

Kowhai Programme

Support for families, whānau & carers

Finding Meaning

This information is to assist you to explore sources of spiritual strength to manage the journey ahead.

Te Whare tapa wha is the model of health care that Hospice New Zealand follows to ensure holistic care. This focuses on care of the whole person, care that is patient led and patient centred. The model has four walls which are as follows:

- **Tinana** (Physical health): The capacity for physical growth and development.
- **Whānau** (Family health): The capacity to belong, to care and to share, and where individuals are part of wider social systems.
- **Hinengaro** (Mental, cognitive, psychological health): The capacity to communicate, to think and to feel. Mind and body are inseparable.
- **Wairua** (Spiritual health): The capacity for faith and wider communication.

(Four walls are needed. If one wall is missing, the house is not complete and will be unstable.)

Whare tapawha

(Durie, 1994)



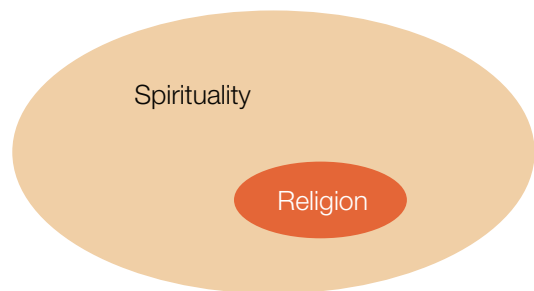
One definition of spirituality

'Spirituality is that 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

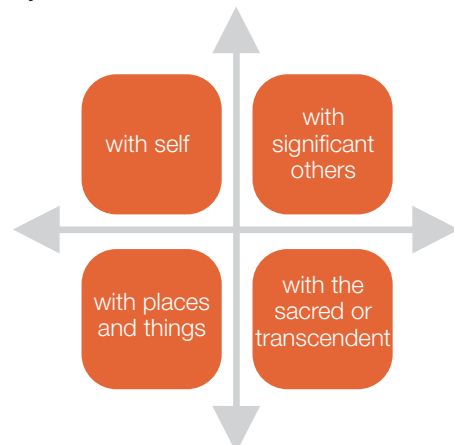
So, what is spirituality?

- It can be very challenging to define it for ourselves
- It is often unseen
- It is often unspoken
- It can mean different things to different people
- It can consist of our beliefs, values, sense of meaning and purpose, identity, and for some, religion or faith
- It is that part of us that seeks meaning and purpose in life
- It is to do with connectedness/relationships (to self, others, the environment, God or to a higher power)



Spirituality is about four supportive relationships:

- With ourselves (our inner strength, being able to present in the moment)
- With our significant others (e.g. family/whānau, friends, community groups)
- With important places and things (e.g. nature, music, art, home)
- With transcendence or that which is 'beyond' (e.g. mystery of the universe, God, 'fate', our ancestors)



These relationships are relevant for all of us. However when people are facing a terminal illness diagnosis, this can lead to disruption of these relationships. Exploring our spirituality can assist restoration of these relationships, which in turn can improve the quality of life for the person facing their terminal diagnosis.

One example of a person who explored their spirituality when facing their terminal illness is from the book **'Tuesdays with Morrie'** by Mitch Albom, 1997.

This is a book based on the true story of Morrie Schwartz who was Mitch's old college professor. They are reunited after many years when Morrie is diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease (MND – which is a progressive neurological disease). Mitch had been climbing the corporate ladder but reassesses his life goals as he spends time discussing the meaning of life with Morrie. In this passage they discuss the benefits of suffering and how Morrie's thinking and attitudes have changed as his disease progressed.

There had been a development in the treatment of MND: an experimental drug that was just gaining passage. It was not a cure, but a delay, a slowing of the decay for perhaps a few months. Morrie had heard about it but he was too far gone. Besides, the medicine wouldn't be available for several months.

'Not for me', said Morrie, dismissing it.

In all the time he was sick, Morrie never held out a hope he would be cured. He was realistic to a fault. One time, I asked if someone were to wave a magic wand and make him all better, would he become, in time, the man he had been before?

He shook his head. 'No way could I go back. I am a different self now. I'm different in my attitudes. I'm different appreciating my body, which I didn't do fully before. I'm different in terms of trying to grapple with the big questions, the ultimate questions, the ones that won't go away.

That's the thing, you see. Once you get your fingers on the important questions, you can't turn away from them.'

And which are the important questions?

'As I see it, (said Morrie) they have to do with love, responsibility, spirituality, awareness. And if I were healthy today, those would still be my issues. They should have been all along.'



If you would like assistance to explore your spirituality further, **Annette Tate** (Spiritual Care Coordinator) is available to encourage people to think and talk about the things that give them meaning and purpose, which 'feed' their hearts/spirits. By doing this people tend to find increased peace and meaning and are better equipped for life and death.

Speak with your Care Coordinator and they can arrange for Annette to provide you with support

Phone toll free: 0800 473 6005