

Key texts on God images:

Moriarty, G. L. (2006). Pastoral care of depression. New York: Haworth Pastoral Press. Contains several instruments to assess God Images, including the GISB, exercises with drawings, and others. Clearly writing and a valuable work for psychotherapy with psychospiritual issues.

Moriarty, G.L, and Hoffman, L (Eds, 2007). God image handbook for spiritual counseling and psychotherapy. New York: Routledge. An edited volume representing much of the best work in the field until the mid-2000s.

Rizzuto, Ana-Maria (1979). The birth of the living God. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. The seminal text that launched and shaped inquiry in the field in the last four decades. Takes a problematic anthropocentric view of God.

Readings that emphasize and teach about a more relational spirituality and are psychologically-minded:

De Saint-Laurent, T. (1989). The book of confidence. Hanover, PA: America Needs Fatima. A short but solid explanation of the reasons for confidence in God, and ways to address a lack of confidence.

Ligouri, St. Alphonsus (2005). How to converse with God. Charlotte, NC: TAN Books. Excellent, practical, and clear counsel from this Doctor of the Church on relational prayer with God in this little booklet.

Moynihan, A. (1948). The presence of God. New Hope, KY: New Hope Publications. A remarkable introduction to understanding God's immediacy in our souls; especially useful for those who struggle with distant God images.

Neubert, E. (1947). My ideal: Jesus, Son of Mary. Charlotte, NC: Tan Books. A very short and clear description of Mary's spiritual maternity and the depth of her love for us. It is written in a way that invites relational prayer, and is the best short primer I have found on relating personally with Mary.

Neubert, E. (1959). Life of union with Mary. New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate. A more advanced book on relating with Mary and pursuing union with her, with very clear examples and vignettes.

Phillipe, J. (2002). Searching for and maintaining peace. Staten Island: Society of St. Paul. A gentle and thoughtful discussion of peace of heart and how to achieve it in a relational spirituality.

Saint-Jure, J. B. and Colombiere, C. (1980). Trustful surrender to Divine Providence. Charlotte, NC: Tan Books. This is an excellent, short and clear text to demonstrate God the Father's benevolence and competence in loving His children. Very useful for guiding prayer on God images.

Von Hildebrand, D. (1948). Confidence in God. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press. An excerpted chapter from his book Transformation in Christ which provides a psychologically-minded explanation for the difficulties we have with confidence in God from a phenomenological perspective.

God Image Interview Questions

1. Who is God?
2. Now I'd like to ask you pause for a moment and think back on your relationship with God going back as far as you can in early childhood. As you do this, please tell me whatever words or descriptions come to mind. Just speak your thoughts freely as they come. (Probe for specific incidents to illustrate.)
3. Tell me your earliest memory of God. [standard probes]
4. Tell me how God interacted with you when you were growing up and you were at your best.
5. Tell me how God interacted with you when you were growing up and you were at your worst.
6. What are the three most common emotions you feel toward God?
7. Tell me about any experiences you may have of feeling rejected by God.
8. Have you ever felt angry or frustrated with God? Tell me about it.
9. Have you ever felt disappointed by God? Tell me about it.
10. Have you ever felt frightened by God or anxious about God? Tell me about it.
11. Have you ever felt loved by God? Tell me about it.
12. What are the three most common emotions you sense that Jesus feels toward you?
13. How much do you think God likes you and why? [If they respond about loving, not liking, redirect to liking]
14. Now I'd like to ask you pause for a moment and think back on your relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary going back as far as you can in early childhood. As you do this, please tell me whatever words or descriptions come to mind. Just speak your thoughts freely as they come. (Probe for specific incidents to illustrate.)
15. Tell me your earliest memory of Mary. [standard probes]
16. What are the three most common emotions you feel toward Mary?
17. Tell me about any experiences you may have of feeling rejected by Mary.
18. Have you ever felt angry or frustrated with Mary? Tell me about it.
19. Have you ever felt disappointed by Mary? Tell me about it.
20. Have you ever felt frightened by Mary or anxious about Mary? Tell me about it.
21. Have you ever felt loved by Mary? Tell me about it.
22. What are the three most common emotions you sense that Mary feels toward you?
23. How much do you think Mary likes you and why? [If they respond about loving, not liking, redirect to liking]

Assessment of Spiritual Upbringing and Practices

1. Tell me about your religious upbringing
2. Describe yourself Spiritually / Philosophically
3. Tell me about your spiritual practices / plan of life
4. Tell me about your relationship with Mary
5. Who is your favorite saint and why?
6. Any problems, concerns with the Church?

Cues for projective drawings

On this piece of paper, draw a picture of you and God.

On this piece of paper, draw a picture of how you feel you and God look after you have done something wrong.

On this piece of paper, draw a picture of how you feel you and God look during or after your reconciliation.

Draw a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary

This activity involves a series of steps that involve drawing and writing. Because what you're depicting is personal, I am going to sit over here. When you finish a step, let me know and I will give you the next instruction. There is no right or wrong way to do this, it is about letting yourself look inward and represent on paper what is really going on inside. We're trying to be open to discovering underlying assumptions, negative thoughts, unacknowledged feelings, impulses, desires, and memories, even if they don't seem to make sense. You can use shapes, symbols, pictures, doodles, in different media or colors to represent different internal experiences in the work.

When clients ask clarifying questions throughout the process you can repeat the instructions if needed or give a nondirective response such as "It's up to you" or "Whatever you would like, there is no right or wrong way to do this."

If the person is unsure or in need of encouragement, here are some sample cues: Let your hands go, this is an intuitive process, let's see if we can let go of control for a little while.

1. Provide the drawing board, drawing pencils, eraser, colored pencils, sharpener, gel pens, markers, and pastels.
2. Seek to reduce client anxiety – there is no “wrong” way to do this. Reduce perfectionism. Not a measure of artistic ability. Encourage right-brain process. Guard carefully against any internal negative evaluations – clients feel vulnerable and hypersensitive.
3. Say: **Draw your biggest worry, problem, or concern in the center of the page.**
4. **Draw your biggest spiritual struggle on the top of the paper**
5. **Draw other psychological and spiritual issues on the paper** – use size, shape, color, shading, symbols, anything that helps to identify the issues.
6. Optional Parts focus: Let each of your parts [or your modes of operating, emotions, subpersonalities, etc.] have a say. Without cueing, address some of the things the client has already raised. **Try to represent all of your most important emotions on the page**
7. **Incorporate the relationships that are important in your life** – represent the people and the bonds or connections among the people.
8. **Represent the relationships among the issues – connecting their symbols with dots, lines, double lines, squiggly lines, arrows, in different colors or media, etc. to indicate the relationships among the issues.** Be open insight, to discovery of causal connections.
9. This is very free flowing and individual – encourage the expression and ask (if needed) for the client to suspend critical judgment in order to be freer to express the self and understand the self.
10. **Label the major features in words as well**
11. **Can we look at your representations together?** Review the final work with the client's self and document the meaning as it can be understood at present in a narrative. Use labels on the paper for reference.
12. Ask what the client considers to be the most important issues to start with. Rank the top two or three

This exercise utilizes some concepts from Robbie Adler-Tapia in EMDR and the Art of Psychotherapy with Children and some techniques from Deborah Schoeder's Exploring and Developing the Use of Art-Based Genograms in Family of Origin Therapy.