



***Module 5:
Spiritual Issues
and Support***

What is Spirituality?

- Different from religion, which is an organized system of beliefs
- Spirituality is a broad concept, in general, it includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves
- Some people live highly spiritual lives without belonging to a religion, others express their spirituality through a religion – but everyone has a “spiritual life” of some sort.
- Spirituality is:
 - the “innate yearning, longing for harmony and wholeness” (Sugunasuri Suwanda)
 - “the strength to go on” (Statement of Eatwot, 1992)
 - the “experience of striving for self-transcendence, to be in a relationship with the other” (author unknown)
 - “the energy within each person that looks for meaning and purpose in life” (Hospice Association of Ontario)

Spirituality at End of Life

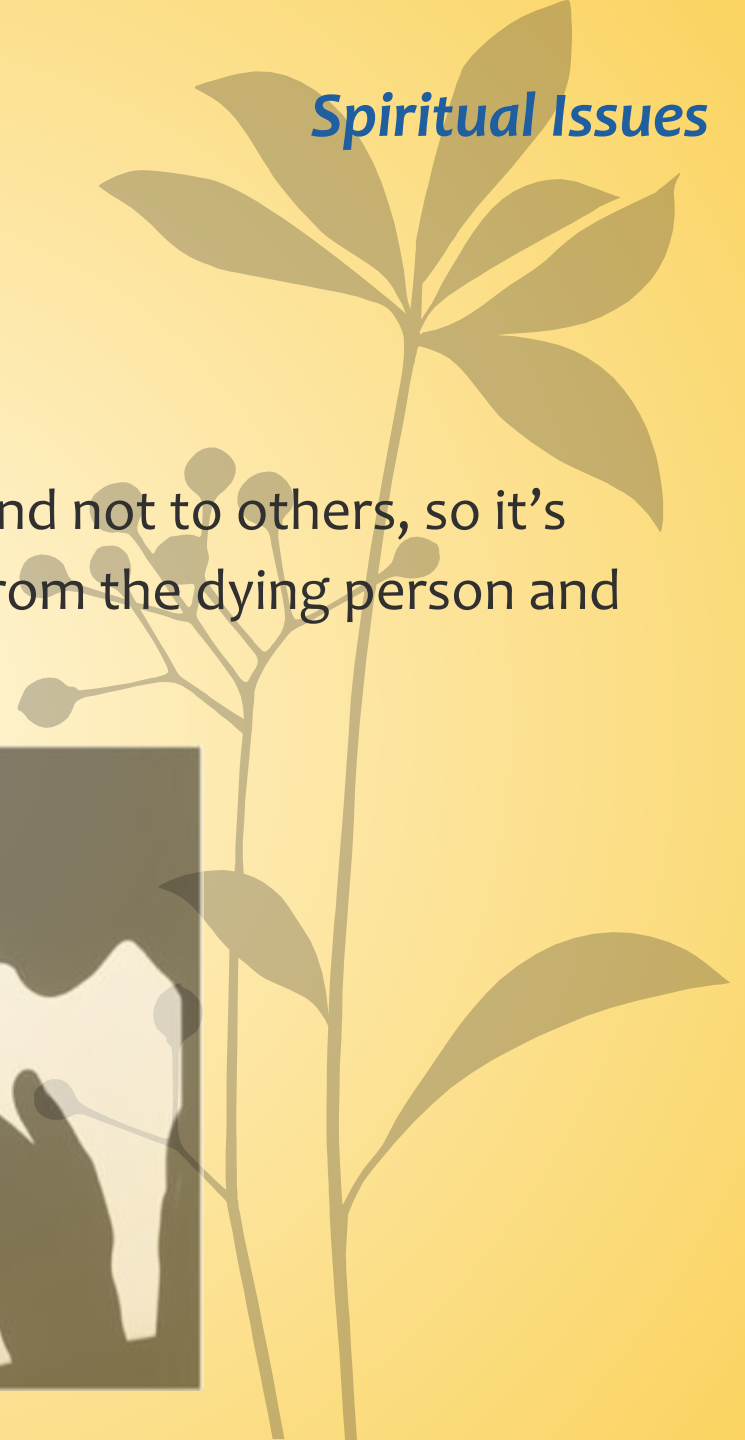
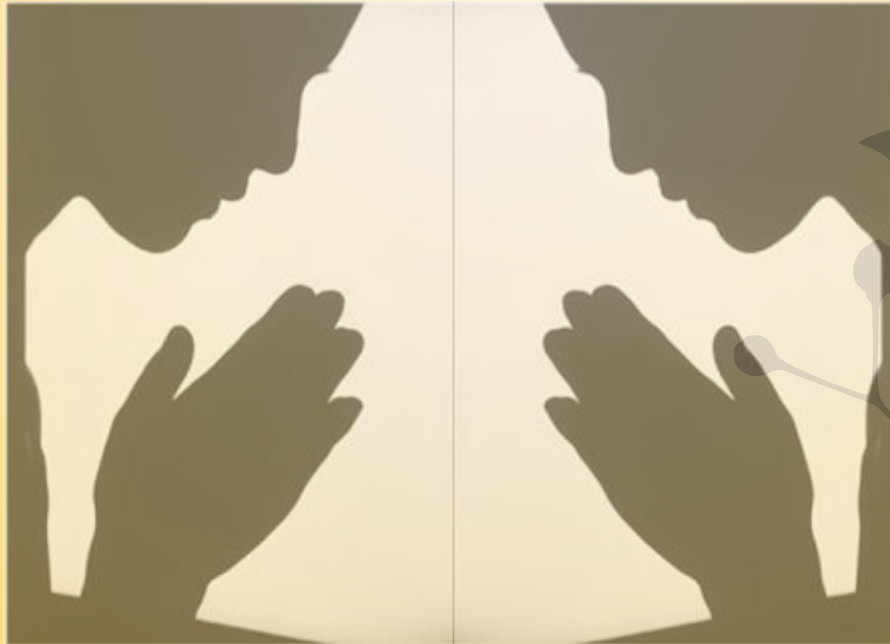
- Most people tend to reflect on the meaning of life as they approach death – to feel that their life counted for something.
- How can you help?
 - Point out that the person is part of a caring community – and that you are a part of that community
 - Encourage the person to tell his or her stories
 - Listen to those stories in a non-judgmental way, to help heal long-held pain
 - Encourage the person to re-live peak experiences and moments of transcendence
 - Point out how the person is valued by others
 - Be calm, to allow the person a chance to reflect – to develop a sense of wholeness, a “higher self”, a soul

Your Role

- Recognize a spiritual need
 - Some people may already have clear spiritual goals that they pursue through prayer, reading, or closeness to nature.
 - Others will wrestle with their faith. Be sensitive to small clues. These are often negative – reflecting discontent, bitterness or regret.
 - Those who are angry are most likely to need spiritual support.
- Provide spiritual support
 - Build trust, and encourage the person to talk about the proud moments in his/her life.
 - Listen – don't advise or try to convert the person.
 - Treat the person with dignity, and respect his/her belief system.
 - Provide whatever specific support is requested by the patient or the family.
- Understand the person's (and the family's) spiritual beliefs
 - If you have questions related to the patient and/or family's beliefs please reach out to the volunteer coordinator for clarity
- Ask for help when necessary
 - Remember: your supervisor and the pastoral care worker are members of the team.

The Role of Prayer

Prayer may be important to some people and not to others, so it's important for volunteers to take the lead from the dying person and family.



Next Steps?

- Click on the link below to take you to the *Module 5: Spiritual Issues* quiz section
 - [Module 5 Quiz](#)

