

Finding meaning and purpose

Most people have a part of them that wants to discover meaning and purpose in life. This is often referred to as 'spirituality'. It influences personal values and beliefs. The importance of spirituality for health and wellbeing is becoming better understood. It can be an important part of someone's life. It may also benefit physical and mental health.

We derive our focus of meaning in life from different sources, e.g. the natural world, music, family, faith or a specific spiritual pathway. For some people, spirituality will involve religious, philosophical or humanist values and beliefs. This may provide support and comfort during difficult times.

Spiritual wellbeing can include the need:

- To give and receive love
- To be understood
- To be valued as a human being
- For forgiveness and trust
- To explore beliefs and values
- To find meaning, purpose and hope

Spiritual care can help when someone is struggling because their health is changing or getting worse. This is especially true if you're:

- Looking for help to cope with being unwell, physically or mentally
- Dealing with difficult feelings such as anxiety, uncertainty, despair, guilt or anger
- Coming to terms with an illness and searching for meaning

Suggestions or ideas

Looking after your own spiritual needs can include doing activities that help you:

- Reflect on your day-to-day experiences
- Connect to how you're feeling in a deeper way

Everyone will have different activities that help them.

Ways to look after your own spiritual needs include:

- Exploring your thoughts and feelings using art, music, drama or writing
- Meditation/mindfulness techniques
- Spending time reflecting on your feelings, either alone or with others
- Meeting others in a relaxed environment to discuss any deeper questions that you want to explore
- Gardening or spending time in nature
- Taking part in the worship and rituals relevant to your faith – like going to church, the mosque or another faith group or meeting

Reflect on your spiritual needs on the next page

THE EVIDENCE

- Spirituality and finding meaning in life are linked with better coping and lower depressive symptoms (Koenig, 2012).
- Hope and a sense of purpose are linked with lower depressive symptoms and improved wellbeing (Schrack et al., 2011).

SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

WHAT ARE MY SPIRITUAL NEEDS?

Try answering the following questions about your own spiritual needs with the HOPE tool, and consider taking it with you to appointments if you feel it might help practitioners to better understand your needs.

<p>H – Hope / spiritual resources</p>	<p>What gives me meaning, hope or comfort?</p> <p>What helps me during difficult times?</p>
<p>O – Organised religion</p>	<p>Am I part of a faith group or community?</p> <p>Which religious practices matter to me?</p>
<p>P – Personal spirituality</p>	<p>Do I have spiritual beliefs that guide me?</p> <p>What personal practices (e.g. nature, art, meditation) help me most?</p>
<p>E – Effects on care</p>	<p>Do my beliefs affect the care I receive?</p> <p>Is there anything I'd like those supporting me to understand about this?</p>

Whitehead et al., 2022

WHERE TO START

You could start by filling in 'My plan' or use the 'Exploring Values, Strengths and Purpose' Tool on the following pages.

- The Somerset Foundation Trust chaplaincy team offer emotional, spiritual, and religious care for patients, visitors, carers, and staff. They will listen without judgement and respect your beliefs, as you try to make meaning in the midst of uncertainty and change. somersetft.nhs.uk/chaplaincy-and-spiritual/chaplaincy-and-spiritual-care/community-chaplaincy-and-spiritual-care/



**Somerset Foundation Trust
Chaplaincy Team**