

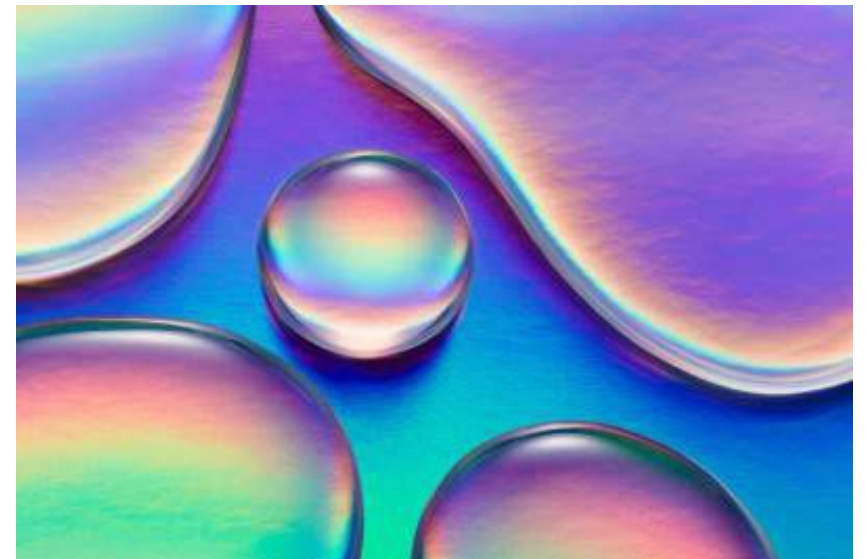
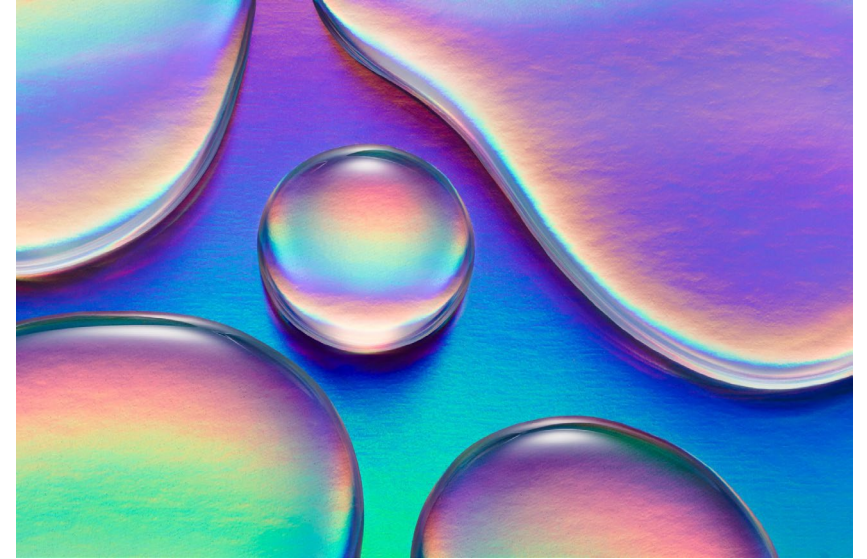
# Influence of Spirituality on Health

Renee McCoy, PhD

HIV Projects Manager

African American Reach and Teach Health Ministry

June 22, 2023



# Learning Objectives



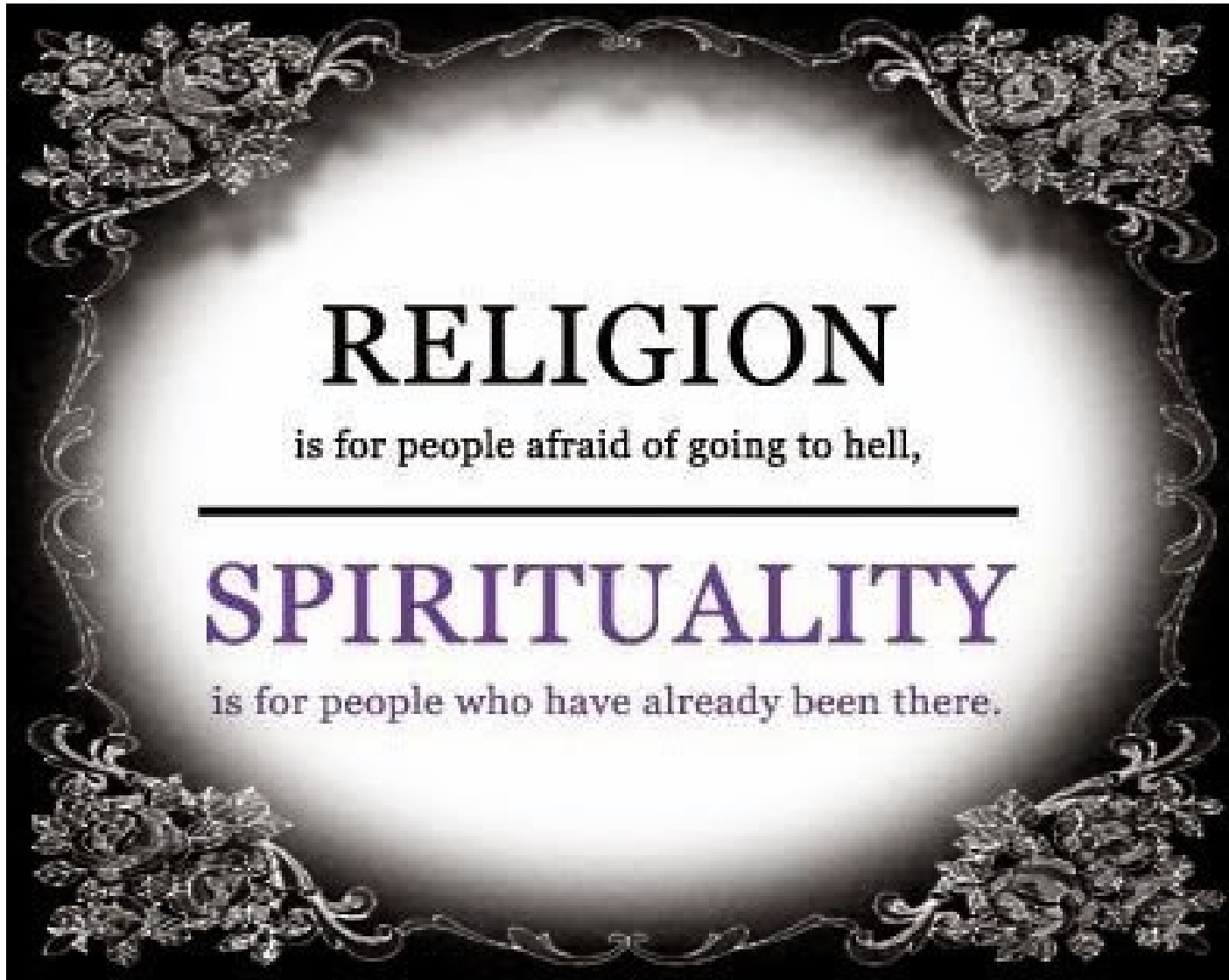
Explore the meaning and utility of spirituality



Examine how spirituality impacts and influences health



Expand personal and professional willingness and abilities to consider spirituality as a component of care



# Spirituality vs. Religion

- Spirituality is a broad concept with many layers
- Religion and spirituality are discussed together but are not the same

# Spirituality Defined

- A dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity
- Used to find purpose, meaning, and transcendence
- Used to experience relationship to self, family, others, community
- What life is all about





# Expressions and Components of Spirituality

- Spirituality is expressed through beliefs, values, traditions, and practices
- Determining what gives you a sense of meaning in life
- Our experience of how we relate to whatever is greater than ourselves and gives meaning to our lives.
- An experience unique to each person.
- Involves how we are connected to one another.

# Religion Defined

**A system of beliefs**

**A system of practices**

**Defined by a specific community or social group**

**May include spirituality**

**Search for significance within the context of established institutions focused on issues related to spirituality**

## **Religions in the United States**

- Protestantism (26%)
- Catholicism (21%)
- Generic Christian (20%)
- Mormon (1%)
- Unitarian (1%)
- Judaism (2%)
- Islam (1%)
- Buddhism (2%)

# Spirituality is about Connections

---

To a higher power

---

To humankind

---

To nature

---

To life experience

---

To the cosmos

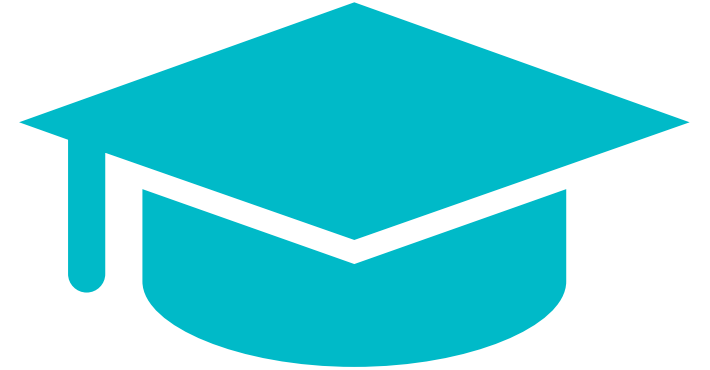
---

To mystery



# What is the Health Connection?

**American Association of Medical Colleges (1999):** “Spirituality is recognized as a factor that contributed to health in many persons. The concept of spirituality is found in all cultures and societies. It is expressed in an individual’s search for ultimate meaning through *participation* in religion and/or belief in God, family, naturalism, rationalism, humanism, and the arts. All of these factors can influence how patients and health care professionals perceive health and illness and how they interact with one another”

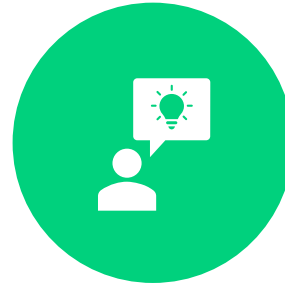




# Beliefs and Practices Vary



Naturalism: everything comes from natural properties and causes



Rationalism: opinions and actions should be based on reason and knowledge



Humanism: Primary importance is the human rather than the divine



The Arts: focus on the application and/or the expression of human creative skills and imagination

# Practices/ Participation Vary

Affiliation	Meditation 1 X/ Week	Prayer 1 X/ Week
Buddhist	66%	14%
Catholic	41%	17%
Evangelical Protestant	49%	44%
Hindu	33%	9%
Historically Black Protestant	55%	44%
Jehovah's Witness	77%	85%
Jewish	28%	16%
Mainline Protestant	36%	19%
Mormon	60%	71%
Orthodox Christian	35%	18%
Unaffiliated (Religious Nones)	26%	< 1%

# Religion and Spirituality Affect a Range of Health Issues

- **Physical Health:** people who attend weekly services with a supportive community live longer; religious people, on average, smoke less, exercise more, eat more healthy foods engage in less risky behaviors
- **Mental Health:** meaning and connection can build optimism and reduce depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress
- **Managing Chronic Illnesses:** having a spiritual practice can help tolerate pain and improve functioning
- **Handling Disruptive Occurrences:** engaging in spiritual practices increases ability to handle stress, loss, and the effects of war

# Qualitative Research on Spirituality and Health

---

Spirituality is important for most patients;

---

Spiritual needs are common;

---

Spiritual care is frequently desired by patients;

---

Spiritual needs are infrequently addressed in medical care;

---

Spirituality can play a role in medical decision making;

---

Spiritual care is infrequent in medical care;

---

Unaddressed spiritual needs are associated with poorer patient quality of life;

---

Provision of spiritual care is associated with better patient end-of-life outcomes.

# Synthesis of Research on Spirituality and Health

---

Frequent religious/spiritual service attendance is associated with a lower risk of mortality;

---

Frequent attendance is associated with subsequent less smoking and use of alcohol, marijuana, and illicit drugs;

---

Frequent attendance is associated with subsequent better quality of life;

---

Frequent attendance is associated with subsequent better mental health outcomes;

---

There is a dose-response relationship between frequent attendance and lower risk of mortality;

---

Frequent attendance is associated with subsequent less smoking, risky sexual behaviors, and use of alcohol, marijuana, and illicit drugs in adolescents;

---

Frequent attendance is associated with fewer subsequent depressive symptoms;

---

Frequent attendance is associated with subsequent fewer suicidal behaviors.

---

What to  
DO ????????



# Implications for Health Outcomes



Health professionals recognize and consider the benefits of spiritual community for improving well-being



Increase education of public health professionals and students regarding spirituality and health outcomes



Recognize spirituality as a social factor along with other social determinants of health



Intentionally include spirituality as a component in treatment planning

Identify the need for spiritual specialty care and advocate  
Acknowledge spiritual injury  
Acknowledge spiritual distress and suffering

# The FICA Spiritual History Tool

F (Faith): What gives life meaning?



I (Import or Influence): How does spirituality influence health practices?



C (Community): Which spiritual communities?



A (Address): What is the desired response?



**Questions???**

