

SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT

A spiritual self-assessment or history is a vital aspect of joining with ones self or with a client, who has an illness, or problems in living. This joining is for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of self and of the challenges of life.

With the increasing global influence of materialism and secularism of the modern era, the idea of the spiritual tended to become vague and secondary in Western influenced and developed healthcare settings. Now in the post-modern era there has been a rise of many different 'spiritualities' with the strong interest in Eastern and African religions in the West and with the resurgence of the occult in all walks of life as a way of dealing with problems. It is therefore vital for caregivers and community workers to be able to enable a spiritual assessment, diagnosis and spiritual assessments with some clarity of understanding.

A. PHILOSOPHY

The life of spirituality faith is *a life of searching*. This search is an 'upward' search, for meaning beyond self and the world. It is an 'inward' search, into the depths of one's soul and 'spirit life.' It is 'outwards' in terms of finding spiritual meaning in a community of faith. Assessing one's journey and one's style, method and steps in travelling the journey is vital to its enjoyment and completion.

B. DEFINITIONS OF TYPES OF SPIRITUALITY

Persons of varying belief systems can use the term spirituality to mean different things.

The definitions of types of spirituality being used in this chapter are as follows: -

1. Personalistic spirituality involves a relationship with an all-loving and omni-potent Supreme Being. This relationship provides a sense of meaning and purpose. It undergirds one's values. It also provides a sense of empowerment in living. One's belief in the Supreme Being includes faith for the provision for needs and protection from danger.

Spirituality often involves a relationship with an all-loving and omni-potent Supreme Being. This relationship provides a sense of meaning and purpose. It undergirds one's values and provides a sense of empowerment in living. One's belief in the Supreme Being includes faith for the provision for needs and protection from danger. Personalistic Spirituality relates to the ability for self, *in relation to the Being*. To transcend one's outer circumstances. Personalistic spirituality can be *monotheistic* or *polytheistic* where there is a belief in several gods. *Spiritualism* is another type of personalistic spirituality where one's dependence is on departed and other spirits.

2. For some persons their spirituality may be more **metaphysical** rather than centering on an "I-thou" or personalistic relationship. For example "God" may mean "a higher consciousness".

3. **Animism** is another non-personalistic spirituality and it involves a belief that objects such as trees, animals and rocks have supernatural powers.

4. There are other varieties such as **Pantheism** which sees divinities in everything.

, *Spiritualism* where one's dependence is on departed and other spirits. In *polytheism* there is a belief in several gods.

The Christian definition of spirituality being referred to in the Bible is the *personalistic* and *monotheistic* type which centers on an "I-thou" relationship with a Supreme Being. It applies where a reference is being made to "God". This spiritual understanding is essentially also consistent with other *monotheistic* religions such as of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

The spiritual assessment tool being shared allows for responses from persons of various faiths.

C. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The main purpose of a spiritual assessment is to achieve better *understanding as to how we structure and experience:*

a) *our beliefs and practice,*

b) *our "I-thou" encounters of self with God*

c) *our problems*

d) *our issues of self-f understanding and of existence or*

e) *our goals for growth*

In secular settings, the ethics of helping professionals does not usually encourage efforts to evangelize in formal or service settings. Nevertheless in a Church based Healing Ministry the caregivers of various disciplines can more readily share the gospel with the willing client or community member. If the health or counselling practitioner shares a common faith with the client, the client often willingly seeks to discuss their spiritual experiences, problems and victories. The care giver may also seek to refer the client to a spiritual leader or chaplain within his or her faith community. Here the main goal of the

practitioner would be to listen, aid self-help in growth as well as to offer support and relevant information.

In the context of pastoral counselling, prayer and spiritual direction can be offered at the request of the client. *It is essential to recognize that the role of the counselling or health professional is not to proselytize or impose any religious ritual – or anything else for that matter against the client's will.*

The assessment is a tool for self-help in one's searching and discovering Divine resources for our healing and problem solving. Where a professional is involved the tool is shared for this purpose. of aiding a client in this process. It enables a 'spiritual diagnosis' and more effective interventions for self-help.

D. THE FORMAT

The questions in this format are intentionally open-ended. Thus they allow for a wide variety of responses. In this way, one will be helped oneself to achieve or the client. In reflection and exploration to as deep a level as one wishes and as time allows. This approach also allows for ventilation of feelings and as well as for follow up questions.

The responses sought are also geared more towards a greater awareness of self-understanding, beliefs, practice, experience and feelings rather than for eliciting intellectual opinions and debate. Thus how we word our questions is critical. *We best grow when we can freely tell our stories as well as share our philosophies.*

E. FACTORS AFFECTING SPIRITUALITY

Our childhood socialization, current stresses, as well as ones personality and illnesses often colour our current state of spirituality. Thus a spiritual history can assist this understanding. It can also enable us to set goals to promote a more positive relationship between these factors and one's faith life.

F. EXISTENTIAL CONCERNS

Spirituality is also a part of our existential questions as to a) How do I feel about life b) What is most important to me? Why has this problem happened to me in particular? Why now? What then? Or how do I see the future, including the end of life?

G. THE OPEN-ENDED SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

SELF-UNDERSTANDING

1) What is *most important* to you in life?

IDENTIFICATION

2) Do you belong to any *specific religion or denomination*? If so which?

OVERVIEW

3) Tell me, or share with yourself, about *your spiritual life*?

(If one is not intentionally not spiritually involved, then the other questions need not be pursued. Also one may have a definition of spirituality that may need clarification. Here clarify for the interviewer or one's self)

4) What does your spirituality mean to you?

PRACTICES

5) How regularly do you attend your *place of worship*?

6) In what *other spiritual activities* are you involved?

7) How regular are your *devotional activities*?

- the reading of your scriptures
- prayer and meditation

FAITH

8) How do you *feel about God*?

EXPERIENCE

9) How has He *been to you*?

If the individual has a *non-personalistic* or a *non-monotheistic* understanding of spirituality one may ask:

10) If you don't believe in the God, what is your understanding of who or what you consider in most supreme in the order of life?

11) How has(ve) this/these being(s) or entity(ies) affected your life?

PROBLEMS

12) Are you having any *spiritual problems*?

13) If so do you wish to discuss them? What are they?

(Sometimes problems may be considered before the process of spiritual self-exploration stage)

EXISTENTIAL CONCERNS

14) How do you *feel about life*?

15) How do you feel about *the future*?

16) Why do you think your problem has happened to you in particular?

Why now?

18) What do you see as the main purpose of your life?

19) What feeling do you have about *the end of life*?

STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

20) What are some of your strengths, goals and other *assets for living*?

GOALS OF GROWTH

21) What *goals*, if any, do you wish to set for your future spiritual growth?

22) Whom, if anyone, would you seek *assistance* from?

H. ELICITING SPECIFIC SPIRITUAL CONCERNS

A more directive approach can be used to elicits what the interviewer could consider as specific spiritual concerns.

Appendix II is a whole person questionnaire that has been developed at the Bethel Baptist Church to elicit life problems that could be addressed by one's spirituality as well as by other means. It seeks to be more specific for identifying particular spiritual problems.

It is hoped that these questionnaires and the related ideas that have been shared will be useful to you all Healing Ministry workers. These instruments can be used for ongoing evaluation and goal setting for one's spiritual development. They can also be helpful in

building awareness as part of the training of both non-professional workers as well as anyone else interested in understanding more about spirituality and spiritual formation.