Spirituality and Mindfulness in Recovery

Presented by Wolf Yoxall
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• **RELIGION:** the interpersonal and intuitional aspects of religiosity/spirituality that derived from engaging with a formal religious group’s doctrines, values, traditions, and co-members. *Spiritual Evolution, George Vaillant, MD*

• **RELIGION:** *noun \ri-'li-jən\*

  • the belief in a god or in a group of gods: an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods

  • an interest, a belief, or an activity that is very important to a person or group
Examples of RELIGION
Many people turn to religion for comfort in a time of crisis.
Prayer
There are many *religions*, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Native and Judaism.
Hockey is a *religion* in Canada.

Where I live, high school football is *religion*.
Politics are a *religion* to him.

Food is *religion* in this house.
Negative aspects as viewed by patients!

- Control
- War
- Brain Washing
- Lies
- To institutional
- Judgmental
- Cruel
- Strict
- Negative
- Hoax
- Rigid
- Unreal
- Joke
You have heard me say: be humble, forgive, love and show mercy. But now I say unto you: ridicule those who disagree with you, despise people of other orientations, denigrate women, and above all be arrogant and rude!
Spirituality

- Spirituality has many definitions, but at its core spirituality helps to give our lives context. It's not necessarily connected to a specific belief system or even religious worship. Instead, it arises from your connection with yourself and with others, the development of your personal value system, and your search for meaning in life.

- For many, spirituality takes the form of religious observance, prayer, meditation or a belief in a higher power. For others, it can be found in nature, music, art or a secular community. Spirituality is different for everyone.
Examples of SPIRITUALITY

- Religious Practice
- Meditation
Nature

Art
Music

Community
Personal
Spiritual Assessment

• What do you believe in that gives meaning to life?
• How do you define your Higher Power/God?
• How important is your spiritual belief?
• Are you part of a Spiritual community? If so please describe:
  • How often do you attend?
• What other activities do you do to connect with your Higher Power/God?
• How familiar are you with other views of God/Higher Power?
• Do you consider yourself religious, spiritual, or both?
• How has your relationship to your Higher Power/God changed over the years?
• What does suffering mean to you?
• What is your experience with giving and receiving forgiveness?
• Describe HOPE:
• Have you ever had a spiritual awakening, or conversion experience? If yes please describe:
• Do you have someone that you talk to about religion or spirituality in your life?
• Do you seek more meaning or spiritual direction in your life?
• Do you want to address the issues surrounding your spirituality?
SPIRITUALITY and the BRAIN
• Every human brain assembles its perceptions of God in uniquely different ways, thus giving God different qualities of meaning and value.

• Spiritual practices, even when stripped of religious beliefs enhance the neural functioning of the brain in ways that improve both physical and emotional health.

• Long-term contemplation of God and other spiritual values permanently changes the structure of those parts of the brain that control our moods, giving rise to our conscious notions of self and shape our sensory perceptions of the world.

• Spiritual contemplation strengthens neurological circuits that generate peacefulness, social awareness and compassion for others.
• Amygdala: Flight or fight.

• Frontal Lobes: Focused attention on spirituality/God calms the Amygdala, pushes blood flow to the frontal lobes increasing the ability to problem solve and deal with emotions.

The brain’s reward system

• Addictive drugs provide a shortcut to the brain’s reward system by flooding the nucleus with dopamine. The hippocampus lays down memories of this rapid sense of satisfaction, and the amygdala creates a conditioned response to certain stimuli.
Why is it so Difficult?

• Diverse definitions of Spirituality.
• Provider bias due to different worldviews resulting in failure to value and embrace diverse spiritual perspectives.
• Lack of culturally responsive behaviors due to overreliance on western medical models to inform treatment.
• Counter-transference issues due to negative experiences.
• Lack of training and limited tools to help one to become more skilled.
• Lack of institutional support (i.e., leadership, funding, environment)
• Fear of not being able to discern healthy vs. healthy spirituality and the consequences of making errors.
• Viewed as another skill set one has to add to an already excessively heavy workload.
• Unfamiliar with one’s own Spirituality and spiritual practices. May not see oneself as a spiritual being.
What is the Solution?

• Become more self-aware to discover who you are by revisiting your attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors around Spirituality.
• Acknowledge where you are and embrace your own Spirituality.
• Become willing to change attitudes by participating in cultural/spiritual responsiveness trainings.
• Be willing to have courageous conversations with leaders, co-workers, family, & friends.
• As you are building a trusting relationship, allow consumers and their family members to educate you about their cultural/spiritual world and be responsive to their needs you have developed rapport and trust.
• Seek community partnerships to teach, inform, support, and advise you.
MINDFULNESS

Before and After
Awareness

"Hey, wait a minute! This is grass! We've been eating grass!"
ONE THOUGHT

WHO? WHAT?
WHERE? WHEN? HOW?
WHY? WHICH? HOW MUCH?
HOW MANY? HOW LONG? HOW FAR?
WHAT FOR? WHAT NEXT? THEN
WHAT? WHY ME?

[Cartoon of a person and a dog thinking]
WHAT IS MINDFULNESS

• the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something.

• a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.

The ABC of mindfulness

A is for awareness - Becoming more aware of what you are thinking and doing - what's going on in your mind and body.

B is for "just Being" with your experience. Avoiding the tendency to respond on auto-pilot and feed problems by creating your own story.

C is for seeing things and responding more wisely. By creating a gap between the experience and our reaction to, we can make wiser choices.

Juliet Adams, Founder of Mindfulnet.org & Director, A Head for Work
The Benefits of Mindfulness

Helping individuals to:

• Recognize, slow down or stop automatic and habitual reactions.
• Respond more effectively to complex or difficult situations.
• See situations more clearly
• Become more creative
• Achieve balance and resilience at work and at home
MINDFULNESS MEDITATION
The Practice

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place. Sit in a chair or on the floor with your head, neck and back straight but not stiff.

2. Try to put aside all thoughts of the past and the future and stay in the present.

3. Become aware of your breathing, focusing on the sensation of air moving in and out of your body as you breathe. Feel your belly rise and fall, the air enter your nostrils and leave your mouth. Pay attention to the way each breath changes and is different.

4. Watch every thought come and go, whether it be a worry, fear, anxiety or hope. When thoughts come up in your mind, don't ignore or suppress them but simply note them, remain calm and use your breathing as an anchor.

5. If you find yourself getting carried away in your thoughts, observe where your mind went off to, without judging, and simply return to your breathing. Remember not to be hard on yourself if this happens.

6. As the time comes to a close, sit for a minute or two, becoming aware of where you are. Get up gradually.
BODY SCAN MEDITATION

• Lie down on your back in a comfortable place, such as on a foam pad on the floor or on your bed (but remember that for this use, you are aiming to stay awake, not fall asleep). Make sure that you will be warm enough. You might want to cover yourself with a blanket or do it in a sleeping bag if the room is cold.

• Allow your eyes to gently close.

• Feel the rising and falling of your belly with each in breath and outbreath.

• Take a few moments to feel your body as a “whole,” from head to toe, the “envelope” of your skin, the sensations associated with touch in the places you are in contact with the floor or the bed.

• Bring your attention to the toes of the left foot. As you direct your attention to them, see if you can “direct,” or channel, your breathing to them as well, so that it feels as if you are breathing in to your toes and out from your toes. It may take a while for you to get the hang of this. It may help to just imagine your breath traveling down the body from your nose into the lungs and then continuing through the abdomen and down the left leg all the way to the toes and then back again and out through your nose.

• Allow yourself to feel any and all sensations from your toes, perhaps distinguishing between them and watching the flux of sensations in this region. If you don’t feel anything at the moment, that is fine too. Just allow yourself to feel “not feeling anything.”

• When you are ready to leave the toes and move on, take a deeper, more intentional breath in all the way down to the toes and, on the outbreath, allow them to “dissolve” in your “mind’s eye.” Stay with your breathing for a few breaths at least, and then move on in turn to the soul of the foot, the heel, the top of the foot, and in the ankle, continuing to breathe in to and out from each region as you observe the sensations that you are experiencing, and then letting go of it and moving on.

• Bring your mind back to the breath and to the region you are focusing on each time you notice that your attention has wandered off.

• Continue to move slowly up your left leg and through the rest of your body as you maintain the focus on the breath and on the feeling of the particular regions as you come to them, breathe with them, and let go of them.
SPIRITUALITY and RECOVERY
The 12 Steps

• We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
• We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
• We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
• We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
• We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
• We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
• We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
• We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
• We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
• We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
• We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
• Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”  

*William James (1852-1910)*

- Honesty
- Acceptance
- Humility
- Surrender
- Courage
- Willingness
- Gratitude
- Forgiveness
- Patience
- Tolerance
- Service to others
- Love
THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY
Higher Power/Life Vest
Falling
Trust and Responsibility
Stay OFF the Rocks
GET OUT
OR ELSE
TOOLS

• Question?? What do you trust outside of yourself, that you can depend on and to ask for help?

• Stop and breathe!!!!

• You are not alone in this world.

• Stop and breathe!!!!

• If something created a tree or the ocean, that same thing created you so therefore you are special.

• Stop and breathe!!!!

• You are a spiritual being on a human journey, that is where the work is.

• Stop and breathe!!!!

• Does what you are doing grow corn?

• Stop and breathe!!!!
Resources

• A Gentle Path through the Twelve Steps
  • Patrick Carnes, Ph.D

• Spirituality in Recovery
  • John Ishee and Paul Barton Doyle

• The Tao of Sobriety
  • David Gregson and Jay S. Efran

• How God Changes Your Brain
  • Andrew Newberg, M.D

• Against the Stream
  • Noah Levine

• Happiness
  • Thich Nhat Hanh
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