THE CHURCHILL FRAMEWORK

for COACHING & MENTORING

A core competence framework when working with clients' faith/religious/spiritual issues

Sue Iqbal, Alison Cansdale & Dr Heather Churchill
in partnership with **ACC**

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Introduction to this coaching and mentoring version of the Churchill Framework

The Churchill Framework, developed for the Christian counselling profession, is as relevant for Christian coach and mentor practitioners. With some minor adaptations, it serves to support practitioners navigate the complexities of integrating faith and spirituality in their practice. Dr Heather Churchill, the author of the original work, offered her text as the basis for this version. Alison Cansdale and Sue Iqbal have adapted the language and made some minor alterations for this version.



We believe that this framework is invaluable for the Christian coaching and mentoring profession. It provides a useful set of competences to assist practitioners as they seek to work safely, effectively and navigate the complexity of integrating faith, religion and spiritual issues in their work with clients. We are grateful to Heather's generosity in sharing her work with us and hope practitioners find it helpful.

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March 2025

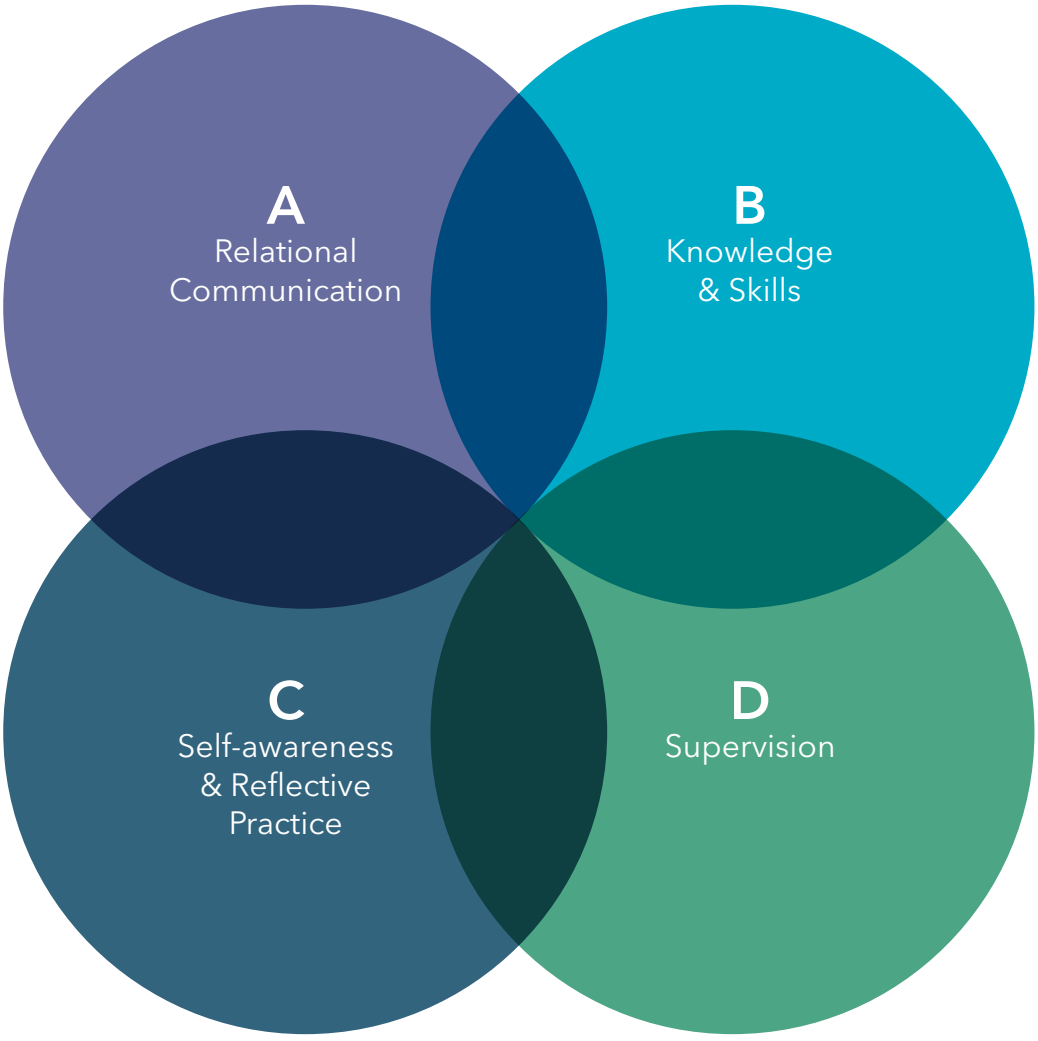


PART 1: a core competence framework when working with clients' religious/spiritual issues in practice

COACHING & MENTORING

THE COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

Four Key Domains



PART 1

A RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION



A1 Recognise a client's religious/spiritual issues

Practitioners are able to recognise any religious/spiritual issues that their client might refer to.

A2 Attend and be empathic to a client's religious/spiritual beliefs/concerns

Practitioners are able to listen and attend to their client when the client expresses their faith/religious/spiritual beliefs and in addition are empathic and non-judgemental about them. This is applicable not only when faith beliefs of the practitioner and the client differ, but when faith beliefs are perceived to match because even then there may be differences in doctrine and practice.

A3 Offer respect, acceptance and be non-judgemental

Practitioners are able to offer respect, acceptance and be non-judgemental to their clients' faith/religious/spiritual beliefs, including those the practitioner may have a personal negative response to.

A4 Be reflective and do not make assumptions

Practitioners have the ability to be reflective and be aware of the danger of making assumptions about the religious/spiritual beliefs their client may or may not hold.

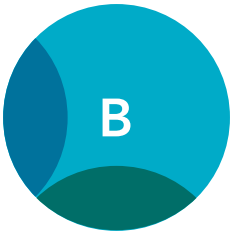
A5 Be aware of ethical requirements

Practitioners have the ability to be reflective and be aware of the danger of making assumptions about the faith/religious/spiritual beliefs their client may or may not hold.

A6 Explore a client's religious/spiritual concerns with curiosity, respect and acceptance

Practitioners are able to explore with curiosity, respect and acceptance their clients' religious/spiritual concerns and difficulties when they are important to the client and/or are relevant to the issues they bring into the session.

B KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS



B1 **Recognise the importance of religion/spirituality for some clients**

Practitioners are aware that a client's faith/religious/spiritual beliefs will impact their view of themselves and the world around them as well as influencing their choices and behaviour. In addition, practitioners are aware that for some clients, faith/religion/spirituality is an important part of their lives and to dismiss this area could be perceived by the client as a denial of their core being and/or identity. In addition, practitioners are also aware that for some clients, faith/religion/spirituality is a source of comfort and support, especially in times of stress.

B2 **Ask open and non-threatening questions in the assessment session**

As part of the contracting process, a practitioner is able to ask open, curious and empathic questions in order to assess whether a client may wish to explore faith/religious/spiritual issues during their coaching and mentoring sessions.
This may include an agreement about the boundaries of any spiritual intervention, such as prayer. (See C4)

B3 **Recognise the importance of not ignoring or undermining a client's religious/spiritual concerns**

Practitioners are aware that when clients raise faith/religious/spiritual concerns, it is important to explore these and not to dismiss, ignore or undermine them in the session.

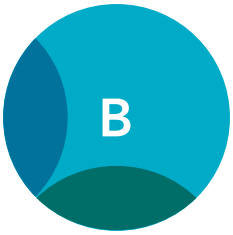
B4 **Recognise a client's right to autonomy at all times**

Practitioners are aware of their clients' right to autonomy at all times. The exploration of faith/religious/spiritual issues should not be determined by the practitioner's own personal agenda, but should be in service of the process.

B5 **Assess the potential link between a client's religious/spiritual issues and their psychological issues**

When faith/religious/spiritual issues are raised in practice, the practitioner is able to assess the possible link between their clients' issues and the faith/religious/spiritual issues that are being disclosed. Similarly, when psychological issues are explored, the practitioner is able to assess the possible link with their clients' faith/religious/spiritual difficulties. Where there is a link, practitioners are aware that discussion and further exploration is likely to be helpful to the client and the process.

B5 continues on the next page.



If the client wants or wishes to explore faith/religious/spiritual issues, but these are not considered salient to their presenting problem and psychological well-being, practitioners have the ability to carefully consider the potential limits of coaching and mentoring and be aware of the possibility of potential role confusion (for example, acting as a religious leader, spiritual director or pastoral carer). Under these circumstances, the practitioner will carefully consider whether it is in the best interests of the client to suggest a referral to an appropriate helper.

B6

Appreciate a client's religious/spiritual values and faith practices

Practitioners have an appreciation of their clients' faith/religious/spiritual values and faith practices and endeavour to understand, as far as is possible, their clients' specific faith worldview.

Practitioners are also able to recognise the possibility they may not understand their clients' faith/religious/spiritual perspectives and if this is the case will seek further information in order to be able to assist their clients, or be open to exploring with their clients whether a client believes a referral to another practitioner would be beneficial.

B7

Have the ability to recognise mental health issues/problems

Practitioners have the ability to recognise and evaluate when coaching and mentoring may not be appropriate and/or unlikely to help and/or the exploration of clients' faith/religious/spiritual issues may be detrimental to their clients' well-being.

Practitioners are also aware that clients can have direct experiences of God which are not necessarily symptoms of a mental health problem, (see B8).

B8

Recognise that clients can have times of faith crises and also times of faith transition

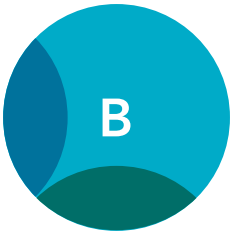
Practitioners are aware that clients can have times of faith crises and also times of faith transition. During these times, it is important practitioners are able to recognise these can be times of growth and development for clients and that it is therefore important to avoid undermining their clients' faith/religious/spiritual beliefs.

B9

Recognise that religious/spiritual beliefs can be a source of difficulty at times

Practitioners recognise that faith/religious/spiritual beliefs can be a source of difficulty at times. Such difficulties may include their clients' relationships with God/the Divine and/or conflicts within the religious community and/or experiencing spiritual abuse.

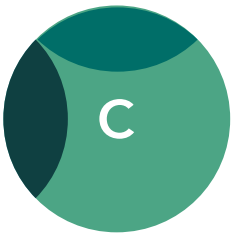
B9 continues on the next page



B9 In these situations, through the coaching process, practitioners are able to sensitively assist their clients to explore their beliefs/issues and facilitate them to objectively consider whether these beliefs/issues might be helpful or unhelpful to their mental health and well-being.eg limiting beliefs, toxic theology etc. In the case of spiritual abuse, if the client wants to explore this in coaching, to assist in helping them navigate their spiritual journey towards healing and wholeness.

B10 **Document the rationale for exploring a client's religious/spiritual issues and/or the use of religious/spiritual interventions**
Practitioners have awareness of the importance of documenting in their clients' notes the rationale for, and outcome of, exploring faith/religious/spiritual issues. This includes documenting when faith/religious/spiritual interventions have been utilised.

C SELF-AWARENESS & REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

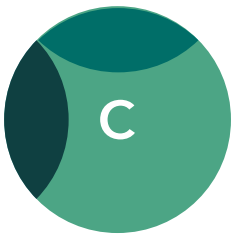


C1 **Recognise issues of difference and diversity and practise in non-discriminatory manner**
Practitioners have the ability to recognise issues of difference and diversity (including when they share the same faith tradition/background) and practise in a non-discriminatory manner and avoid oppressive practice.

C2 **Recognise the potential need for further training**
Practitioners recognise that having a personal faith is not necessarily sufficient on its own to work competently with their clients' religious/spiritual material. Practitioners have the awareness to seek further supervision, research and/or training in order to work proficiently in this area.

C3 **Be aware of the issue surrounding dual relationships**
Practitioners have an understanding and awareness of the tensions that may arise (especially within the religious community and/or pastoral and counselling settings) between different helping roles, e.g. coach, mentor, therapist, pastoral carer, religious leader and/or spiritual director.
Practitioners have the ability to understand the ethical importance of avoiding dual relationships whenever possible.

C3 continues on the next page



When this is not possible, practitioners are able to reflect on and manage the ethical complexities and relational implications of the dual relationship through supervision and ethical practice. This includes having the ability to manage the dual relationship and maintain appropriate boundaries related to their role as a coach or mentor. (This is of particular relevance when the practitioner is a leader or holds a position of authority in a faith community).
In cases where there are dual relationships, practitioners explore these and agree boundaries with the client when contracting, and are able to recontract if the situation changes.

C4

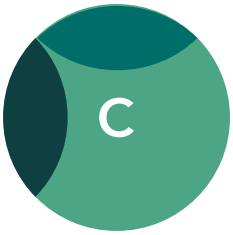
Evaluate the potential harm as well as the benefits of utilising faith/religious/spiritual interventions

Practitioners are aware of the ethical importance of staying within their level of competence when working with religious/spiritual issues. In addition, as with all interventions, practitioners have the ability to carefully and ethically evaluate the risks/potential harm as well as the benefits to a client when making use of religious/spiritual interventions in practice

C5

Be aware of potential power dynamics and the risk of spiritual abuse

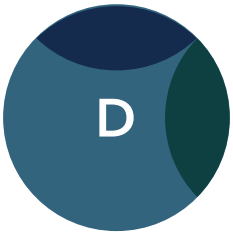
When making use of faith/religious/spiritual interventions such as prayer, practitioners are able to reflect on and be aware of the ongoing power dynamics that can occur, including when the practitioner and the client come from the same faith tradition. In addition, practitioners are able to recognise the risk of spiritual abuse, due to potential power dynamics occurring, when faith/religious/spiritual issues are explored and/or faith/religious/spiritual interventions are utilised.
To minimise the risk of spiritual abuse/power dynamics taking place, practitioners will discuss any proposed faith/religious/spiritual intervention with their client and only proceed if:
a) the client gives specific informed consent, and
b) the intervention is considered by both parties to be of value to the progress of the client.
Practitioners will also work with faith/religious/spiritual interventions in a manner that is consistent and coherent with the work the practitioner is undertaking with the client.
When making use of religious/spiritual interventions such as prayer, practitioners are able to reflect on and be aware of the ongoing power dynamics that can occur, including when the practitioner and the client come from the same faith tradition. As with all other areas of practice, practitioners will discuss any proposed religious/spiritual intervention with their client and only proceed if:
a) the client gives specific informed consent, and
b) the intervention is considered by both parties to be of value



C6 **Develop a self-critical and reflective approach**
Practitioners have developed a self-critical and reflective approach to their practice, both in individual reflection and in supervision. This includes practitioners reflecting on their responses and reactions to their own, as well as their clients', religious/spiritual issues and difficulties and in addition, paying attention to any potential relational dynamics/ transference and counter-transference issues that arise when working in this area.

C7 **Reflect on own history/background/assumptions and values**
Practitioners have an ability to reflect on how their own history, background, assumptions, values and/or religious/spiritual faith or issues might influence and/or impact their response to their client.

D SUPERVISION



D1 **Present all work to supervision**
Therapists are aware of the importance of bringing all of their clinical work to supervision, including how (or whether) they have addressed their clients' faith/religious/spiritual issues. This is important in order to receive feedback on the effectiveness of their work and to integrate their supervisor's suggestions into their clinical practice.

D2 **Reflect with supervisor whether role boundaries have been crossed or blurred**
Practitioners have the ethical sensitivity to the issues surrounding dual roles and are able to reflect on these with their supervisor. For example, if a practitioner, in addition to being a coach or mentor, holds a role such as a religious leader or spiritual director, the practitioner has the ability to reflect on and consider with their supervisor, whether role boundaries have been crossed or blurred and whether it might be beneficial for the practitioner to refer the client to another professional.

D3 **Explore relational dynamics/transference/counter-transference**
Practitioners have the ability to process in supervision any relational, psychological or emotional responses or dynamics that might have occurred in the coaching or mentoring process, including any responses that have occurred as a direct response to their clients' religious/spiritual material.

D4 **Explore impact of work with client on own religious/spiritual beliefs/practice**
Practitioners have the ability to explore in supervision any particular impact the work with their clients' religious/spiritual beliefs might have had on the practitioners' own religious/spiritual beliefs and practice.

FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The client's right to autonomy and self-determination is enshrined in professional coaching and mentoring ethics, (ref eg Global Code of Ethics), as is the requirement of all practitioners to not impose on or try to persuade a client to adopt the practitioner's own religious and spiritual beliefs and moral judgements on clients' undergoing coaching and mentoring work. The following five guiding principles are set out to help guide practitioners in practicing holistically and ethically with clients, recognising that, as evidenced by research, religion and spirituality contribute to the wellbeing of many people.

1 **Exploration**

The coach should be willing to explore their client's wishes regarding whether they want or do not want to explore any faith/religious/spiritual issues and concerns, and/or receive the use of religious/spiritual interventions in coaching. This implies an initial process that gives space for religious and spiritual concerns to be raised implicitly or explicitly according to setting and context.

2 **Agreement (contracting)**

Where a client wishes to explore their religious and/or spiritual issues in coaching at any point, their practitioner should gain explicit informed consent from their client to work in this area, gaining a shared understanding of the client's wishes, and enshrining the client's right to autonomy. This implies a dynamic contracting process that allows the coach and client to re-negotiate the focus of the work, where and when required.

3 **Rationale**

Coaches should be able to articulate a clear rationale regarding the use of religious/spiritual interventions for their client, having given careful consideration as to the potential benefit or harm that the intervention might create. Directive interventions based on the presuppositions and/or religious beliefs and judgements held by the practitioner are to be avoided. Practitioners should be aware of situations where working with a client's religious and spiritual issues are contra-indicated, for example if there are severe emotional, mental and/or psychological presenting issues. Practitioners should have adequate understanding of mental ill health to enable them to respond appropriately to any mental health emergency.

4 Respect for Difference and Diversity

Practitioners should be open to diverse religious beliefs, doctrines, faith and spiritual expressions and understandings even within the same religious denominations, and understand that faith is a dynamic and developmental process.

5 Sensitivity to the Sacred

Practitioners should be mindful of and sensitive to the depth of impact (positive and negative) that addressing issues of meaning and purpose in a religious and spiritual context can have on their client, especially with issues relating to the client's sense of eternal significance and security. Practitioners should therefore reflect on their own religious/spiritual beliefs and journey in order to enhance their self-awareness and their ability to identify any assumptions and/or prejudices that they hold. In addition, practitioners need to be sensitive to the altered relational dynamics that can arise from working with the transpersonal dimension of the coaching relationship, and/or with clients' faith and spirituality in coaching. Practitioners should work with the client and/or their supervisor to explore issues of impact and transference and counter transference that arise especially from working with religious and spiritual issues.

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