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Integration of Faith
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Social Work & Christian Faith

During the course of the education an Advanced Social Work Practitioner is taught to be consciously mindful of their personal biases, assumptions, and stereotypical beliefs. This is important because these can influence the way a Social Worker shapes their practice, assesses and engages with a client. We are to put aside our agenda and focus on meeting the client where they are. Christian faith whether it's stemming from the worker, client, or agency is an area that must be treaded carefully. There are topics and subjects that are sensitive that must be navigated in a methodical and evidence-based way. Topics such as abortion, homosexuality, abuse, domestic violence, faith, politics and racism among others are ones that can pose a challenge to address in session.

As Practitioners we are taught to hold firm to personal values but be open-minded enough that we can consider different perspectives and ideas. Even working at a faith-based agency with practice founded on Biblical Scripture a client's won't always agree with what we teach. We must be careful not to use this foundational teaching as a way to convert, conform, or influence our client's into thinking a certain way. When it comes to the Christian faith people come to understand and accept "truth" on their own. It can be argued that Biblical principles are used to transform people from acknowledging lies they've believed to accepting truths that are in the Word to get to the heart of the matter of issues. Due to controversy on the teachings of the Bible a client and worker's interpretation will differ and can also cause conflict when trying to apply it to for real life application.

Controversial issues can cause conflict in the client worker relationship or internal conflict within the worker themselves. Sometimes controversial topics are brought up unexpectedly during session or we recognize a particular subject area as something the client may possibly be dealing with. When complex situations like this arise how does a worker navigate through it? In these and other instances we must remember to remain professional in facial expression, body language, word choice, and tone of voice. This is important to remember because we don't want to unintentionally upset, judge, or insult the client or even complicate the situation even further. Even though we are not able to predict or completely prevent conflict handling such situations as appropriately as possible in the moment can help ease the conversation. This is demonstrated by keeping our responses to statements and questions posed simple, neutral, and non-imposing. As Practitioners we can take all necessary action to diffuse or placate the client but conflict can still occur.