



# Beneficial Roles the Sacred Can Play in Mental Illness

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# What Beneficial Roles Can the Sacred Play in Mental Illness?

- Sacred: Both spirituality and religion
- Spirituality: One's own search for meaning and purpose (Abernethy et al., 2018)
- Religion: Search for meaning and purpose using a specific set of values or beliefs (Abernethy et al., 2018)

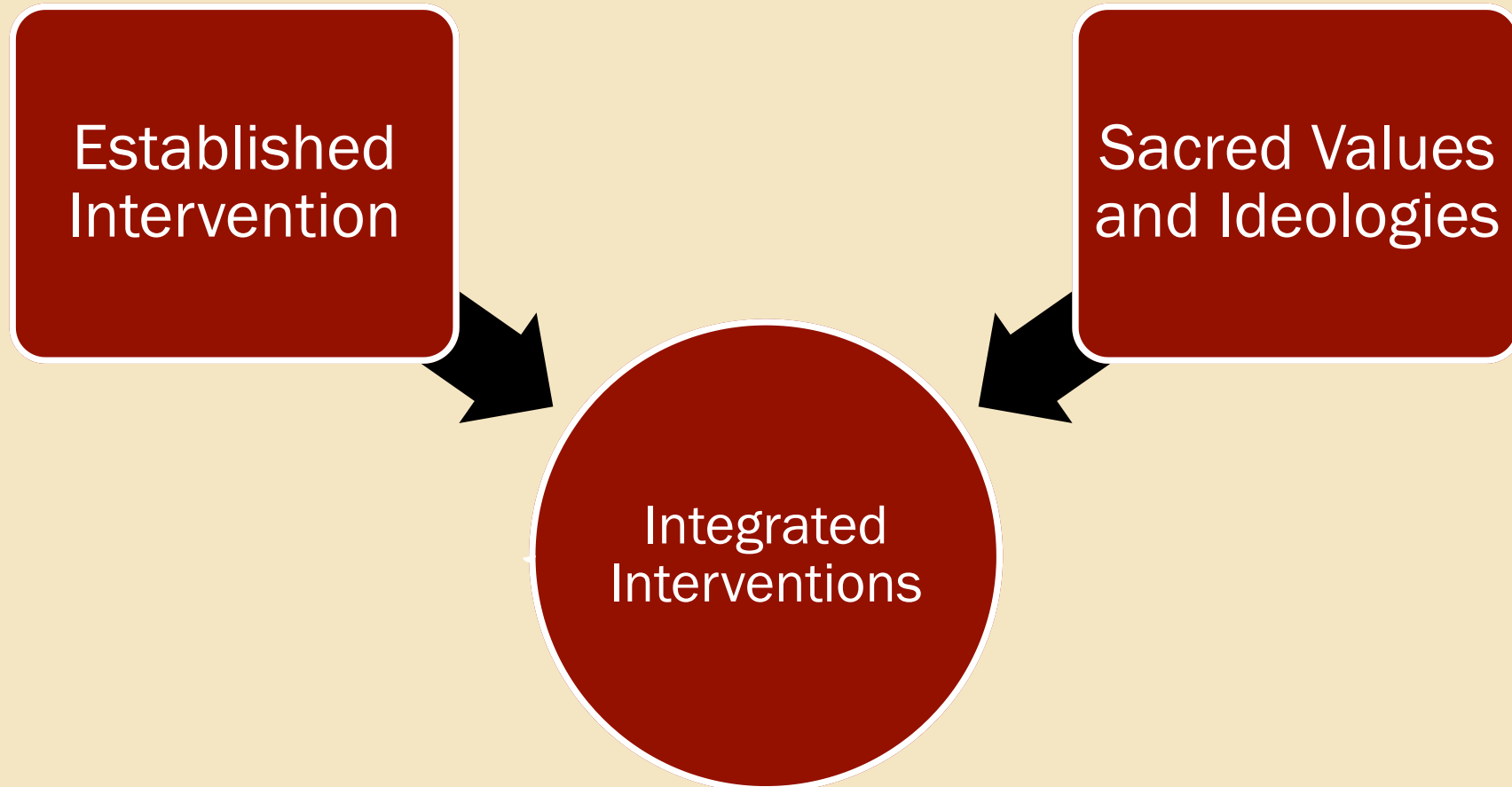
# The Sacred Provides Support to People with a Mental Illness

- People with a mental illness and more of a belief in the sacred:
  - Reported fewer symptoms (Haney & Rollock, 2018)
  - Had better overall cognitive function (e.g. recall and attention) and were more cooperative (Koenig, George, & Titus, 2004)
- Differs by ethnicity and sacred affiliations (Bhui, King, Dein, & O'Connor, 2008; Loewenthal, Cinnirella, Evdoka, & Murphy, 2001)

# Sacred Coping

- Positive sacred coping: Sacred beliefs provide a positive outlook on life and help deal with stress (Mohr et al., 2010)
- Negative sacred coping: Sacred beliefs provide a negative outlook on life and feelings of anger or fear when faced with stress (Mohr et al., 2010)
- People who used positive sacred coping had more of a support system and greater decreases in symptoms of mental illness than those who used negative sacred coping (Rosmarin et al., 2013; Webb, Charbonneau, McCann, & Gayle, 2011)

# Integrating Sacred Beliefs into Established Interventions



# Integrating Sacred Beliefs into Established Interventions – Promising Results

- Integrated intervention groups were compared to non-integrated intervention groups pre and post intervention:
  - Both groups were equally effective at decreasing symptoms (Hawkins, Tan, & Turk, 1999; Rosmarin, Pargament, Piruntinsky, & Mahoney, 2010)
  - Integrated intervention groups were more effective at decreasing symptoms (Koenig, Pearce, Nelson, & Daher, 2015; Koszycki, Bilodeau, Raab-Mayo, & Bradwejn, 2014; Reist Gibbel, Regueiro, & Pargament, 2019)

# A Loss of the Higher Power to Heal?

- Doctors felt it was not appropriate to talk about a patient's sacred beliefs while patients felt it was appropriate (Best, Butow, & Olver, 2015)
- Increases in Atheism, Agnosticism, and no specific sacred affiliation (Pew Research Center, 2019)
- Decreases in Christian affiliations (Pew Research Center, 2019)
- Increases in non-Christian affiliations (Pew Research Center, 2019)

# Recommendations

- Need for more research that is not centered on Caucasian Christians
- Need to become more comfortable discussing the sacred



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