



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRE MANITOBA

Tips for Wellness | Spirituality

Spirituality is a term that has multiple associations. If you do an on-line internet search on this topic, you are going to find hundreds of articles and many varying perspectives. Some writers will talk about spirituality as a journey to fulfillment, discovery, renewal of a sense of meaning and purpose and an enhanced feeling of connection.

A few will point to religious organizations and faith congregations as the foundations of spirituality. These formal institutions promote belief in God, a particular philosophy and hold a set of doctrines as the path to spirituality. Some people find comfort and belonging in the community as well as fulfillment from the religious teachings.

Others will make a clear distinction between the concept of spirituality versus the practice of religion. They argue that spirituality is not tied to any specific religion but is a natural, innate state of being which everyone has access to. This inner experience of spirituality can be nurtured in nature, in meditation, prayer, through reading, sports and by connecting to people in community. This inner experience of spirituality is not dependent on attendance at church, synagogue, mosque, temple or sacred sites. Spirituality can be strengthened by belonging to organizations, but is not dependent on them, says this perspective.

Unfortunately, some people living with mental health challenges may have been hurt by religious beliefs and practices. As children, they might have been forced to attend services or to accept doctrine that was damaging for them.



As in anything else, recovery from these experiences is possible. Some people will seek out faith communities that are accepting of differences and help them to heal from past trauma. It may mean finding a church, temple, synagogue or mosque that meets spiritual needs in the present. For some it may mean finding a healthy spirituality without becoming involved in an organized religion.

It is important that people can choose what is right for them and not be pressured into practices or beliefs of any kind. The defining characteristic of spirituality is that it is unique to every person. You alone will decide what spirituality means for you. Likewise, you will choose how to express your version of it.

Exploring Spirituality

The following questions can help to evaluate your own spiritual wellness. These are intended to help you to focus inward. There are no right or wrong answers. It may help to answer these questions, first by yourself, and then share your reactions with a trusted support person. Keep in mind that these questions can help you to investigate your thoughts about what spirituality means to you personally. They may also help to guide you toward small steps that will increase a feeling of connection.

1. What gives my life meaning and purpose?
2. What gives me hope?
3. How do I get through tough times? Where do I find comfort?
4. Am I tolerant of other people's views about life issues?
5. Do I make attempts to expand my awareness of different ethnic, racial and religious groups?
6. Do I make time for relaxation in my day?
7. Do my values guide my decisions and actions?



Practice Spiritual Wellness

The search for spiritual connectedness has many routes with a number of practices that can help a person get there. There is no “one size fits all” approach to discovering your unique approach. However, there are practices or techniques which can nurture a sense of relaxation, self-reflection, a feeling of hope and an attitude of well-being.

Your journey to spiritual wellness may involve the following:

- Practicing meditation or yoga
- Praying or taking part in organized religion
- Spending quiet time alone pondering the meaning of life
- Building awareness through journaling
- Serving your community, spending time in nature, appreciating music and the arts

References and Links

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<https://campuspress.yale.edu/perspective/religion-and-mental-health-the-connection-between-faith-and-delusion/>

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OF HOME AND COMFORT** | Becca Anderson, 2017

SPIRITUALITY: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION | Philip Sheldrake, 2012

