

Spirituality and psychiatry

Spirituality is what brings inspiration to the human spirit, providing meaning and purpose in life. Culture and religion often shape it; however everyone has their own unique interpretation. Equally, you don't need to hold a formal religious belief to experience spirituality.

Spiritual practices includes:

- Belonging to a faith or community
- Keeping good relationships with friends and family
- Acts of compassion
- Enjoying and appreciating nature
- Meditation, deep reflection or prayer
- The traditions of yoga, Tai Chi and similar disciplined practices
- Reading books and poetry
- Listening to or playing music
- Appreciating the arts
- Being creative - painting, cookery, gardening etc.

Over 50% of patients hold religious beliefs and the majority describe turning to spirituality in some form. Spirituality becomes more important in times of emotional stress, physical and mental illness, loss and bereavement. People often do not discuss this with their psychiatrist. However, it is important to consider someone's spirituality in order to treat them as a whole, holistically. True recovery

in illness cannot be restored without hope, meaning and purpose in life.

You might like to think about what your own spirituality is, whether you are religious or not. Thinking about these questions occasionally is healthy. It can help your team to support and respect your spirituality if you become unwell – we'd be happy to add anything about your spirituality to your notes.

The sorts of questions you could consider are:

- What is my greatest value?
- When do I experience those "ahh" moments?
- What could I not live without?
- What community supports me?
- Who are the most important people for me?
- Are there books, resources, or people who support my sense of spirit?
- Do I belong to any religious organisations?
- What do I believe I am here for?
- What do I believe will happen to me and my loved ones after this life?
- How does what I believe help me when I am not well? How does it get in the way?

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