

# A short guide to the assessment of spiritual concerns in mental healthcare

## 1. Taking account of the Spiritual Dimension

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/sig/spirit/index.asp>

a) The following questions are easily asked, are not intrusive, and could alert the team to the need for the appropriate response:

- What is the patient's spiritual/religious background?
- Are spiritual/religious beliefs supportive and positive, or anxiety provoking and punitive?
- What role did spirituality/religion play in childhood, and how does the patient feel about that now?
- What role does spirituality/religion play now in the patient's life?
- Is religion/spirituality drawn upon to cope with stress? In what ways?
- Is the patient a member of any religious community? Is it supportive?
- What is the patient's relationship with their clergy like?
- Are there any spiritual/religious issues the patient would like to discuss in therapy?
- Do the patient's spiritual/religious beliefs influence the type of therapy he or she would be most comfortable with?
- Do those beliefs influence how the person feels about taking medication?

b) 'HEALING FROM WITHIN: A Guide for Assessing the Religious and Spiritual Aspects of People's Lives' Dr Larry Culliford and Rev Dr Stuart Johnson

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/sig/spirit/publications/index.htm>

c) THE MEASUREMENT OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

Professor Michael King, Royal Free and University College London Medical School

*King et al.* (1995) The Royal Free Interview for Religious and Spiritual Beliefs. *Psychological Medicine* 25: 1125-1134.

*King, M. Speck, P. Thomas, A.* (2001) The Royal Free Interview for Spiritual and Religious Beliefs: development and validation of a self-report version. *Psychological Medicine* 31:1015–1023

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/sig/spirit/publications/king.pdf>

## **2. Spirituality and Medical Practice: Using the HOPE Questions as a Practical Tool for Spiritual Assessment**

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/20010101/81.html>

### **The HOPE Questions for a Formal Spiritual Assessment in a Medical Interview**

**H:** Sources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love and connection

**O:** Organized religion

**P:** Personal spirituality and practices

**E:** Effects on medical care and end-of-life issues

### **Examples of Questions for the HOPE Approach to Spiritual Assessment**

**H:** Sources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love and connection

We have been discussing your support systems. I was wondering, what is there in your life that gives you internal support?

What are your sources of hope, strength, comfort and peace?

What do you hold on to during difficult times?

What sustains you and keeps you going?

For some people, their religious or spiritual beliefs act as a source of comfort and strength in dealing with life's ups and downs; is this true for you?

If the answer is "Yes," go on to O and P questions.

If the answer is "No," consider asking: Was it ever? If the answer is "Yes," ask: What changed?

**O:** Organized religion

Do you consider yourself part of an organized religion?

How important is this to you?

What aspects of your religion are helpful and not so helpful to you?

Are you part of a religious or spiritual community? Does it help you? How?

**P:** Personal spirituality/practices

Do you have personal spiritual beliefs that are independent of organized religion? What are they?

Do you believe in God? What kind of relationship do you have with God?

What aspects of your spirituality or spiritual practices do you find most helpful to you personally? (e.g., prayer, meditation, reading scripture, attending religious services, listening to music, hiking, communing with nature)

**E: Effects on medical care and end-of-life issues**

Has being sick (or your current situation) affected your ability to do the things that usually help you spiritually? (Or affected your relationship with God?)

As a doctor, is there anything that I can do to help you access the resources that usually help you?

Are you worried about any conflicts between your beliefs and your medical situation/care/decisions?

Would it be helpful for you to speak to a clinical chaplain/community spiritual leader?

Are there any specific practices or restrictions I should know about in providing your medical care? (e.g., dietary restrictions, use of blood products)

*If the patient is dying:* How do your beliefs affect the kind of medical care you would like me to provide over the next few days/weeks/months?

**3. University of Minnesota, Centre for Spirituality and Healing**

- online learning – spirituality in Healthcare – free module on taking a spiritual history using all these methods- **a resource highly recommended**

<http://www.csh.umn.edu/modules/index.html>

**4. The George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health**

<http://www.gwish.org/index.htm>

**FICA -Taking a Spiritual History**

**The acronym FICA can help structure questions in taking a spiritual history by Healthcare Professionals.**

**F—Faith and Belief**

“Do you consider yourself spiritual or religious?” or “Do you have spiritual beliefs that help you cope with stress?” IF the patient responds “No,” the physician might ask, “What gives your life meaning?” Sometimes patients respond with answers such as family, career, or nature.

**I—Importance**

“What importance does your faith or belief have in our life? Have your beliefs influenced how you take care of yourself in this illness? What role do your beliefs play in regaining your health?”

### **C—Community**

“Are you part of a spiritual or religious community? Is this of support to you and how? Is there a group of people you really love or who are important to you?” Communities such as churches, temples, and mosques, or a group of like-minded friends can serve as strong support systems for some patients.

### **A—Address in Care**

“How would you like me, your healthcare provider, to address these issues in your healthcare?”

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Adapted with permission from Puchalski CM, Romer AL. Taking a spiritual history allows clinicians to understand patients more fully. *J Pall Med* 2000;3:129-37.

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## **5. *Spiritual competency website***

<http://www.spiritualcompetency.com/index.asp>

### **A. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND AND BELIEFS-**

What religion did your family practice when you were growing up?

How religious were your parents?

Do you practice a religion currently?

Do you believe in God or a higher power?

What have been important experiences and thoughts about God/Higher Power?

How would you describe God/Higher Power? Personal or impersonal? Loving or stern?

### **B. SPIRITUAL MEANING AND VALUES**

Do you follow any spiritual path or practice (e.g., meditation, yoga, chanting)?

What significant spiritual experiences have you had (e.g., mystical experience, near-death experience, 12-step spirituality, drug-induced, dreams)?

### **C. PRAYER EXPERIENCES**

Do you pray? When? In what way(s)?

How has prayer worked in your life?

**Compiled by Dr. Sarah Egger 2005**