CHAPTER 1

Introducing Spiritual Struggles

In my security I said I shall never be shaken.
—Psalm 30

The call came in after dinner. One of Nancy's fellow coworkers at the emergency room spoke to her in a strained voice: "You need to get over here right away. Your daughter has been shot." The rest of that night seemed like a series of snapshots to Nancy, burning images seared into her mind: the look of pity in the doctor's eyes as he delivered the news that her daughter had been shot in her car and was in very serious condition; her adult daughter, her precious Lilly, so frail and helpless, lying on a table ensnared in a spider's web of medical lines; and the bleakness of the cold white room where Nancy sat holding her daughter's limp hand until death came.

Before that unforgettable night, Nancy's 52 years had been rich and rewarding, filled with more than she could have hoped for. Her daughter, a surprise after many years of infertility, had been a special blessing. "You're my gift from God," she had often told Lilly. "I had a hand in choosing my career and your father, but you just came to me, like a miracle. And on top of that, you became my best friend."

The days, weeks, and first months after Lilly's death passed in a blur. She knew she had to keep herself going, if not for herself, for the sake of Lilly's two small children who Nancy and her husband would now be raising. One foot in front of the other, one foot in front of the other, she told herself. But it was all an act. She felt as if she had been thrown into the middle of an ocean, totally disoriented, at the mercy of waves, tides, and the weather. She was familiar with the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and she knew she met the criteria: those awful flashbulb-like memories of her daughter in the hospital; her futile efforts to avoid anything that reminded her of the tragedy; and then the tears, nausea, and rage that would sweep over her at the most unexpected times.

As painful as Nancy's psychological symptoms were, it was the feeling of being lost at sea, with nothing solid to grab on to, nothing to ground her, and nowhere to go, that was even more distressing. Adding to her pain were the

questions that rushed in to fill the void left by Lilly, agonizing questions that overwhelmed her every time she thought about the death of her daughter. Nancy had always believed that if she lived a good life, God would spare her from this kind of suffering. Now she found herself repeatedly asking, Why, why had God taken away the special gift he had given her? Nancy couldn't stop thinking about that bullet, that mini guided missile that had honed in on Lilly with such perfect precision. So many hundreds of small events had to come together to create this horror. The police had been unable to find a shooter and had attributed it to "a stray bullet, a random act of violence." It didn't feel random to Nancy, though. Why would the God who had created the miracle of Lilly undo it all through this "antimiracle"? Or perhaps it was the act of evil, demonic forces in the universe that had singled her daughter out for an attack? Nancy had never given much thought to the idea of evil but now she found herself preoccupied by it. At other times, Nancy wondered whether she was being punished for sins she had committed. Had she failed to live the good life she had imagined she was living? Nancy had been far less than perfect, but what could she have done that merited the death penalty for her precious Lilly? And what kind of God would be so cruel? God, she had been taught, would never give her more than she could handle, but this was way more than she could handle. Perhaps the God she had believed in was just a child's fantasy.

When she sought out comfort from her church, she was met with sentiments that only made matters worse. "Remember that God called Lilly to Him for his own purpose," one friend told her. "You have to trust in God's plan," said another. Nancy knew these remarks were well intended, but they only infuriated her. How could God need Lilly more than she and Lilly's young children did? What kind of divine plan was this? This was no plan; that bullet flying through the night was surely a sign of sheer chaos in the universe. Going to church only increased Nancy's sense of unease and alienation. But who could understand? She herself used to offer similar bromides to members of the church who had lost loved ones. Nancy was adrift, cut off from other people, cut off from herself. After much prompting by her husband and friends, Nancy scheduled an appointment with a psychotherapist.

The prospect of working with Nancy would make many practitioners uneasy. After all, Nancy's nightmare-come-to-life raises our own deep-seated fears. Don't we, like Nancy, assume a basic level of security in our world? Don't we also live by some implicit expectation that we can manage to avoid our own fateful calls in the night? Nancy poses a challenge to our own positive illusions. If the unthinkable could happen to her, why couldn't it happen to us as well?

But the uneasiness of working with clients like Nancy could be due to another reason as well. Nancy was experiencing more than PTSD, more than a purely psychological or psychiatric problem. Her trauma was made especially torturous because she had lost the most precious part of her life. Not only the loss itself—but the manner of the loss—had thrown her most basic values,

assumptions, actions, and beliefs into confusion, leaving her bewildered and disoriented, shaken to the core. And in the midst of this upheaval, Nancy found herself grappling with profoundly spiritual questions. In short, she was experiencing spiritual struggles, formidable struggles that were the source of her greatest pain.

While many clinicians might be tempted to try to sidestep Nancy's struggles and focus purely on her psychological symptoms, the reality is that Nancy's psychological problems and spiritual struggles were deeply intertwined. Attempting to disentangle the two would be as futile as trying to pull apart the black and white threads of a gray sweater. And to overlook Nancy's spiritual struggles would, we believe, impede her recovery and opportunity to move from her place of brokenness to greater wholeness. Instead, Nancy's psychological recovery and growth would require attention not only to her symptoms but also to her spiritual tensions and conflicts.

Although Nancy's personal story is unique, she is not alone in her spiritual struggles. As we will see, spiritual struggles are interwoven into many of the problems people bring to therapy. How can practitioners understand these struggles and help individuals like Nancy? Unfortunately, the reality is that most of us are ill equipped to recognize, understand, and assist people facing spiritual struggles—and with good reason: Most mental health professionals have not received any kind of training on how to address religious and spiritual issues, including spiritual struggles, in their graduate education (Saunders, Petrik, & Miller, 2014). And yet, training in spiritual competencies has been shown to enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of practitioners (Pearce, Pargament, Oxhandler, Vieten, & Wong, 2020). As we will see, a significant body of research is emerging on spiritual struggles. And this research, we believe, can be of tremendous value to practitioners looking for guidance in their work. To be of greatest help to clients like Nancy who seek us out in the midst of their suffering, we have to draw on theory, research, and clinical example, integrating a deeper understanding of spirituality in general, and spiritual struggles in particular, into our clinical perspective and practice. This book is designed largely to enhance the ability of practitioners to understand and help people who come to us shaken to the core—however, we hope that the theory and research presented here serves as an up-to-date and useful resource for researchers as well. In this chapter, we begin by considering the defining characteristics of spiritual struggles and why they deserve attention from practitioners and researchers.

WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES?

Though many of us might wish for smooth, predictable lives, our days are punctuated occasionally by change, transition, and turmoil. Struggle is part and parcel of life. Certainly, not all struggles are on the order of Nancy's. We can struggle with less momentous issues—the struggle to get out of bed, the struggle to lose

weight, the struggle to adjust to a new job. Spiritual struggles are among the deepest of all conflicts. They can shake us to the heart of our being. More formally, we define spiritual struggles as experiences of tension, conflict, or strain that center on whatever people view as sacred (Exline, 2013; Pargament, Murray-Swank, Magyar, & Ano, 2005).

As is true of many definitions, this one needs a little unpacking. In particular, what do we mean by "sacred"? The term *sacred* refers not only to traditional understandings of God or higher powers but also to any other aspect of life that is perceived to hold divine-like qualities (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). What first comes to mind for most people when they think about the sacred are images of divinity, be they God, Allah, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, Brahman, Yahweh, or Jehovah. But the sacred is not limited to the divine. People can perceive sacredness within any part of life. In fact, the world's major religious traditions do all they can to encourage their adherents to perceive a presence of the divine in life. Most traditions teach that, because life comes from God, it carries a spark of the divine. To care for ourselves, care for one another, and care for the world then become spiritual imperatives.

Even those who are not traditionally religious or theistic may perceive sacredness in aspects of their lives, by attributing to them divine-like qualities, such as transcendence, ultimacy, and boundlessness. Consider a few examples. A marriage can be seen as a legal contract, but it can be much more. In most wedding ceremonies, the love and commitment binding a couple are described as everlasting and eternal. Work too can take on a deeper meaning. For some, a job is simply a way to put food on the table and pay the bills. For others, though, work is less a job than it is a calling or a vocation, a source of ultimate purpose in life. Music, dance, poetry, and painting can also be perceived with greater depth—through the arts many people feel they experience something of essential and timeless truth. In short, the capacity to see domains of life such as these through a sacred lens, imbuing them with deeper divine-like character and significance, may be the essence of spirituality. And it is not a rarity. Empirical studies have shown that many people do, in fact, instill life, in part or in its entirety, with sacred status (Mahoney, Pargament, & Hernandez, 2013). For instance, in one national survey in the United States (Doehring & Clarke, 2002), 75% of individuals agreed or strongly agreed that they "see God's presence in all of life," and 76% indicated that they "experience something more sacred than simply material existence."

Spiritual struggles involve a process of grappling with questions and concerns that involve whatever is held sacred. The questions and concerns embedded in spiritual struggles are often existential in nature: Who am I? Why am I here? How should I live my life? Is the world safe and trustworthy? Am I alone in the universe? Am I loved? What is true? How can I make sense of and deal with suffering? How do I come to terms with my own frailties and finitude? Of

course, these questions may not be explicitly linked to spiritual matters. Existential writers have produced wonderful books on the topic with little mention of the sacred (e.g., Yalom, 1980). Nevertheless, the fact is that life's most fundamental existential questions often do become fraught with sacred power and significance. And when they do, struggles become spiritual struggles. Questions of meaning become struggles with whether the universe is chaos or cosmos (cf. Karff, 1979), whether the individual has a divine purpose, and whether there are absolute truths to live by. Questions of identity turn into battles over whether the person can live up to his or her spiritual values, whether the individual has a soul, or whether the person is being influenced by demonic or evil forces. Questions about one's place in the world become worries over whether the person can be part of a sacred community in which he or she is truly known and affirmed by others, whether there is a loving God (or a God of any kind), and how best to relate to that God. In their spiritual struggles, people wrestle with not just any set of questions, but questions replete with sacred significance, questions that have to do with the ultimate destinations of life and the pathways to get there.

THE DIVERSITY OF SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES

Because people can struggle with the sacred in any of its expressions, spiritual struggles can take many forms. Spiritual struggles may focus on gods, demons, or other supernatural entities; on relationships with individuals, families, groups, organizations, or institutions; or on one's own internal beliefs, values, feelings, and practices. In short, spiritual struggles may be supernatural, interpersonal, or intrapersonal. They encompass not only struggles with elements of organized religious life, such as religious dogma, religious institutions, God, and the demonic, but struggles with other sacred dimensions of human experience. And different types of spiritual struggles can raise different sets of existential questions. Thus, spiritual struggles can be found in surprising places, including conflicts and tensions around seemingly secular parts of life.

Different kinds of struggle are not mutually exclusive; people may encounter more than one struggle at the same time. For example, Nancy was dealing with anger and confusion about God, questions about the place of evil in the universe, feelings of alienation from her church, doubts about her faith, guilt that she had perhaps failed to live up to her own highest standards, and fear that she would never be able to fill the vacuum created by the loss of the most sacred part of her life. In fact, Nancy's struggles fed into one another like individual logs fueling a larger fire.

Over the last 20 years, researchers have begun to measure spiritual struggles more systematically. A number of scales have been developed that focus on particular kinds and contexts of struggle. For example, the Penn Inventory of Scrupulosity (Abramowitz, Huppert, Cohen, Tolin, & Cahill, 2002) assesses

fears about having committed sins and being punished by God. Piedmont (2012) created the four-item Religious Crisis Scale to assess conflicts and difficulties individuals may experience with God and their religious community. The Inventory of Complicated Spiritual Grief (Burke et al., 2014) measures spiritual struggles with the divine and other people in the context of bereavement. Exline, Yali, and Sanderson (2000) devised a Religious Strain Scale that measures alienation from God, religious rifts with others, and fear/guilt (see Table 1.1).

The most widely used measure of spiritual struggles, the negative subscale of the Brief Religious Coping scale (Brief RCOPE; Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998), consists of seven items (see Table 1.1). As you can see, the majority of the items assess the degree to which people feel punished or abandoned by God and question God's power and love for them. These items can be referenced to the ways people respond to specific life stressors or to their lives and situations more generally. Although the terms *negative religious coping* and *spiritual struggles* are often used interchangeably, we now prefer the term *spiritual*

TABLE 1.1. Scales Related to Spiritual Struggle from Our Research Teams

Items from the Religious Strain Scale (Exline, Yali, & Sanderson, 2000)

Alienation from God

1. Feeling that God is far away
2. Feeling abandoned by God
3. Feeling that your faith is weak
4. Difficulty trusting God
5. Difficulty believing God exists

Fear/guilt

6. Belief that you have committed a sin too big to be forgiven
7. Fear of evil or of the devil
8. Belief that sin has caused your problems
9. Fear of God's punishment

Religious rifts

10. Bad memories of past experiences with religion or religious people
11. Disagreement with a family member or friend about religious issues
12. Disagreement with something that your religion or church teaches
13. Feeling lonely or different from others because of your beliefs

Negative religious coping items from the Brief RCOPE (Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998)

1. Wondered whether God had abandoned me
2. Felt punished by God for my lack of devotion
3. Wondered what I did for God to punish me
4. Questioned God's love for me
5. Wondered whether my church had abandoned me
6. Decided the devil made this happen
7. Questioned the power of God

struggles for two reasons: (1) the coping methods that were previously labeled negative do not always lead to negative outcomes; and (2) by using the language of spiritual struggle, we convey the possibility of growth as people work through these conflicts.

These measures have helped to bring spiritual struggles into sharper focus. However, the scales assess a very limited range of spiritual struggles, and the field has lacked a standard metric for assessing these tensions and conflicts. This makes it difficult to form general conclusions about spiritual struggles across different studies and samples.

Six Types of Spiritual Struggle

In an effort to examine spiritual struggles more comprehensively (though not exhaustively) and establish a more standard measure, our research group (Exline, Pargament, Grubbs, & Yali, 2014) delineated six types of spiritual struggles that tap into the supernatural, intrapsychic, and interpersonal domains:

1. *Divine struggles* take the form of anger or disappointment with God, and feeling punished, abandoned, or unloved by God.
2. *Demonic struggles* involve worries that problems are caused by the devil or evil spirits, and feelings of being attacked or tormented by the devil.
3. *Interpersonal spiritual struggles* reflect conflicts with other people and institutions about sacred issues; anger at organized religion and feeling hurt, mistreated, or offended by others in relation to religious or spiritual issues.
4. *Struggles with doubt* are marked by feeling confused about religious/spiritual beliefs and feeling troubled by doubts or questions about religion/spirituality.
5. *Moral struggles* take the form of tensions and guilt about not living up to one's higher standards and wrestling with attempts to follow moral principles.
6. *Struggles of ultimate meaning* involve questions about whether one's life has a deeper meaning and whether life really matters.

We went on to create a set of items to assess these six types of struggle (Exline, Pargament, Grubbs, & Yali, 2014) and administered these items to two samples of adults and one large sample of college students (see Table 1.2 for items). Through factor analyses, we found solid support for the distinctiveness of these six types of struggle. It is important to add that the six types of spiritual struggle were moderately intercorrelated with one another, meaning that those who experienced one form of struggle were more likely to experience other forms of struggle as well. As a group, spiritual struggles share something

TABLE 1.2. Religious and Spiritual Struggles Dimensions and Items

Divine struggles

1. Felt as though God had let me down
2. Felt angry at God*
3. Felt as though God had abandoned me*
4. Felt as though God was punishing me*
5. Questioned God's love for me

Demonic struggles

6. Felt tormented by the devil or evil spirits
7. Worried that the problems I was facing were the work of the devil or evil spirits*
8. Felt attacked by the devil or by evil spirits*
9. Felt as though the devil (or an evil spirit) was trying to turn me away from what was good

Interpersonal struggles

10. Felt hurt, mistreated, or offended by religious/spiritual people*
11. Felt rejected or misunderstood by religious/spiritual people
12. Felt as though others were looking down on me because of my religious/spiritual beliefs
13. Had conflicts with other people about religious/spiritual matters*
14. Felt angry at organized religion*

Moral struggles

15. Wrestled with attempts to follow my moral principles*
16. Worried that my actions were morally or spiritually wrong
17. Felt torn between what I wanted and what I knew was morally right
18. Felt guilty for not living up to my moral standards*

Struggles of ultimate meaning

19. Questioned whether life really matters*
20. Felt as though my life had no deeper meaning*
21. Questioned whether my life will really make any difference in the world
22. Had concerns about whether there is any ultimate purpose to life or existence

Doubt-related struggles

23. Struggled to figure out what I really believe about religion/spirituality
24. Felt confused about my religious/spiritual beliefs*
25. Felt troubled by doubts or questions about religion or spirituality*
26. Worried about whether my beliefs about religion/spirituality were correct

Note. Based on Exline, Pargament, Grubbs, and Yali (2014).

*Items included in the RSS-14 (Exline, Pargament, Wilt, Grubbs, & Yali, 2021).

in common: the experience of grappling with matters of profound significance. However, each form of struggle is also distinctive in some respects. (We take a closer look at specific spiritual struggles in the second half of this book.)

Other Variations in Spiritual Struggles

Spiritual struggles vary along other dimensions as well. For some people, spiritual struggles are relatively short-lived experiences—the fleeting feeling that an illness might be a divine punishment, or perhaps the momentary unease that

one's own core religious beliefs might simply be fantasies or human inventions. For example, following the death of his wife after only 3 years of marriage, Christian writer C. S. Lewis (1961) described how his painful struggles with his wife's illness came to a head one evening:

> What chokes every prayer and every hope is the memory of all the prayers H. and I offered and all the false hopes we had. . . . Step by step we were "led up the garden path." Time after time, when He seemed most gracious He was really preparing the next torture. (p. 27)

The next morning, however, his intense pain and anger toward God gave way to more reflective thought: "I wrote that last night. It was a yell rather than a thought. Let me try it over again. Is it rational to believe in a bad God? Anyway, in a God so bad as all that? The Cosmic Sadist, the spiteful imbecile?" (p. 27).

Although spiritual struggles can be relatively brief for some, others experience spiritual struggles over a period of years. For example, Dennis, a 50-year-old veteran dealing with depression and anxiety, had been a special operations officer in Vietnam where he had killed a number of civilians and combatants. As a soldier, he had begun to question his actions, but he had kept his doubts to himself. A Roman Catholic, Dennis believed he had committed a set of sins that placed him beyond the realm of forgiveness and condemned him to eternal hell. For almost 25 years, Dennis had been struggling with an unrelenting sense of guilt, a dread of the divine punishment to come when he died, and the belief that none of this could be changed. His spiritual struggles, he believed, were intractable. Studies suggest that many people, like Dennis, face long-lasting spiritual struggles in the wake of serious negative life events. For instance, 40% of parents of children with Down syndrome indicated some level of spiritual struggle 11 years after the birth of their children (Mussett, 2012). Among survivors of hematopoietic cell transplant, 30% reported some degree of spiritual struggles up to 33 years later (King et al., 2018).

While some people may experience only one episode of spiritual struggle over the course of their lives, others encounter spiritual struggles at many points in the lifespan. In his classic but heart-wrenching book *Night,* Elie Wiesel (1972) described the spiritual struggles he encountered as an adolescent with his father in Auschwitz. The cruelty and immensity of suffering he witnessed was of such breathtaking scale that it was difficult to put into words. Yet, Wiesel was able to offer a bitterly powerful lamentation of rage toward the God who could allow such an event to happen:

> Why, but why would I bless him? Every fiber in me rebelled. Because He caused thousands of children to burn in His mass graves? Because He kept six crematoria working day and night, including Sabbath and the Holy Days? . . . How could I say to Him: Blessed be Thou, Almighty, Master of the Universe, who chose us among

> all nations to be tortured day and night, to watch as our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end up in the furnace? (p. 85)

This is a God Wiesel must accuse. This is a God Wiesel (1979) finds guilty, as we see literally enacted in his later play *The Trial of God*. However, although Wiesel must rebel against this God, he cannot abandon Him. In the concentration camp and later, Wiesel continues to pray for himself, his parents, and the world. And he commits himself to a remarkable life of writing, teaching, and political activism in which he bears witness against the atrocities he experienced.

Yet even a man with the tremendous maturity and humanity of Wiesel was not immune to subsequent spiritual struggles in his life. At the age of 82, he suddenly faced the need for life-threatening quintuple bypass surgery. In his account of his surgery and recovery, *Open Heart,* Wiesel (2012) once again grapples with profound spiritual questions and tensions. At one point, he briefly wonders whether his disease is a divine retribution: "Evidently, I have prayed poorly, lacking concentration and fervor; otherwise, why would the Lord, by definition just and merciful, punish me in this way?" (p. 14). Later, reminiscent of his struggles with the Holocaust, Wiesel returns to the questions of "why," now in the context of his illness: "Why this illness? These pains, why did I deserve them . . . for what purpose?" (p. 66). As he had over 70 years earlier, Wiesel leaves the reader with this sentiment: "I confess to having rebelled against the Lord, but I have never repudiated Him" (p. 68). Wiesel's example is instructive. The struggles experienced at one age and the resolutions people reach in response to these struggles do not preclude the possibility of similar or different struggles at a later time in life.

In sum, as we look more closely at spiritual struggles, we see that they are far from uniform. They are multidimensional human experiences that vary in type, duration, intensity, and frequency.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES

In spite of their differences, spiritual struggles share some important characteristics, characteristics that underscore why struggles deserve attention from practitioners and researchers. We suggest that spiritual struggles are often pervasive, painful, and pivotal.

Spiritual Struggles Are Pervasive

Spiritual struggles are an essential part of the personal journeys of the world's religious exemplars. In the Hebrew Bible, "complaint with God co-mingles with communion with God" (Beck, 2007, p. 72). For example, we read about Job's bitterness and bewilderment resulting from the cataclysm that has befallen him.

How, he asks God, can a man of piety and faith suffer the loss of family, home, health, riches, and security? His struggle with "why the righteous suffer" is a question that echoes down through the ages. In the New Testament, we listen to Jesus's final anguished plea and expression of abandonment on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Within Islam, we hear of the struggles of the Prophet Muhammed to establish a new religion against the backdrop of the ruling elite of Mecca and the larger polytheistic culture. Within Buddhism, we read of Siddhartha Gautama's search for enlightenment. Before he becomes the Buddha, Gautama rests beneath a fig tree where he is confronted by the demon Mara who presents him with the greatest worldly temptations: the desires to give in to fear and rage, to lust, and to pride. More recently, we have witnessed the Dalai Lama's struggle to withstand the efforts of the Chinese regime to stifle Buddhist thought and expression in Tibet. Of course, there is more to the great religious traditions than spiritual struggle. But a religious tradition missing these stories of struggles would lack power and drama, and might never reach the level of greatness because these moving accounts of turmoil set the stage for the profoundly inspirational insights and transformations that follow.

Stories of spiritual struggle are not limited to religious scriptures or seminal religious figures. They are easy to find in the great literature of the world as well. *Beowulf,* the oldest long poem in Old English, written at least 1,000 years ago, describes the epic struggle of the King of the Geats, Beowulf, against an array of supernatural beasts, demons, and dragons. *Crime and Punishment,* Dostoevsky's masterpiece, focuses on the moral struggle and spiritual alienation of the protagonist after he commits acts of murder. In *The Bridge of San Luis Rey,* Thornton Wilder raises the question of how to find a larger meaning in the capriciousness of a world in which five innocent people lose their lives in a bridge collapse.

Spiritual struggles and the ways people come to terms with them are also central to the life stories of many well-known people, past and present. Over 400 years ago, Galileo conducted telescopic observations that led him to conclude that the Earth revolved around a stationary Sun. These conclusions also precipitated a decades-long struggle with the Catholic Church, ultimately resulting in his conviction for the heresy of "heliocentrism" and imprisonment in his house for the remainder of his life (Finocchiaro, 1989). Before he developed his theory of evolution, Charles Darwin was, in fact, an orthodox Christian. His observations about the workings of the natural world, as well as personal losses in his life, including the death of his beloved daughter, gradually led him to profound religious doubts and eventually a loss of belief in a personal God (Pleins, 2013). After he had already accumulated wealth and achieved success as a writer, Leo Tolstoy (1983) experienced a life-threatening midlife crisis of ultimate meaning that prompted the question "Is there any meaning in my life that couldn't be destroyed by the death that inevitably awaits me?" (p. 35). Beatles' guitarist

George Harrison faced a similar struggle. The material success, fame, and highs of drugs and sex left him wondering whether that is all there is to life, a question that propelled him toward a more spiritual path in his music and his lifestyle (Greene, 2007).

Struggles repeatedly emerge as a theme in the lives of remarkable people, so much so, that one might wonder whether spiritual struggles are part of the price people pay for greatness. Research, however, suggests that ordinary people face spiritual struggles, too. We sprinkle many personal accounts throughout this book to illustrate this point. Here we present just a few statistics. In a study of over 17,000 adults in the United States, participants were asked how often they had experienced each of the six types of spiritual struggle identified by Exline, Pargament, and Grubbs (2014) over the past few weeks. A sizable minority of the sample reported that they had recently experience some level of the various struggles: divine (32%), demonic (31%), interpersonal (35%), moral (49%), doubt (35%), and ultimate meaning (43%). If we ask about how often people have faced spiritual struggles over the course of their lifetimes, the percentages go even higher. For example, in one national survey of over 1,000 adults, approximately 75% reportedly experienced most of the types of spiritual struggle at some time in their lives (Exline, Pargament, & Grubbs, 2014).

As high as these figures are, they may still be underestimates, for our method of asking people to report whether they have experienced spiritual struggles assumes that people are aware of these tensions and conflicts, and willing to admit them to others (Exline & Grubbs, 2011). Yet as we will see, spiritual struggles may bubble beneath the surface of an individual's consciousness. Moreover, there can be guilt, shame, and stigma associated with the expression of spiritual struggles. In any case, though, it seems clear that spiritual struggles are far from unusual.

Research also shows that spiritual struggles can be found in any particular group, any particular situation, or any particular time. Spiritual struggles are reported by men and women, all ages, all ethnicities, and all religious groups that have been studied so far (e.g., Roman Catholic, Protestant, unspecified Christians, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Spiritual not Religious; see Abu-Raiya, Pargament, Exline, & Agbaria, 2015; Abu-Raiya, Pargament, Weissberger, & Exline, 2016; Mercadante, 2020; Phillips et al., 2009; Saritoprak, Exline, & Stauner, 2016; Tarakeshwar, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2003). Spiritual struggles unfold across diverse life situations, ranging from the experiences of mental and physical illness to natural disaster to marital and family conflict. For example, in one study of family caregivers for loved ones with dementia, spiritual struggles were frequently reported, especially moral struggles (64.5%), ultimate meaning struggles (61.6%), and doubt-related struggles (48.0%; Wong & Pargament, 2019). In another study of older patients with cancer in outpatient palliative care centers, 66% reported some spiritual struggle and 20% indicated

quite a bit or a great deal of struggle (Damen et al., in press). And, it is important to add, spiritual struggles are commonplace among people seeking help for psychological problems. For example, 50% of older adults with depression reported spiritual struggles (Murphy, Fitchett, & Emery-Tiburcio, 2016), as did 47% of outpatients in treatment for a mood disorder (Rosmarin, Malloy, & Forester, 2014). Among college students in campus counseling centers, one-third reported spiritual struggles (Johnson & Hayes, 2003).

It may seem counterintuitive, but even atheists may run into spiritual struggles. Family members, friends, coworkers, or strangers may deride, confront, or challenge atheists about their unbelief. Atheists may also have their own unresolved tensions regarding their religious stance. In one survey of atheist and theist college students and Internet respondents, atheists reported lower levels of spiritual struggles than theists, unsurprisingly (Sedlar et al., 2018). Even so, the atheists still manifested spiritual struggles, particularly interpersonal, moral, and ultimate meaning struggles. Along similar lines, Bradley, Exline, and Uzdavines (2015, 2017) have conducted studies that show that some people who do not believe in God still have negative emotion around the idea of God. These may be, as Rabbi Samuel Karff (1979) put it, "atheists with an ache" (p. 5).

In short, spiritual struggles can be found among people from past and present, from diverse religious and nonreligious groups, from the most ordinary to the most exemplary, from all walks of life, from all cultures, and among those facing the full range of life experience, including individuals with psychological problems. Later, we see that spiritual struggles are more common among some groups and in some situations than others. Taken as a whole, however, the stories and studies we briefly described here all lead to the same strong conclusion: spiritual struggles are a pervasive human experience.

Spiritual Struggles Are Painful

Pain is built into spiritual struggles. Because they can shake and shatter our most fundamental beliefs, values, practices, and relationships, spiritual struggles can yield a great deal of heartache. Consider the true story recounted by Joan Chittister (2003) in her powerful book *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*. Chittister, a teacher and member of a Roman Catholic religious order, was looking forward to pursuing her dream of becoming a writer of fiction. It seemed as though her dream would come true. With the encouragement of her superior and religious order, she had applied and won admission to the prestigious master's of art writing program at Iowa State University. However, just a few weeks before she was to leave for Iowa, she received another call from her superior. Inexplicably, Chittister was told that she had to withdraw from the program. She was, her superior said, not "ready for a Master's degree" (p. 6). Chittister was shaken to the core: "It was life-altering to me. It was cataclysm in the midst of calm. It

was the end of the dream, the loss of the hope. It was forced change at the center of my personal universe. It was impossible" (p. 7). She goes on to describe her spiritual struggle:

> God had become a question mark, not a certainty. Religious life had become cruel, not fulfilling. As I tried to pray, shaken, isolated, and in darkness, I could feel the dust of my soul under my tongue. . . . My body went on living but my soul had died in a darkness so thick I could not see through it. (p. 39)

And her struggle was accompanied by a wave-like pain not unlike that experienced by Nancy:

> Suddenly without warning . . . I would find myself swimming in a sea of black, my arms and legs heavy and lifeless, tears in my eyes. The frustration of it all swept over me like waves on a beach, pulling me under, upending me in deep water, washing me out away from a firm emotional shore. Day after day, the struggle raged. (p. 91)

Chittister refuses to sentimentalize her spiritual struggles. "Struggle," she concludes, "is never done without cost. Real struggle marks us for life" (p. 81).

Throughout this book, we provide examples of the potent links between spiritual struggles and many signs of emotional distress. We will see that spiritual struggles can be embedded in the full range of psychological problems. A study led by researcher Kelly Trevino (formerly McConnell) provides one initial illustration. They surveyed a national sample of people in the United States about their symptoms of psychopathology and spiritual struggles (McConnell, Pargament, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2006). Symptoms of virtually every form of psychopathology—anxiety, phobias, depression, paranoid ideation, obsessions–compulsions, and somatization—were associated with higher levels of spiritual struggles. These findings are consistent with what clinicians often hear in therapy: descriptions of psychological and physical symptoms comingled with statements of spiritual tension, conflict, and confusion. The client dealing with bipolar illness blurts out how she fears God has abandoned her. The abusive father of a young child admits that he feels he is battling with the devil for his child's soul. The depressed older man in treatment for cancer wonders whether his life has had any real purpose and why he should bother to go on. Comments such as these illustrate how physical and mental health problems are often profoundly disturbing to the client's most basic values, beliefs, and assumptions about life. And the spiritual struggles triggered by psychological trauma and pathology may, in turn, exacerbate the client's psychological functioning and undermine progress in treatment (Evans et al., 2018; Magyar-Russell, Pargament, Trevino, & Sherman, 2013; Pomerleau, Pargament, Krause, Ironson, & Hill, 2020). Studies have shown spiritual struggles to be risk factors for poorer treatment outcomes

(Currier, Holland, & Drescher, 2015; Medlock et al., 2017). There are many good reasons, then, to attend to spiritual struggles in clinical practice.

A caveat is needed here. Distressing though they are, spiritual struggles are not signs of weakness, pathology, immaturity, or weak faith. As we saw above, even the greatest of religious figures experienced their periods of spiritual storm and stress, and through their struggles underwent powerful transformations that shaped not only their lives but the course of history. Rather than signs of pathology, spiritual struggles are a natural part of the lifelong search for significance. They are embedded in the human condition. Beneath the pain, turmoil, and conflict of spiritual struggles, we find people striving to find and realize their most important goals and purposes. We elaborate on this important point in the following chapter.

Struggles, spiritual and nonspiritual, play a key role in development and offer the potential for growth. Without them, how could we ever learn new ways of thinking about ourselves, other people, and the world? Without struggle, how could we find our way through seemingly impassable thickets and discover new pathways to our goals or abandon lost destinations for new ones? This notion is, of course, central to many psychological theories, such as the work of Jean Piaget (1954) and Erik Erikson (1998).

Thinking about spiritual struggle in this way forces us to shift out of the mindset of weakness and pathology. Spiritual struggles are certainly painful and can lead to problems, but they are not medical illnesses or even symptoms. For that reason, we selected the term *spiritual struggles* rather than other related terms in the literature—*spiritual injury, spiritual distress, spiritual trauma, spiritual crisis, spiritual emergency, spiritual wounding*—because spiritual struggles connote not only pain but also active possibility and potential. The language of spiritual struggles, we believe, discourages strugglers from seeing themselves as spiritually deficient or wanting (Santiago & Gall, 2016). In fact, spiritual struggles offer the potential for growth, as well as decline. They are, in short, pivotal experiences.

Spiritual Struggles Are Pivotal

Nancy, the woman who had lost her beloved daughter in a shooting, comes to therapy at a pivotal time in her life. Her future holds many possibilities: she could start drinking, medicating herself, or engaging in a series of extramarital affairs in an effort to fill the spiritual void in her life; she could deaden her emotions by placing herself on automatic pilot, going through the day-to-day motions disconnected from any feelings; she could explore dramatic changes and try to turn her life around through a new job, a new career, a new faith, a rejection of religious commitments, a move to another community or country; she could decide that her situation calls for soul-searching and introspection,

and use this time to become more aware of herself and the sources of her suffering. The options are almost endless for Nancy. In short, Nancy is coming to treatment at a pivotal time in her life, a time in which she finds herself at the junction of a multiforked road.

Spiritual struggles are often momentous. Like nuclear energy, they are fraught with power and possibility (Griffith, 2010). They are periods when "destiny is hanging in the balance," as Anton Boisen (1955, p. 116), founder of pastoral counseling, once said. On the one hand, spiritual struggles create the potential for transcendence and growth. Most religious traditions present powerful stories of the greatest of figures—from Moses to Jesus to Muhammed—strengthened, tempered, and transfigured by their spiritual trials. From a religious perspective, struggles are opportunities for spiritual regeneration. Theologian Martin Marty (1983) writes, "Brokenness and wounding do not occur in order to break human dignity but to open the heart so God can act" (p. 123).

On the other hand, even though spiritual struggles can indeed lead to greater wholeness and growth, we will see in later chapters that this outcome is far from guaranteed. Suffering builds character, the old saying goes, but like many old sayings it can be misleading. Suffering can build character, some of the time. Nevertheless, if spiritual struggles have the capacity to "make," they also have the capacity to "break" (cf. Boisen, 1955).

The stark reality is that spiritual struggles lead many people down a dark road to despair and brokenness. Of course, even then, possibilities for recovery, wholeness, and growth remain. However, we review a number of sobering studies that point to the destructive, even deadly consequences of spiritual struggles. Some people, it appears, do not find their way back once they have gone down this painful spiritual path.

What determines the outcomes of these pivotal times: whether spiritual struggles make or break an individual, or perhaps some measure of both? Later, we try to provide some answers to this central question by drawing on research and clinical practice. These answers help us respond, in turn, to the questions of greatest concern for practitioners: How do we work with spiritual strugglers, like Nancy, who have come to us at a fork in the road in their lives? How do we help them bear and survive their struggles? How do we help them find paths to greater wholeness and growth rather than brokenness and decline?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

In her pioneering book *Trauma and Recovery,* Judith Herman (1992/1997) describes how, historically, mental health professionals overlooked the role that trauma played in many of the psychological problems that clients presented in treatment. Although Freud initially believed that his hysterical patients' reports

of abuse, assault, and incest were true, later he shifted to seeing these stories as fabrications and fantasies based on the desires and needs of his patients rather than their real-world experiences. Similarly, Herman notes, for much of the 20th century, practitioners attributed the psychological problems of soldiers who had broken down in combat to moral and character weakness rather than to the actual horrors of the battlefield. Through the screen of television, the Vietnam War brought home the life-shattering reality of combat itself and stimulated the growth of study on trauma leading, eventually, to the term *posttraumatic stress disorder*. The field of mental health had overlooked a dimension of psychological suffering that, with all the wisdom of hindsight, appears rather obvious.

The same might be said of spiritual struggles. Helping professionals have not generally paid close attention to the spiritual dimension of problems that people bring in to treatment, though there are signs of change (e.g., Doehring, 2015; Griffith, 2010; Jones, 2019; Pargament, 2007; Park, Currier, Harris, & Slattery, 2017; Rosmarin, 2018). The point may apply at times even to chaplains and clergy. Herman (1992/1997) cites an apt illustration from the work of Norman (1989), who recounts the following interaction between a soldier and a priest:

> I could not rationalize in my mind how God let good men die. I had gone to several . . . priests. I was sitting there with this one priest and said, "Father, I don't understand this: how does God allow small children to be killed? What is this thing, this war, this bullshit? I got all these friends who are dead. . . . " That priest, he looked me in the eye and said, "I don't know, son, I've never been in war." I said, "I didn't ask you about war, I asked you about God." (p. 55)

The lack of attention to spiritual concerns may come with costs. Balboni and colleagues (2011) conducted a study of patients at the end of life that speaks to this point. Although they did not measure spiritual struggles directly, they found that patients who did not feel their spiritual needs were being met had considerably higher costs of treatment, received less hospice care, spent more time in an intensive care unit (ICU), and experienced more ICU deaths. These effects were especially strong among minorities and people who look to their faith for help in coping.

To avoid the topic of spiritual struggles is to miss an important opportunity for change. Because spiritual struggles represent critical crossroads, conversations about these struggles can have powerful, long-lasting consequences for the trajectory of the individual's life. By broaching spiritual struggles in treatment, then, practitioners may be better able to arrest decline, heal brokenness, and foster wholeness and growth. In fact, efforts to address spiritual struggles explicitly in therapy have yielded promising results in evaluative studies, as we discuss later (Dworsky et al., 2013; Harris et al., 2011).

This book shines a light directly on spiritual struggles. It is designed, in part, for researchers interested in a thorough (though not exhaustive), up-to-date

review of what we have learned from studies of spiritual struggles. It is also designed to help mental health professionals recognize, understand, and address spiritual struggles in treatment. As coauthors of this book, we are aware that the work of practitioners is already very demanding. And we do not want to complicate that work further by adding yet another issue to consider in psychotherapy. Yet, because spiritual struggles are pervasive, painful, and pivotal, they do call for clinical attention.

Many clients themselves would like the chance to discuss spiritual matters, including spiritual struggles, in their mental health care. For example, in a study of 253 patients with psychiatric issues, over half (58%) expressed at least some desire to integrate spirituality into their psychotherapy. Interestingly, a significant percentage of patients (37%) with no religious affiliation also voiced interest in talking about spirituality in treatment (Rosmarin, 2018). Clients experiencing spiritual struggles and strain have shown even greater interest in integrating spirituality in their mental health care (Exline et al., 2000). However, it is important to recognize that some clients may be hesitant to talk about their spiritual struggles because these conflicts may elicit feelings of guilt, shame, or fear of stigmatization (Currier, McDermott, Hawkins, Greer, & Carpenter, 2018; Exline & Grubbs, 2011).

Even though spiritual struggles can be a sensitive topic for clients, we believe the reluctance to broach this topic in practice often comes from clinicians. Several forces have led practitioners to steer clear of spirituality: the history of antireligious bias among several of the founding figures in the field; the tendency of mental health professionals to underestimate the importance of spiritual and religious issues, perhaps as a result of their own lower levels of religiousness (Shafranske & Cummings, 2013); fears about overstepping appropriate professional boundaries; and perhaps most importantly, and, as we noted earlier, the lack of training about spirituality in graduate professional education (Oxhandler, Parrish, Torres, & Achenbaum, 2015; Saunders et al., 2014).

It is time to break the silence. Spirituality is too important to be ignored in treatment. Like any other issue relevant to the client's mental health and goals in therapy, spiritual matters can and should be a part of the therapeutic dialogue. Spiritual struggles in particular deserve far greater attention. More than that, we believe that addressing spiritual struggles is a key element of spiritually competent mental health care (Pearce, Pargament, Oxhandler, Vieten, & Wong, 2019). We will see that, like other sensitive topics, spiritual struggles can be discussed in ways that are respectful of clients and of the professional boundaries and competence of practitioners.

In this chapter, we have stressed that spiritual struggles are a natural part of the human journey. There are no signs of that changing. People today continue to feel the powerful effects of a bewildering array of disorienting biological, social, and cultural forces: pandemics, militarism, terrorism, ethnic hatreds, misogyny,

economic disparity, racial discrimination, weapons proliferation, sociopolitical conflict, ecological destruction, family breakdown, and genocide. In this world in flux, Chittister (2003) notes, "there is no such thing as a noncombatant" (p. 11). We strongly suspect that this bubbling caldron of elements will continue to produce the more immediate experiences—the stray bullet that took the life of Nancy's daughter, Lilly—that throw sacred values and beliefs into confusion and turmoil. All the more reason then for mental health professionals to better understand and help people as they struggle with life's most sacred matters in their search for significance.

THE APPROACH OF THIS BOOK

No group or profession can lay exclusive claim to the topic of spiritual struggles. They are of interest to many people, including clergy, chaplains, theologians, mental health and medical professionals, artists, scientists, scholars, and the general public. Each group has important insights that help illuminate spiritual struggles. This book draws on the wisdom and contributions of people from many traditions, disciplines, and backgrounds. Thus, the substance of this book includes not only findings from research but also stories, anecdotes, symbols, and metaphors; we believe that the subject matter calls for them. Empirical studies provide invaluable, at times, surprising insights into spiritual struggles, and we review this burgeoning literature here. Even so, spiritual struggles cannot be fully captured by the methods of science. Like spirituality more generally, spiritual struggles can be ineffable (cf. James, 1902)—that is, hard or even impossible to put into words. Grasping spiritual struggles sometimes requires nonlinear modes of thought and expression. Spiritual struggles, like spirituality more generally, can often be best understood by asking people to tell the story of their struggle; struggles seem to be encoded by the mind in narrative form. There are other aspects of spiritual struggles that can be best understood from the corner of the eye or, as Emily Dickinson (Johnson, 1960) put it poetically, on the "slant" (p. 1129). Admittedly, ours is an ambitious approach; we run the risk of producing our own hodgepodge of ideas—a discordant composition on spiritual struggles that is just plain hard to listen to.

The harmony and balance in the book, we believe, comes from its psychological orientation. Although the material included consists of many notes, tones, and rhythms, it is all written in the key of psychology, a psychology inclusive of many methods and theories to be sure, but a psychology nevertheless, one defined by values of curiosity, tentativeness, skepticism, clear and critical thinking, and rigor. This psychology is not to be confused with theology. Psychology has nothing to offer when it comes to finding the "ultimate truth," but it can speak in volume to perceptions of truth and their effects on peoples' lives—the footprints left by faith (cf. Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). We hope that

our approach is of value to researchers and practitioners from a variety of fields, backgrounds, and orientations.

What does a psychological approach mean in the context of a book that touches on beliefs about supernatural entities, including a God or gods; the devil, demons, or supernatural evil forces; and spirits of people who have died? It means that we primarily use a *psychological lens* to view these supernaturally focused beliefs and experiences. Using this lens, practitioners would typically frame client reports about supernatural phenomena, adaptive or maladaptive, in terms of normal psychological processes, such as development, temperament, motivation, experience, learning, and socialization, without taking a stance on whether or not the associated supernatural beliefs or perceptions are based in reality. However, it is important to note that a psychological approach is not the only one that people might find valuable in framing such experiences. Depending on their own personal beliefs, prior experiences, and professional practice settings, some professionals might opt to use what we term a *mental illness lens* (framing the belief or experience as a sign of medical or mental illness) or a *supernatural lens* (framing the experience as an actual result of supernatural activity).

Imagine, for example, that a client described an experience that was seen as a personal message from God or a departed loved one. Some professionals, perhaps especially those with materialistic worldviews or who work in psychiatric settings, might readily adopt a mental illness lens: They would want to examine whether this experience might be the result of a hallucination or a delusion, perhaps due to serious mental illness, or a neurological or another medical condition. Others, perhaps especially those with strong beliefs in a personal, relational God or an afterlife, might easily take up a supernatural lens, one that would allow them to seriously consider and perhaps even adopt a supernatural explanation for a client's experiences. Some practitioners might choose to address the supernatural angle directly—perhaps by praying with a client, encouraging the client to actively seek out messages, or consulting with a religious or spiritual professional (e.g., a member of the clergy, a spirit medium, a shaman) who would try to address the issues within a supernatural framework that is shared by the client. A professional might opt to use any or all of these lenses. In this book, we address the role that mental illness can play as one potential cause and consequence of spiritual struggles. Nevertheless, we view supernatural beliefs and experiences primarily through the psychological lens, with its emphasis on normal psychological processes.

As psychologists, we place a priority on trying to recognize the ways our own particular biases and commitments may shape our work, knowingly or unknowingly. This recognition is especially important when we move from research to practice and face the risks of imposing our own beliefs and values on our clients. Readers, too, should be aware of the backgrounds and biases of the authors they are studying. This book is written by one Jewish psychologist

(K.I.P.) and another psychologist—a spiritual seeker from a Christian background (J.J.E.). We joined forces in our research and worked on this book as a result of our common interests, the feeling that we could deepen and enrich our understanding through collaboration, and the fact that we like and respect each other a lot. Though we come from Jewish and Christian traditions, respectively, we share a deep interest in and appreciation of other religious traditions. We have both sought out research collaborations focusing on a diverse range of worldviews, including a wide variety of religious perspectives (Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist), as well as viewpoints that are secular or spiritual without being religious. In addition, K.I.P. has worked extensively with people from diverse religious traditions, including his graduate students and clients. J.J.E. also has a broad, enduring interest in learning more about the world's religious and spiritual traditions, as reflected in Buddhist meditation retreats, yoga practice, and study of the Hebrew and Arabic languages. Nevertheless, we recognize that this book comes out of the perspectives of two psychologists who have lived their lives in a Western context and are familiar first and foremost with the religions of Judaism and Christianity. It also becomes apparent that both of us are eclectic in our orientations to change, and draw on the valuable resources of many therapeutic perspectives to meet the diverse needs of clients. Likewise, we hope that our work on spirituals struggles is helpful to practitioners who come from a wide range of mental health-related disciplines and hold a wide range of therapeutic orientations. Undoubtedly, our own backgrounds and biases have shaped the ideas that run through these pages.

We believe spiritual struggles represent one of the most complex topics in our field. Spiritual struggles do not lend themselves to quick fixes or how-to manuals. Though it might be tempting to try to provide a few simple recommendations for addressing spiritual struggles in mental health care, we do not do so, for simple solutions to complex problems are likely to be ineffective at best and harmful at worst. Instead, we offer readers some ways to think about spiritual struggles in the context of the larger human search for significance, and then some tools to help clinicians recognize spiritual struggles and respond to them in treatment. This book is a work in progress. It reflects the youthful stage of a developing area of study. Yet, we have already learned a great deal about spiritual struggles. We share this body of knowledge with readers as one of the first rather than last words on spiritual struggles. Our hope is that this initial work opens the door to further conversations and study that advance our ability to understand and assist clients who come to us shaken to the core.

This book is divided into two parts. Part I rests on the assumption that before we can help people who are experiencing spiritual struggles, we have to understand them. Each chapter takes up an important question. In this first, introductory chapter we asked, "What are spiritual struggles?" and described why they are a vital part of clinical care and practice. The following chapter

places spirituality and spiritual struggles in the larger context of a theoretical model or way of understanding the search for significance. In Chapter 3, we consider "Where do spiritual struggles come from?" The next two chapters zero in on the question of whether spiritual struggles really matter and, if so, how. Chapter 4 focuses on the dark side of the answer to this question, along with the links between spiritual struggles and distress, disorientation, and decline. Chapter 5 looks at the bright side of the response to this question—namely, the possibility that spiritual struggles may be related to growth. This leads to the critical question of what determines whether spiritual struggles lead to decline or growth. Chapter 6 asks, "What shapes the outcome of spiritual struggles?"

Building on this understanding of spiritual struggles, Part II focuses on the ways that practitioners can respond to the clinical challenges that arise when spiritual struggles enter into psychotherapy. Chapter 7 provides a general framework and set of tools to answer the question "How can practitioners address spiritual struggles?" We then shift the focus from spiritual struggles in general to six specific spiritual struggles and the distinctive challenges they raise and the responses they call for in practice. These six chapters bridge research and practice. The first half of each chapter focuses on practically relevant theory and research, and the second half of each chapter builds on that body of knowledge to consider how practitioners can help people facing divine struggles (Chapter 8), struggles of ultimate meaning (Chapter 9), struggles with doubt (Chapter 10), moral struggles (Chapter 11), demonic struggles (Chapter 12), and interpersonal struggles (Chapter 13). In our final chapter, we offer some brief concluding thoughts.

Let's get started!

Guilford Publications
370 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10001
212-431-9800
800-365-7006
www.guilford.com