SPIRITUALITY AND YOU

What is Spirituality?

According to scholars, spirituality might refer to:

(Makey & Sparling, 2000): “intrinsically based beliefs in which personal values are used for guidance in day-to-day living”

(Kaiser, 2002): “an article of faith; a spiritual person possesses a ‘right relationship with all that is’”

(Koenig, 2002): “spirituality is what gives significance and purpose to one’s life”

Spirituality can also mean...
- Meditation
- Connectedness
- Mindfulness
- Authenticity
- Inner-health
- Oneness
- Self-centering/re-centering
- Relaxation
- Self-discovery
- Finding Purpose
- ...

Research on Spirituality in College

Ellison & Lewin (1988):
- Outlined several possible explanatory mechanisms through which religiosity and overall spiritual well-being may lead to positive health outcomes:
  (1) regulation of individual lifestyles and health
  (2) provision of social resources (e.g., social ties, formal and informal support),
  (3) promotion of positive self perceptions (e.g., self-esteem, feelings of personal mastery),
  (4) provision of specific coping resources (i.e., particular cognitive or behavioral responses to stress),
  (5) generation of other positive emotions (e.g., love, forgiveness),
  (6) promotion of healthy beliefs, and
  (7) existence of healing bioenergy.

Spirituality in Higher Education Project

Dr. Helen Astin, Dr. Alexander Astin, and Dr. Jennifer Lindholm, UCLA (2003, ongoing)
- The largest and most exhaustive study attempted investigating spirituality in college
- 112,000 Freshmen surveyed in 236 public and private colleges; faculty was surveyed as well
- Authors define “spiritual development” as “how students make meaning of their education and their lives, how they develop a sense of purpose, the value and belief dilemmas that they experience, as well as the role of religion, the sacred, and the mystical in their lives.”
- Found religious engagement among students declines somewhat during college, but their spirituality shows substantial growth. Authors highlight care, tolerance of others, inclusivity, connectedness.
- Also found spiritual growth enhances academic performance, psychological well-being, leadership development, and satisfaction with college.
- College activities that contribute to students’ spiritual growth include:
  - Service learning
  - Study abroad
  - Interdisciplinary studies

Spirituality Terms:

- Equanimity
  Equanimity measures the extent to which the student is able to find meaning in times of hardship, feels at peace or is centered, sees each day as a gift, and feels good about the direction of her life.

- Spiritual Quest
  Spiritual Quest reflects the degree to which the student is actively searching for meaning and purpose in life, to become a more self-aware and enlightened person, and to find answers to life’s mysteries and “big questions.”

- Ecumenical Worldview
  Ecumenical Worldview indicates the extent to which the student is interested in and seeks to understand different religious traditions, feels a strong connection to all humanity

Ideas for Spiritual Development

Community Service
Keep a journal
Do Yoga
Walk a labyrinth
Pray
Run or play a sport

Experience solitude— to where does your mind drift?

Have conversations with family or friends using spiritual questions

Create an ongoing list of things that make you happy— your “natural high list”

Read books or watch movies that stimulate thinking

Spiritual Questions to Ponder

1. Who are the most important people in my life?
2. Where would I like to be in 10 years?
3. How can I avoid a stagnant life?
4. What qualities must I possess to be a good person?
5. Do things happen for a reason?
6. What are the values that guide my life?
7. When do I feel the most alive or real?
8. What gifts can I give of myself to the world?
9. How would I like others to see me?
10. What are my beliefs on life purpose?

Adapted from "Spiritual Journey" by Jen Manning

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