



UNDERSTANDING HOW CARING FOR A LOVED ONE AFFECTS YOU

Spirituality & Health

Spirituality is a way you find meaning and inner peace in life. Some people find spirituality in religion. Other people find spirituality through art, nature, or their values. No matter your beliefs, your spiritual health is important.

What You Need to Know

Caregivers often sacrifice their own well-being to provide care for others. This sacrifice can disrupt your beliefs and cause spiritual distress. Symptoms of spiritual distress include:

- Loss of purpose or meaning
- Questioning your faith, values, and beliefs
- Feeling abandoned or punished by God
- Feeling worthless, hopeless, and alone in the world
- Withdrawal from family and friends

Why is spirituality important to your health?

There seems to be a connection between the mind, body, and spirit. When you have spiritual distress, your entire being is affected. While physical health is easy to measure, spiritual health is not. Being healthy spiritually means showing love to yourself and others. You have a sense of inner peace and contentment. You value life and are thankful for what you have. Being spiritually healthy can help you cope with the stress of being a caregiver.

What to Discuss with Healthcare Team

Talk to your healthcare provider if you are feeling spiritual distress. Your provider can refer you to a local clergyman or spiritual advisor. If you attend a house of worship, speak to your pastor or priest. Ask your healthcare provider about support groups in your area.

Helpful Tips

Think about what nourishes your spirit and makes you feel at peace. Set aside time each day to practice these things. This may include:

- **Practicing prayer or meditation.** Some people find prayer or meditation to be helpful. Benefits include lower stress and better overall health.
- **Volunteering in the community.** Helping others can put your problems into perspective. It can also provide you with a sense of purpose and pride.
- **Reading the bible or other inspirational books.** Some people find comfort in God's word. Reading about other's triumphs over adversity can inspire you.
- **Attending a house of worship.** Some people find a sense of community when surrounded by others who share their beliefs.
- **Going on a nature walk.** Connecting with nature can bring spiritual peace.
- **Keeping a journal to express your thoughts and feelings.** Writing down your problems can help you sort them out.

Remember

- Strengthening your spiritual side can help you cope with the stress of caregiving.
- There seems to be a connection between the mind, body and spirit. When you have spiritual distress, other areas of your body and mind are affected.
- Think about what nourishes your spirit and makes you feel at peace. Set aside time every day to practice these things.

More Resources

MHV

<https://www.myhealth.va.gov/>

My HealtheVet's Spirituality Center has resources and information to address your spiritual needs.

- Go to <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/>
- Click on *Research Health*
- Click on *Healthy Living Centers*
- Click on *Spirituality*

References: FamilyDoctor.org (2010). *Spirituality and Health*. Retrieved June 20, 2011, from: <http://familydoctor.org/>; Cancer**care** (2011). *Strengthening the Spirit*. Retrieved June 20, 2011, from: <http://www.cancercare.org/>; Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association. (2010). *Quick Information Sheet: Spiritual Care*. Retrieved June 20, 2011 from <http://www.hpna.org/>; My HealtheVet. (2009). Spirituality Center. Retrieved June 24, 2011, from <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/>.