

A Spiritual Fitness Assessment & 18 Spiritual Exercises for a Healthier Life

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The Need: Lifestyle and stress-related conditions such as obesity are at an all-time high. The use of complimentary and alternative medicine is ever-increasing as people search for solutions. Concerned health educators and fitness professionals of the Christian faith need more effective resources/tools to inform their program participants/clients about the connection between faith and health and about corresponding faith-based ‘interventions’ that seem to positively impact on emotional and physical health and well being.

Purpose: To provide a tool that health and fitness professionals of the Christian faith can use as a ‘door opener’ to begin discussions with those they serve about the relationship between faith and health. This initial discussion could facilitate further conversation about the principles of the Christian faith that might impact favorably on their client’s ability to live a full and flourishing life.

Methods: The literature was reviewed to understand faith-related beliefs and practices that appear to be related to health and well being. The Holy Bible was studied to appreciate what scripture reveals about the connection between the Christian faith and well being. Eighteen attitudes, beliefs and practices were identified and classified as Spiritual Exercises, supported by the scripture 1st Timothy 4:7-8.

Results: A 40-item self-report Spiritual Fitness Assessment using a seven point Likert scale that addresses one’s beliefs and attitudes, one’s relationship with God, and one’s practice of their faith was developed. A corresponding booklet titled *Spiritual Exercises for a Healthier Life* was written

A graduate student at University of Detroit Mercy is undertaking a study to provide information on the reliability (inter-item response consistency), factorial validity, convergent validity (through correlations with my measure of spirituality), and criterion validity (in its ability to predict self-esteem and well-being) of the assessment. Data that looks at the relation of the assessment to social desirability, environmental attitudes, and locus of control will also be generated.

Application: Typically, the assessment would not be offered until there is a degree of trust and respect built between the client and the professional. In discussing the responses to the voluntary assessment with the client, the professional will be able to have a dialog about how to integrate the spirit component of fitness and health programming to impact the client’s health. The professional could share with the client about his/her personal experiences in incorporating these Spiritual Exercises in their own life. The *Spiritual Exercises for a Healthier Life* booklet could be available for further reading by the client. It includes applicable scriptures for each of the 18 exercises as well as practical information on how to integrate the exercises into their life and the relevance of the exercises to health.

Impact: A deeper faith and corresponding improved health may result in some who explore and incorporate the Spiritual Exercises into their life more completely. Others exposed to these spiritual truths may develop a personal faith that will have rewards in this life and eternally.

An Invitation: Organizations and individuals who would like to partner with us to conduct a pilot or research project are encouraged to contact Dale Fletcher. Address correspondence to: dale@faithandhealthconnection.org

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Spiritual Exercises for a Healthier Life

Exercises Related to Your Beliefs and Attitude

Believe in God
Believe God Forgives You
Believe God's Spirit Lives in You

Exercises Related to Your Relationship with God

Read and Study the Bible
Believe In & Receive God's Love
Love God
Pray and Meditate
Obey God
Cry Out to God
Surrender to God/Let Go
Abide in God's Presence
Have Faith & Trust in God

Exercises Related to How You Practice Your Faith

Confess Your Sins
Forgive
Attend Church/Worship with Others
Be in Community with Others
Love & Serve Others
Think Spiritual Thoughts/Renew Your Mind

*“Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but **spiritual exercise** is much more important for it promises a reward in both this life and the next.” 1st Timothy 4:7-8*

Mission and Vision of Faith and Health Connection: To teach others how to apply Biblical principles and results of medical research to achieve improved health and wholeness through an integrated spirit, mind & body approach. Through this, some people will grow in their faith and others will begin to experience the love of God in a very personal way.



Spiritual Fitness Assessment

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

This questionnaire measures some of your faith-related attitudes, beliefs and practices that may have an impact on your health. Your responses may be used by a member of our staff to have a dialogue with you regarding faith and health should you desire. If you are uncomfortable providing a response to any statement, just skip that item.

For each item, please circle the number that best describes your answer according to the scale provided.

All information will be kept confidential.

YOUR BELIEFS & ATITUDES:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Moderately Disagree 3 = Slightly Disagree 4 = Unsure
5 = Slightly Agree 6 = Moderately Agree 7 = Strongly Agree

1. There is a connection between a person's spirit, mind, emotions and body. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. A person's faith-related beliefs, attitudes and practices can have a positive impact on their health. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I am open to learning how faith-related beliefs, attitudes and practices might impact in a positive way on my health. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. I obtain strength and comfort from my faith/spirituality. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. Aside from my frequency of attending worship services, I consider myself to be spiritual. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. My faith gives me a strong sense of meaning and purpose. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. There is a God. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. God's Spirit lives in me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. My spiritual beliefs affect absolutely every aspect of my life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. My trust and faith in God gives me hope. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. God hears me when I cry out to Him. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. My thought patterns impact on my emotions, feelings and associated behaviors. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD:

13. My relationship with God is the foundation for how I live my life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. My relationship with God gives me a strong sense of purpose and meaning. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. I love God in a personal way. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. God loves me in a personal way. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. I know that God forgives me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. I trust in God and have faith that He will take care of me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. I try my very best to understand the principles and commandments of Holy Scriptures/the Bible. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. I am obedient to the principles and commandments of Holy Scriptures/the Bible. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. I have forgiven God for bad things that have happened to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Moderately Disagree 3 = Slightly Disagree 4 = Unsure
 5 = Slightly Agree 6 = Moderately Agree 7 = Strongly Agree

HOW YOU PRACTICE YOUR FAITH:

22. I have close relationships with others in my faith community who have influence in my life's direction. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. I feel a strong sense of support from other people who are in my faith community. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. I engage in healthy behaviors to care for my body as God's temple. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. I draw special strength/power from God's Spirit to make health-related behavior choices and changes in my life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. I tend not to hold grudges for a long time when people hurt me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. I have forgiven myself for things that I have done wrong. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. I have forgiven those who have hurt me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. I am not angry or bitter towards God, myself or others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 = Never 2 = About once a year 3 = Several times a year 4 = About once a month
 5 = 2-3 times a month 6 = About once a week 7 = More than once a week

--- USE NEW SCALE ABOVE ---

30. I cry out to God when I need His help. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31. I attend religious services, activities or Bible studies. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32. I confess my wrongdoings/sins to God and ask for His forgiveness. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
33. I volunteer at my place of worship or in my community. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
34. I consciously surrender or "let go" of all aspects of my life to God. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
35. I engage in social interaction with others of my faith. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 = Never 2 = Less than once a month 3 = 2-3 times a month 4 = About once a week
 5 = Several times a week 6 = Once a day 7 = More than once a day

--- USE NEW SCALE ABOVE ---

36. I monitor my thinking/thought patterns as a way to influence my emotions, feelings and associated behaviors. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
37. Other than at mealtime I pray, meditate, or talk with God. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
38. I read or study Holy Scriptures/the Bible privately. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
39. Would you like a member of our staff to talk with you about your responses and suggest how certain Christian-principled 'spiritual exercises' might help make a difference with your health? Yes or No
40. What is your current religion, faith and/or denomination? _____