

Spirituality in The Eight Dimensions of Wellness

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Spirituality was not invented by humankind, it emerged from our essence.

Spirituality has been a fundamental dimension of the human experience since the beginning of human cultural expression. Even before modern human beings emerged and formed civilizations, the Neanderthal showed evidence of spiritual beliefs and customs. Neanderthal people would bury the dead with tools and implements that held great value for survival success in the journey beyond life. This burial with tools ritual was evidence to suggest belief in a spiritual dimension of the person that went on to an afterlife. These artifacts of Homo sapiens neanderthalensis that date back over 40,000 years ago are evidence of spirituality emerging long before civilization. These beliefs in an afterlife and a force of power greater than oneself has evolved into the variety of spiritual expressions we see today.

The Eight Dimensions of Wellness

Spirituality is one of the eight dimensions of wellness. These eight dimensions of wellness include the following dimensions of the human experience; Emotional Resilience, Environmental Consciousness, Financial Responsibility, Intellectual Inquiry, Vocational Purpose, Physical Vitality, Social Connection and Spirituality. All of these dimensions are interconnected such that growth and satisfaction in one area has the potential to stimulate growth and satisfaction in other dimensions as well. As a person exercises spiritual discipline and achieves spiritual wellness, their concept of self changes, their behavior towards other people changes and their overall wellness improves.

Spirituality is a protective factor motivating people to think beyond the here and now and outside of self as they strive for some greater meaning in life. This fundamental dimension of human psychological experience is a useful resource for facilitating growth to wellness. Wellness is not only experiencing freedom from disease, but also experiencing healthy functioning in multiple dimensions of life.

Spiritual Disciplines are the Exercises of Spiritual Growth

Spiritual growth is facilitated by the exercise of spiritual disciplines. Spiritual Disciplines are practices that lead to meaningful changes in thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Every person who desires to enhance wellness in the spiritual dimension of their life can practice these disciplines on a daily basis to harmonize their inner core values with their everyday lifestyle.

Meditation – active and open attention to the present. This discipline leads you to be mindful of self and others with attention to all the valuable resources around and within you.

Prayer – intimate and authentic communication with God. This discipline improves your conscious connection with the Source of energy that fuels your spirituality. Pray for wisdom about all aspects of your life. Pray for peace. Pray for healing and restoration. Pray for the wellbeing of others. Pray for the power you need to deal with the demands of life.

Fellowship – social connection with others in warmth, cooperation and genuine engagement. This discipline places you in proximity to others and allows you to experience the warmth of inclusion in community. Let your presence in community focus on what you can contribute with your time, attention and genuine care for others to help others experience authentic connection.

Service – to give your own time and talent to be helpful to others. This discipline results in the most valuable use of your time and talent to enhance the world around you by helping others who will experience greater wellness from you serving them.

Gratitude – to give thanks. This discipline alters your mood and changes your personality. Gratitude causes you to be mindful of the blessings present all around you. Gratitude orients your attention toward what is right in your life and the world around you.

Sacrifice – to release something you treasure or to give up pursuit of something you covet. This discipline starves dysfunctional compulsions in your life. Fasting serves the purpose of exercising discipline through deprivation of self-centered desires. Abstinence from unhealthy substances or behaviors is an example of sacrifice through fasting. Another important aspect of the discipline of sacrifice is to release attachment to unhealthy connections in your life. Any void that is felt when you make sacrifices will be filled by the satisfaction of connection and dependence on the Source of your spirituality.

Forgiveness – to release resentment you hold against another. This discipline releases you from bitterness and the discontentment of resentment. Forgiveness is a gift that you give yourself that releases you from the bondage of self-centered resentment.

Love – is the meaning of life. Love is the most powerful force in the universe. Love is creative, restorative, healing and empowering. Love is a renewable energy source that gains strength when you transfer it to others through loving actions. Love's potential is not achieved through feeling, but rather through action. If you feel love, then do something about. Love is as love does. Express your love for others with loving words and actions.

Imagine the positive impact on your own psychological well-being, relational health, and general productivity if you were to practice each of these spiritual disciplines every day.