tell about this inventory — a therapist, a spiritual director, a sponsor, a trusted friend?

Be specific and honest...

Part 10 • Exercise 4: Spiritual Practice Audit — What Nourishes Your Soul?

Spiritual Practice Audit

What Nourishes Your Soul?

Practice, Not Theory

The reading's third step of renewal is practice — regular, deliberate, non-negotiable. Not a crisis tool, not something you recommend to clients, but something you actually do. "Spiritual practice" here means whatever reliably connects you to your deepest self or to something larger: prayer, meditation, time outdoors, music, silence, service, sacred reading, a meeting, a run at dawn. This audit takes stock of what you once did, what you do now, what drains you, and what one practice you could protect starting this week.

What You Once Practiced

1. List the practices that once sustained you, at any point in your life.

Be specific and honest...

2. What did those practices give you that nothing else did?

Be specific and honest...

3. How did each one fall away — exhaustion, schedule, disillusionment, a move, a change in belief?

Be specific and honest...

4. Which one do you miss most, and what do you miss about it?

Be specific and honest...

What You Practice Now

Look only at the last thirty days.

1. What did you actually do in the last month that nourished your spirit? Include the small and the unofficial.

Be specific and honest...

2. Which practices do you turn to only when things fall apart?

Be specific and honest...

3. How regular is your spiritual practice right now?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

4. How much are you living a spiritual practice, rather than knowing about one?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Across the Domains

Rate how present each is in your life right now, then note what you would add.

1. Stillness — prayer, meditation, silence, contemplation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

2. Nature and the body — time outdoors, movement, breath, rest

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

3. Beauty and awe — music, art, sky, anything that makes you pause

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

4. Service beyond your job — giving where there is no paycheck or caseload

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

5. Fellowship — people with whom you can explore spiritual questions honestly

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

6. Which domain is thinnest, and what is one way back into it?

Be specific and honest...

What Gets in the Way

1. The reading asks: if practice reduces burnout, what is actually stopping you? Give the honest answer, not the scheduling answer.

Be specific and honest...

2. What drains your spirit that you could reduce — news, scrolling, gossip, overwork, numbing?

Be specific and honest...

3. What story do you tell yourself about why practice is for other people, or for later?

Be specific and honest...

4. What is the smallest version of practice that your real life could hold?

Be specific and honest...

Your Practice Prescription

1. The one practice you will make non-negotiable, starting this week.

Be specific and honest...

2. When, where and for how long — specific enough to put in a calendar.

Be specific and honest...

3. What you will do on the day you miss it, without abandoning it.

Be specific and honest...

4. Who will you tell, or practice alongside?

Be specific and honest...

5. How committed are you to keeping this practice for the next thirty days?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 11 · Exercise 5: Spiritual Bypass Self-Examination

Spiritual Bypass Self-Examination

When Spiritual Language Becomes a Way Around Pain

The Shortcut That Isn't

Spiritual bypass is using spiritual ideas, language or a serene persona to step around pain instead of through it. It can sound like "everything happens for a reason," "just turn it over," or a calm that is really a lid. Clinicians are especially at risk: we know the vocabulary, we are expected to project hope, and knowing about spirituality can quietly replace living it. This examination looks for bypass in how you speak to clients, how you speak to yourself, and the gap between the persona at work and the person at home.

The Phrases You Reach For

1. Which spiritual phrases or platitudes do you reach for when someone is suffering?

Be specific and honest...

2. Recall a time you used one. What feeling — theirs or yours — did it help you skip?

Be specific and honest...

3. What might you have said, or not said, if you had stayed with the darkness a little longer?

Be specific and honest...

4. How often do you default to platitudes rather than sitting with real suffering?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Bypassing Your Own Pain

1. Which of your own feelings do you most often cover with spiritual language — anger, grief, fear, doubt, resentment?

Be specific and honest...

2. Is there anger you have not let yourself feel — at God, at life, at a community, at the field — because it did not seem spiritual?

Be specific and honest...

3. Where have you rushed to acceptance or forgiveness before you had actually felt the hurt?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much do you use spiritual ideas to avoid painful emotions of your own?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Persona and the Person

1. Describe the spiritual self you present at work — the calm, the confidence, the hope.

Be specific and honest...

2. Describe the spiritual self you live in private, honestly.

Be specific and honest...

3. What does keeping that gap cost you — in energy, in honesty, in loneliness?

Be specific and honest...

4. How wide is the gap between your spiritual persona at work and your private experience?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Knowing About vs. Living

1. Where has clinical expertise about spirituality replaced your own practice of it?

Be specific and honest...

2. Have you ever felt more spiritually evolved than a client or colleague? What was that feeling protecting?

Be specific and honest...

3. Is there a spiritual framework you defend even when it is not serving a client, or you? What makes it hard to question?

Be specific and honest...

4. How comfortable are you admitting spiritual doubt or struggle to colleagues?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Going Through Instead of Around

1. Name one feeling you have been bypassing that you are willing to feel this week.

Be specific and honest...

2. Where, and with whom, is it safe enough to feel it?

Be specific and honest...

3. Write one honest thing you could say to a suffering client instead of your usual phrase.

Be specific and honest...

4. A short reminder to yourself for the next time you feel the pull to go around.

Be specific and honest...

Part 12 · Exercise 6: Awe & Transcendence Mapping

Awe & Transcendence Mapping

Finding the Moments That Make You Pause

Why This Matters

The science reading lists awe among the experiences that do measurable good, and asks a simple question: when did you last feel it? Awe is the sense of being in the presence of something vast that stretches your understanding — a night sky, a piece of music, a newborn, a client's recovery against the odds, a moment of unexpected kindness. Transcendence is the felt sense of going beyond your ordinary self. Neither requires a particular belief. This map gathers where awe has found you, where it still could, and how to leave room for it on purpose.

Moments That Stopped You

1. Describe the strongest moment of awe or wonder you can remember. Where were you, and what happened inside you?

Be specific and honest...

2. Have you had a moment of going beyond your ordinary sense of self? Describe it in your own words, without needing to explain it.

Be specific and honest...

3. When did you last feel genuine awe? What was it?

Be specific and honest...

4. How often do you experience awe, wonder or gratitude in daily life right now?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Where Awe Finds You

Rate how reliably each opens you up, then name the specifics.

1. The natural world — sky, water, mountains, weather, living things

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

2. Art, music, words, beauty made by people

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

3. Human goodness — courage, kindness, sacrifice, forgiveness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

4. The sacred — worship, prayer, ritual, sacred places or texts

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

5. Name the specific places, people, songs or practices that open you up most.

Be specific and honest...

Awe in the Work

No client names or identifying details.

1. Recall a moment in this work that felt close to sacred — a turning point, an honest confession, a family reunited.

Be specific and honest...

2. Did you let that moment touch you, or did you move on to the next note? What happens if you let it in now?

Be specific and honest...

3. What has dulled your ability to be moved by recovery you witness?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much are you still moved by the transformations you see?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

What Crowds It Out

1. What in your days leaves no room for awe — pace, screens, cynicism, never looking up?

Be specific and honest...

2. Where has cynicism become a form of self-protection? What is it protecting you from?

Be specific and honest...

3. What source of awe is within ten minutes of where you live or work that you rarely visit?

Be specific and honest...

Making Room on Purpose

1. One deliberate awe practice for the next week — an unhurried walk, a sunrise, a piece of music listened to with full attention.

Be specific and honest...

2. A daily habit of noticing — how will you capture one moment of wonder or gratitude each day?
Be specific and honest...

3. Who could share an awe experience with you?
Be specific and honest...

4. How open are you to being surprised by awe again?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 13 • Exercise 7: The Honest Doubt Inventory

The Honest Doubt Inventory

Doubt as a Place to Stand, Not a Failure

Honoring Doubt

The reading's first step of renewal is radical honesty about where you are. For many clinicians that includes doubt — about God, about meaning, about whether this work makes a difference, about whether suffering has any purpose at all. Doubt is not the opposite of a spiritual life; unexamined certainty often is. This inventory gives your doubts a full hearing, separates the doubts that are wounds from the doubts that are honest questions, and asks what you can still stand on while the questions stay open. You do not need to resolve anything here.

What You Doubt

Write each doubt as plainly as you would say it to someone you trust completely.

1. Doubts about meaning or purpose — in life, in suffering, in your own life.

Be specific and honest...

2. Doubts about God, a Higher Power, or anything larger than ourselves — or about the words people use for it.

Be specific and honest...

3. Doubts about the work — whether it helps, whether recovery lasts, whether you make a difference.

Be specific and honest...

4. Doubts about yourself — whether you are good enough, honest enough, spiritual enough to guide anyone.

Be specific and honest...

Where Each Doubt Came From

1. Which doubts were born from something you witnessed in this work?

Be specific and honest...

2. Which were born from being hurt, let down or excluded by a person or community of faith?

Be specific and honest...

3. Which are honest intellectual questions you have simply never had space to explore?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much do you lack a personal understanding of suffering that helps you make sense of what you witness?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Doubts You Hide

1. Which doubt have you never said out loud to anyone? Say it here.

Be specific and honest...

2. What do you fear would happen if colleagues, clients or your community knew?

Be specific and honest...

3. How do your doubts affect you when you guide someone through spiritual or Step work?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much energy goes into concealing your doubts?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

The Darkest Questions

Sometimes a meaning crisis slides into hopelessness. If you are having thoughts of not wanting to be alive, please do not carry that alone: talk to your own therapist or doctor, or call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, US) any time.

1. What is the hardest question about suffering or meaning that you carry from this work?

Be specific and honest...

2. What helps you sit with that question without needing to answer it?

Be specific and honest...

3. How able are you to hold the tension between suffering and meaning without forcing a resolution?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

What You Can Still Stand On

1. Despite every doubt above, what do you still hold to be true or worth living for?

Be specific and honest...

2. The reading asks for a statement of intention — not belief, but willingness. Write yours.

Be specific and honest...

3. Who could you explore these doubts with honestly — a spiritual director, a mentor, a friend who can hold questions?

Be specific and honest...

4. One question you want to keep open and live with this month.

Be specific and honest...

Part 14 · Exercise 8: Weekly Spiritual Vitality Check-In (7 Days)

Seven-Day Spiritual Vitality Check-In

A Week of Paying Attention to Your Spirit

Why This Matters

Spiritual erosion happens gradually, which is why it hides. For seven days you will take a few minutes to notice your spiritual vitality — what fed it, what drained it, and one small act of practice. Each day has a focus drawn from the module's readings; swap in your own if it fits better. At the end of the week you will look for patterns. The point is attention, not perfection.

Before You Start

1. What do you hope a week of paying attention will show you?

Be specific and honest...

2. When each day will you do the check-in — first thing, the drive home, before bed?

Be specific and honest...

3. On a scale of 1 to 5, how alive is your spiritual life at this moment?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 1 — Honest Starting Point

Write two sentences of unedited truth about where your spirit is today.

1. What did you write, and how did it feel to write it?

Be specific and honest...

2. What fed your spirit today, and what drained it?

Be specific and honest...

3. How spiritually alive did you feel today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 2 — Five Minutes of Stillness

Take five minutes of silence, prayer, meditation or simply sitting without input.

1. What did you do, and what came up in the stillness?

Be specific and honest...

2. What fed your spirit today, and what drained it?

Be specific and honest...

3. How spiritually alive did you feel today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 3 — Look Up

Find one moment of awe or beauty, however small, and give it your full attention.

1. What did you notice, and what happened inside you?

Be specific and honest...

2. What fed your spirit today, and what drained it?

Be specific and honest...

3. How spiritually alive did you feel today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 4 — Meaning in the Work

Name one moment today when the work felt like it mattered. No client details.

1. What was the moment, and why did it matter?

Be specific and honest...

2. What fed your spirit today, and what drained it?

Be specific and honest...

3. How spiritually alive did you feel today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 5 — An Honest Conversation

Share one honest spiritual thought, question or doubt with someone you trust.

1. What did you share, and with whom? How did they respond?

Be specific and honest...

2. What fed your spirit today, and what drained it?

Be specific and honest...

3. How spiritually alive did you feel today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 6 — Service Without a Caseload

Do one act of service that has nothing to do with your job and asks nothing back.

1. What did you do, and how did it feel different from the work?

Be specific and honest...

2. What fed your spirit today, and what drained it?

Be specific and honest...

3. How spiritually alive did you feel today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Day 7 — Rest and Gratitude

Take an unhurried stretch of rest and write down three things you are grateful for.

1. How did you rest, and what are your three?

Be specific and honest...

2. What fed your spirit today, and what drained it?

Be specific and honest...

3. How spiritually alive did you feel today?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Looking Back on the Week

1. Which day felt most alive, and what was different about it?

Be specific and honest...

2. What drained you most often across the week?

Be specific and honest...

3. Which daily practice do you want to keep?

Be specific and honest...

4. What surprised you about your own spirit this week?

Be specific and honest...

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, how alive is your spiritual life now, at the end of the week?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Part 15 · Exercise 9: Clinical-Spiritual Integration Assessment

Clinical-Spiritual Integration Assessment

Bringing Your Whole Self to the Work, Ethically

Why This Matters

The fifth step of renewal is integration: a spiritual life that informs your clinical work without crossing ethical lines, and clinical work that no longer drains your spirit dry. Recovery work is built on spiritual foundations, and clients bring anger at God, disillusionment with religion and existential despair into the room. Integration means you can meet all of that from genuine ground — with humility, without imposing your own beliefs, and without pretending. This assessment looks at where you are integrated, where you are split, and where the boundaries sit.

Meeting Every Client Where They Are

1. How well do you navigate spiritual conversations with clients of any faith, or none, without imposing your own beliefs?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

2. Which spiritual backgrounds or beliefs are hardest for you to meet with openness? Why?

Be specific and honest...

3. How do you support a client who rejects any Higher Power — and how would you like to?

Be specific and honest...

4. Where have your own beliefs, or your own doubts, crept into how you guide clients?

Be specific and honest...

Step Work and Spiritual Distress

1. How authentically can you guide a client through the spiritual dimensions of Step work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

2. How consistently do you recognize and address spiritual distress as a real clinical concern?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

3. Which spiritual topics do you steer away from in session, and what does that avoidance protect?

Be specific and honest...

4. When a client is angry at God or in existential despair, what happens in you? What would help you stay present?

Be specific and honest...

Ethical Boundaries

1. Where is the line for you between your spiritual life informing your work and crossing into it?

Be specific and honest...

2. Describe a time you came close to that line, or crossed it. What did you learn?

Be specific and honest...

3. When spiritual issues come up in a case, who do you consult — supervisor, colleague, chaplain, your own director?

Be specific and honest...

4. How well do you model humility — sitting with mystery and not-knowing — in the clinical room?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Integrated or Split

1. How do you reconcile evidence-based practice with the spiritual dimensions of recovery?

Be specific and honest...

2. Where do you feel most split — spiritual self at home and secular professional at work, or the other way around?

Be specific and honest...

3. What in your workplace culture supports or suppresses the spiritual side of recovery — for clients and for staff?

Be specific and honest...

4. How much does your own spiritual life enrich your clinical work right now?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Your Integration Growth Edge

1. Your greatest strength in clinical-spiritual integration.

Be specific and honest...

2. Your most important growth edge.

Be specific and honest...

3. One thing you will learn, read, or seek supervision on in the next three months.

Be specific and honest...

4. One change you will make in how you show up for spiritual conversations in session.

Be specific and honest...

Part 16 · Exercise 10: Spiritual Renewal Action Plan

Spiritual Renewal Action Plan

From Depletion to Depth

Coming Home

Renewal, the reading says, is not about returning to the beliefs you had before this work wore them down. It is about finding a way forward into a spirituality honest and resilient enough to live alongside everything you have witnessed. The reading offers five steps — radical honesty, permission to redefine, practice, community and integration — and this plan walks through each one and ends with a commitment you can keep. You entered this field believing healing is sacred work. That belief is still there, and it is asking you to come home.

Step 1 — Radical Honesty

Gather what the earlier exercises showed you.

1. In one unedited paragraph: where is your spiritual life right now?

Be specific and honest...

2. The most important thing your wound inventory, practice audit, bypass examination and doubt inventory revealed.

Be specific and honest...

3. How honest have you been with yourself in this module?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Step 2 — Permission to Redefine

1. What borrowed belief, language or expectation are you giving yourself permission to let go of?

Be specific and honest...

2. In one or two sentences, what does spirituality mean on your own terms today? (Exercise 2 can help.)

Be specific and honest...

3. Whose permission have you been waiting for — and can you give it to yourself?

Be specific and honest...

Step 3 — Practice

1. Daily: the small practice you will keep.

Be specific and honest...

2. Weekly: the longer practice — time in nature, a meeting, worship, a long walk, a service commitment.

Be specific and honest...

3. Seasonally: a retreat, a day of silence, a pilgrimage, or a real vacation from the work.

Be specific and honest...

4. How realistic is this plan for the life you actually live?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much

Step 4 — Community

1. Who could be a companion in spiritual renewal — a friend, spiritual director, sponsor, faith or meditation community, peer group?

Be specific and honest...

2. Who will you reach out to first, and what will you say?

Be specific and honest...

3. What makes it hard for you to receive spiritual support rather than give it?

Be specific and honest...

Step 5 — Integration

1. How will your renewed spiritual life show up in your work, within ethical boundaries?

Be specific and honest...

2. A small ritual to mark the move from work to home, so meaning is not left at the office door.

Be specific and honest...

3. The early warning signs that your spirit is emptying again, and what you will do when you see them.

Be specific and honest...

Your Commitment

1. In the next thirty days, you will:

Be specific and honest...

2. Within ninety days, you want your spiritual life to feel like this:

Be specific and honest...

3. Within a year, you want to be this kind of clinician and person:

Be specific and honest...

4. The date you will sit down and review this plan, and with whom.

Be specific and honest...

5. Your statement of spiritual intention — not belief, but willingness.

Be specific and honest...

6. How ready are you to begin?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all · Very much