

Spiritual Assessments for Clients of Health Practitioners

Rationale for Addressing Spirituality in a Health and Wellness Setting:

The value of spirituality to the health of clients/patients and to health professionals is evidenced by polls, medical research, recommendations of professional organizations, and clinical practice guidelines.

A Gallup poll of 2014 indicates that 86 percent of adults in the United States believe in God and that 78 percent consider religion either very important or important.

Studies demonstrate that up to 94 percent of hospitalized patients believe spiritual health is as important as physical health.

The World Health Organizations recommends that health care be holistic and that spiritual health should be fostered.

The FICA Model of Spiritual Assessment

The FICA Spiritual History Tool uses an acronym to guide health and wellness professionals through a series of questions designed to elicit client/patient spirituality and its potential effect on their health and their care. Starting with queries about faith and belief, it proceeds to ask about their importance to the client/patient, the client's/patient's community of faith, and how the client/patient wishes the provider to address spirituality in his or her care.

Faith, Belief, Meaning:

Do you consider yourself spiritual or religious?

What gives your life meaning?

Do you have spiritual beliefs that help you cope with stress?

Do you have any religious beliefs that might influence your health-related lifestyle choices or medical decisions?

Importance/Influence:

On a scale of 0 (not important) to 5 (very important), how would you rate the importance of faith/belief in your life? Please briefly explain your answer.

How does your faith or beliefs influence how you handle stress?

Community/Support:

Are you a part of a spiritual or religious community?

Do you have a religious or spiritual support system to help you in times of need?

Address in Care:

Do you have any other spiritual concerns that you would like me or someone to address?

We have talked a little about your spirituality or religious beliefs, and how they may or may not be an influence on your health-related behaviors and health. As your _____ (wellness coach, personal trainer, health educator, nurse, etc) how can I best support your spirituality as part of my care for you?

Open Invite Model of Exploring Spiritual Needs

The Open Invite is a client/patient-focused approach to encouraging a spiritual dialogue. It is structured to allow clients/patients who are spiritual to speak further, and to allow those who are not to easily opt out. First, it reminds care providers that their role is to open the door to conversation and invite (never require) clients/patients to discuss their needs. Second, Open Invite provides a mnemonic for the general types of questions a provider may use. The tool provides questions that allow the provide to broach the topic of spirituality.

The key to this approach is to use questions that are natural and conversational while being respectful and nonthreatening.

Open the door to a conversation with the client/patient.

The medical research has documented that there is a link between on spirituality or religion and health and wellbeing.

Research studies demonstrate that up to 94 percent of hospitalized patients believe spiritual health is as important as physical health, that 40 percent of patients use faith to cope with illness,

Would you like to explore this as it relates to your personal health and wellness?

May I ask your faith or religious background? or
Do you have a faith or spiritual preference?

What helps you cope during stressful times?

Invite the client/patient to discuss their spiritual needs and how they might integrate their spirituality into their plan to care for their health.

Do you think/feel that your spiritual health or related practices or beliefs is affecting your physical health?

What spiritual beliefs, practices, and resources might positively impact on your health?

As your _____ (wellness coach, personal trainer, health educator, nurse, etc.) how can I best support your spirituality as part of my care for you?

The spiritual assessment also allows clients/patients to identify spiritual beliefs, practices, and resources that, if addressed, may positively impact their health.

Considerations:

If the provider and client/patient faith traditions coincide and, if the client/patient requests, the provider may consider offering faith-specific support.

References:

The Spiritual Assessment - <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2012/0915/p546.html>

Duke University Video Series on how to practice whole person medicine - <http://www.spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu/index.php/cme-videos>

Spiritual Assessments in Clinical Care - <http://cmda.org/resources/publication/spiritual-assessment-in-clinical-care>

Review Article - Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The Research and Clinical Implications, Harold Koenig, M.D. - <http://www.hindawi.com/journals/isrn/2012/278730/>

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