


Discovering the Impact of Disaster through the Lens of Spirituality

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



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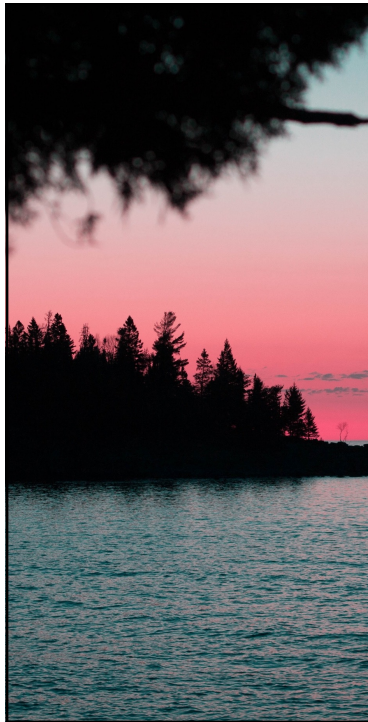
What We'll Cover Today

- Reflect on the role of spirituality in enhancing personal wellbeing, resilience and healing.
- Review some holistic definitions and perspectives on spirituality, inclusive of religious beliefs and traditions.
- Explore everyday practices for strengthening and aligning with one's sense of spirituality.
- Invitation to practice a short, "Everyday" mindful awareness and self-compassion practice.



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Reflections on Spirituality

- What role does spirituality play in your own life?
- What are things you do to enhance or strengthen your spirituality?



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Spirituality: Wellbeing, Healing & Resilience



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Spirituality and Wellbeing

- Spirituality provides a sense of meaning and life purpose, which are associated with wellbeing and resilience.
- A strong spiritual outlook is helpful in finding meaning in life's difficulties.
- People who participate in spiritual communities or religious services have better health outcomes, longevity, less depression and less substance use.
- Spirituality can offer a "Protective Benefit" to one's psychological health and physical wellbeing.
- Spirituality can be cultivated and strengthened with awareness and practice.



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Spirituality: Perspectives & Definitions



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Spirituality

The word **spirituality** comes from the Latin word 'spiritus', which means breath or 'spiri', and from the Latin verb spiro, meaning *breathe* or *to be alive*.

The Hebrew word for **spirit** "**ruah/ruach**" also means *wind, breath and air - that which gives life*.





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Spirituality

"Is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred."

- Christina Puchalski, MD, Director of the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health

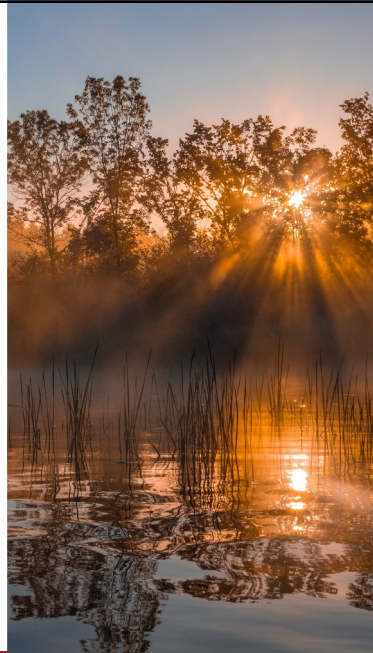



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Spirituality

“Describes each person’s way of finding meaning in their life experiences and that which is held sacred. Based on beliefs and values, it is one’s understanding of self, God, others, the universe, and the resulting relationships. Spirituality is the understanding, integration, and response to the transcendent.” (See Religion)

A Guide for Spiritual Care in Times of Disaster for Disaster Response Volunteers, First Responders and Disaster Planners
www.NVOAD.org



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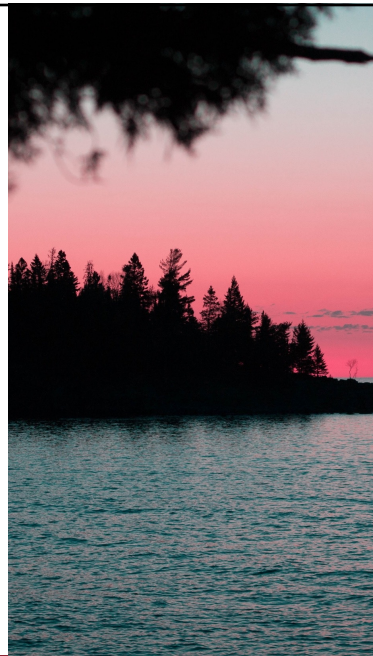
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Spirituality

“Brings clarity to your thoughts, tranquility to your heart and warmth to your feelings.”


“... it is the feeling of being alive. It is the driving force that gives you the understanding of who you are. It is the guide that leads you to the meaning of your relationship with God, people, the world and yourself.”

—Imam Shaykh Kifah Mustapha




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Spirituality

- Spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives.
- It includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves, and it typically involves a search for meaning in life. As such, it is a universal human experience - something that touches us all.
- People may describe a spiritual experience as *sacred* or *transcendent* or simply a deep sense of aliveness and interconnectedness.
- Many find their spiritual life is intricately linked to religious and/or deeply held cultural beliefs and a community that regularly gathers to celebrate and practice their spiritual beliefs.


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Relationship Between Spirituality and Religion



Spirituality
 Where do I find meaning?
 How do I feel connected?
 How should I live?

Religion
 What practices, rites, or rituals should I follow?
 What is right and wrong?
 What is true and false?

belief
comfort
reflection
ethics
awe

Source: <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/what-spirituality>

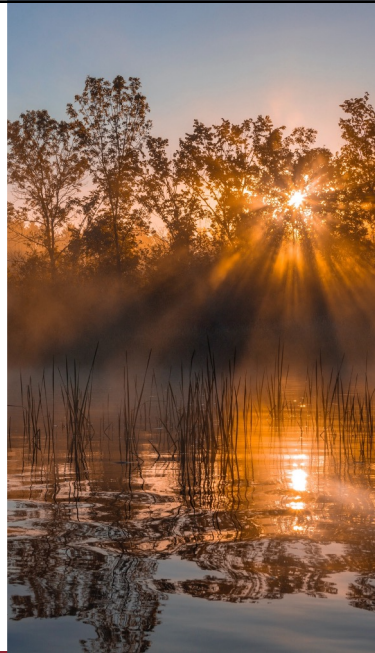

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Spirituality

“Spirituality is an essential part of humanity. Disaster disrupts people’s spiritual lives significantly. Nurturing people’s spiritual needs contributes to holistic healing. Everyone can benefit from spiritual care in times of disaster.”

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Daily Practices to Enhance Spirituality




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Expressions of Spirituality

- Prayer or meditation, finding comfort or deep meaning in a personal relationship with God, a higher power or connection with something larger than oneself.
- Relationships, caring for others and the world around you.
- Connections to nature, including an expansive sense of awe.
- Art making, music and dance, and often shared at communal ceremonies, or religious or spiritual gatherings.
- Like other aspects of our life, one's personal sense of spirituality may change throughout life, adapting to and growing with one's life experiences.



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What are Your Spiritual Practices?

- Contemplative prayer or meditation
- *Practices of gratitude, forgiveness, and kindness.*
- Participate in spiritual communities or religious services and gatherings
- Yoga or other mindful movement
- Live a life reflective of purpose, meaning and deeply held spiritual values or beliefs
- Spend time in nature, perhaps moments of awe
- Journaling, art making and/or sharing art or performances with others
- *Loving others, contributing to the wellbeing of others*
- *"As best I am able" extend grace and compassion to myself and others*
- Others, that also calm the central nervous system?



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“Compassion
for others begins with
kindness to ourselves.”
— Pema Chodron



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“Self-compassion
involves caring for
yourself
as you would treat
a friend
who is having
a hard time.”



- Kristin Neff, PhD, Self-Compassion Researcher & Author



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Three Elements of Self-Compassion

- 1) Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment
- 2) Common, Shared Humanity vs. Isolation
- 3) Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification

- Kristin Neff, PhD, Self-Compassion Researcher & Author



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PACE YOURSELF

Pause throughout your day. Take a few mindful breaths. Offer yourself some grace.

Acknowledge natural reactivity, label your emotions, losses, and ambiguities. Notice and soften into body sensations.

Compassionately direct your energy toward things you can impact/control in the moment. Practice self-compassion.

Engage with others. Ask for support, ideas. Share your experience and feelings with someone you trust.



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Awe

“The feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your current understanding of the world.”

- Dacher Keltner

- An emotion with varying physical sensations.
- *Vast* – varies dramatically across cultures and context of our lives.
- Relationship to life’s mysteries. Sacred. Novel.
- Engages the calming branch of the central nervous system. Reduces stress.
- Strengthens wellbeing and resilience.
- Smaller number can be fearful/threatening - natural disasters, shocking cruelty.






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AWE: 8 Wonders of Life

- 1) **Morale Beauty** – inspired other’s courage, kindness, strength or overcoming.
- 2) **Collective Effervescence** – collective experiences at weddings, christenings, funerals, graduations, sports or community celebrations.
- 3) **Nature** – night sky, power of nature, connection with animals and plants.
- 4) **Music** - connects us with symbolic meaning. Singing together, concerts, music at community gatherings. Performing/listening.
- 5) **Visual Design** – Paintings, pyramids, buildings, sculpture gardens, etc.
- 6) **Spiritual and Religious** – touched by grace, the sacred and the ineffable. Presence of God or transcendence – beyond the physical world.
- 7) **Life and Death** – the poignancy of the cycle of life.
- 8) **Epiphanies** – insights, intuitions, sudden realizations, synchronicity. May be life changing.

Source: Dacher Keltner, PhD, author of
AWE: The New Science of Everyday Wonder ...”



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“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1818 – 1955)



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THANK YOU

Mariann Johnson
mtjohnso@umn.edu



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