

SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING: A SELF-GUIDED CHECK-IN

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The following brief self-assessment may be useful to nurturing spiritual well-being that could be relevant to health.

It's helpful to answer as spontaneously as you are able. You can always think back on your responses later.

1) I have felt a sense of *PEACE* TODAY.

NO YES

This seems true for me: often sometimes rarely

2) I have felt sense of being deeply *ALIVE* TODAY.

NO YES

This seems true for me: often sometimes rarely

3) I have felt sense of *CONNECTION* TODAY.

NO YES

This seems true for me: often sometimes rarely

4) I have felt a sense of *PURPOSE* TODAY.

NO YES

This seems true for me: often sometimes rarely

5) I have felt a sense of *COMFORT* from my spiritual beliefs TODAY.

NO YES

This seems true for me: often sometimes rarely

Do your answers suggest some aspects of your spiritual well-being you'd like to think more about and to nurture in yourself?

If so, see the other side of this sheet.

Thoughts on Nurturing Spiritual Well-Being in Oneself

CONNECTION –

Connection is a broad concept in spiritual well-being. For many it's about the feeling of relationship to other individuals, to a group or community, or to the Divine -- and to feelings of belonging and harmony. The personal and traditional qualities of some forms of prayer (individual and communal) can strengthen our sense of connection. For some, though, it is found in being generally aware of and in touch with all that's around oneself: in social contexts, in nature, or in the experiences of art. When and where do you feel a strong sense of connection? ...because then and there you may discover key vantage points on your spiritual well-being and how to nurture this within yourself.

PURPOSE –

When we feel purpose in ourselves, we are actively living into something meaningful for ourselves. When we have a clear sense of purpose, it may or may not be explicitly of a spiritual nature, but it is usually relevant to our overall spiritual well-being. Even the most immediate and practical sense of purpose relates at some level to our sense of who we are and the meaning of our lives. Some religious traditions talk about purpose in terms of vocations and "callings" -- be they to a line of work, a role in a family, or a commitment to a cause -- while others see purpose largely in the way we may move through a day guided by values and faith. Recognizing and contemplating our sense of purpose can be spiritually affirming and enlightening, and acting intentionally on our sense of purpose can be foundational to our spiritual well-being.

PEACE –

When we think of "peace," we usually associate it with a bodily sensation -- a lack of tension, anxiety, or discomfort. Our bodies can give us feedback and clues to our spiritual state. One way to use this dynamic is to engage in meditation/prayer that turns on awareness of our physical being: concentrating on our breathing, or on our muscles as we relax them. Repetitive and centering prayer as well as music can also be helpful here. However, many people have difficulty aligning their physical state with their spiritual well-being, because of chronic pain or breathing problems; but they may still utilize awareness of their bodies, focusing upon the distressing physical issue in order to "move beyond" it. Meditation/prayer can *revolve* around our physical experience, can *shape* our physical experience, and can also help us *transcend* our physical experience.

ALIVENESS –

A fairly abstract concept, "aliveness" can be a very practical indicator of spiritual well-being. It might be thought of as the sum of our sense of connection, purpose and peace; but it is associated significantly with feelings of joy, love, contentment, empowerment, and awe. It may be an energetic or quiet experience, spiritually. Mindfulness meditation -- in its various forms through different traditions -- may be very useful in deepening our feelings of aliveness. In addition, exercise, play, or creative activity can be relevant. Aliveness isn't necessarily contrary to our awareness of our human limits and mortality, and it may actually be felt in new and profound ways when we contend with our finitude. For some, aliveness is closely associated with a sense of gratitude, and so attention to gratefulness may be a means for developing this aspect of spiritual well-being.

COMFORT FROM ONE'S SPIRITUAL BELIEFS –

The process of exploring the tensions within us about spiritual beliefs can be complicated and even uncomfortable itself. So, many people choose to do this with the help of a professional counselor. However, one possible first step just by yourself may be to keep a journal, or at least a collection of notes about the moments when your beliefs seem particularly comforting or when you wish they would be. It may be especially important to note those circumstances when you used to find comfort in beliefs in the past but might not now. Thinking along these lines might best be envisioned not as problem-solving but as a "journey" into the "big questions" that ground our understanding of the world and of ourselves.