Towards a Definition of Spirituality

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Towards a Definition of Spirituality

- Your definition
- Exploring a societal shift
- Reflecting
- Integrating
- Emerging Definition
My Definition of Spirituality

- Imagine yourself in a patient/client situation where that person suddenly asks you:

  “So what is spirituality anyway?”
Spirituality: A Cornucopia of Meanings

- Out of body experiences
- Yoga paths
- Channeling
- Angels
- The healing power of art
- The birth of white buffalo
- UFO sightings
- Alternative medicine
- Natural investing
Spirituality is “Whatever is left over when the doctor, social worker, psychologist, community education officer or psychiatrist have had a go”.

(C. Sherlock; The Doctrine of Humanity. Leicester: IVP, 1996; 222.)
One thing leads to another

Spirituality

Religion
“Physicians can take a spiritual history - find out whether religious or spiritual beliefs are used to cope, are evoking religious struggles, are likely to influence medical decisions or are responsible for other special needs that trained clergy may help with.”

Reasons to Define:

- The language of spirituality is found in all aspects of our society
- Our professional association and our clinical settings are adopting the language
- The developing of our discipline into a health care professional requires it.
Exploring a Societal Shift

- The hunt for the concept of spirit in our world
Calvin & Hobbes

'Calvin': Time for bed, Calvin.

'Hobbes': You can put my body to bed, but my spirit's going to stay right here. So why bother? Why shouldn't I just stay up?

Calvin: Because the body is the home of the spirit, and if you're not in bed in two minutes, your spirit is going to be permanently nomadic.

'Hobbes': Home sweet home.
September 11, 2001

“Stories of Hope: One year later, a celebration of the American Spirit”

“We’ve chosen to tell the stories of people who...have shown courage, selflessness and hope”
Katy Soulas’ Story

- Spirit
- hope
- courage
- selflessness
- purpose
Research: Spiritual dimensions of a mind-body group for people with severe mental illness

- Urban mental health agency began a Healthy Heart group for mentally ill inner city people because of wide-spread heart related problems
- They discovered that significant spiritual concerns accompanied other concerns raised by the group

(New Dimensions in Mental Health Services, 1998)
Spirituality and Religion in Canadian Psychiatric Residency Training

- A research study by Andrea Grabovac and Soma Ganesan, Dept. of Psychiatry, UBC
- Quote from King and Bushwick study which showed that 94% of inpatients believed spiritual health to be as important as physical health and 77% wanted spiritual issues to be considered in their care.
- Also quoted Fitchett & Burton who found that 80% of psych patients and 88% of medical patients expressed need for prayer
Psychiatry and Spirituality Continued

- The American Psychiatric Association has changed its assessment and Treatment guidelines to include spirituality.
- By 2001, 16 psych residency programs in the US won awards for the spiritual component of their programs ranging from 12-81 hours.
- In Canada, only 4 programs require mandatory didactic teaching in spirituality.
- This is the first article in the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry to call for and outline a specific training module in spirituality (April 2003).
“I’m undergoing empowerment through spiritual awakening”
Dorothee Soelle

- The post-Christian moral is a world of **apathy** which means non-suffering
- society has repressed pain, buried suffering, refusing to accept losses or functional disabilities with pills, denial, and desensitizing and desensitizing behaviour through the media.
- We have lost a sense of vitality
Dorothee Soelle: Suffering

“In the euqilibrium of a suffering-free state, the life curve flattens out completely so that even joy and happiness can no longer be experienced intensely.”
The Banner: Rev. John Suk

- The greatest challenge facing the people of God today is *complacency*
- “most of us prefer conventional wisdom to the sharp edge of Scripture’s call to carry crosses”
- “a livelier spiritual engagement with the hard questions about what it means today to seek the kingdom first would serve Jesus well”
The Avoidance of Pathos

- Astroturf Funeral
- “I just don’t want her to suffer”
- “It’s just too hard for him to move out on his own”
- Desensitization through the media graphically showing us suffering without ever having to feel it.
W5: Depression

“Not an illness of mood but of sensory deprivation…

…the tuning of your heart doesn’t resonate anymore”
The Dominican Republic: A land of Sensations

Here, there’s much more than the Caribbean sun. Much more than a thousand golden beaches, much more than the rhythm of merengue.
Here you will get the feel of life and peace, feel the movement of history, the joy of our people, and the sounds of nature.
Here an entire country awaits you. A land of sensations.  
(Cdn Living; Oct 2002:89)
W5: Depression: “The Disease of the New Millenium”

- A 60% increase in the use of anti-depression medication in the last 5 years.
- There are 20 types of anti-depressants
- Only 60% of patients benefit from anti-depressants
Reality TV

- There are 5,166,922 Web site references to Reality TV on Lycos
- "There is a fascination with seeing the average guy, the guy next door, in extraordinary situations" (CBS President Les Moonves)

(Judy Calheiros: Voyeurism Today)
“What is it about ‘real life’ that has the power to tantalize us? To interest us to such a degree? On the one hand, it is simply that it is ‘real’”
“In this book (of e-mails) the reader experiences the emotions the couple go through in their quest for love.”
(Judy Calheiros: Voyeurism Today)
Michelle Conlin: Covers culture and workplace issues for Business Week

- Fans say that reality TV probes the existential questions of who we are and whether we can escape our psyches.
- Critics call the shows weapons of mass distraction; causing us to become dumber, fatter, and more disengaged from ourselves and society.
- Conlin: substituting an obsession with a contrived reality for attention to the all too-scary global one.
Spokane TV News, May 9/03

- Reports on student fight clubs where teens pay admission to see two people fight in someone’s home
A Search to be Alive in Our Living
What if it can make you feel alive!
Move forward with intention to live the life of their dreams
supported, challenged, motivated and inspired as they create more fulfilling and balanced lives
claim their own power in living a life with meaning
it’s about change and getting closer to what you really want from life
What’s the point of living if you can not feel alive?
• Nurses perceive spirituality to be a universal concept that is relevant to all individuals
• because of nursing discomfort in incorporating the topic, suggests that nursing curriculum add the spiritual dimension of care
Multidisciplinary Definition of Spirituality
Hay River, NWT Regional Hospital, 1997

Spirituality is that aspect of every human being, rooted in our unique createdness which is on a sacred journey of completeness, sometimes seeking to connect with and trust in the divine being and in our pursuit of such things as wisdom, faith, future, love, justice, hope, meaning, forgiveness, peace and more in order to affirm who we are in essence as human beings and with the goal of being alive and fruitful in ways that are meaningful.
Something Simpler

Spirituality is the affirmation of our essential humanness through our search to be alive and fruitful in meaningful ways
Toward Clarification of the Meaning of Spirituality

- A concept analysis study by Ruth Tanyi using a literature search of spirituality spanning 30 years
Tanyi Results

- Spirituality is a phenomenon common to all
- It is a multidimensional concept without an agreed upon definition
- A distinction between religion and spirituality is warranted
- Spirituality is broader concept than religion
- Unfolding experiences such as the loss of significant relationships may facilitate creation of spiritual awareness and transformation
Tanyi: Key aspects of spirituality

- Search for meaning
- wholeness
- peace
- individuality
- harmony
- a biological and integral part of being human
- way of being
- an energizing force for actualization
- meaningful and extensive way of knowing the world
A personal search for meaning and purpose in life, which may or may not be related to religion. It entails connection to self-chosen or religious beliefs, values and practices that give meaning to life, thereby inspiring and motivating individuals to achieve their optimal being. This connection brings faith, hope, peace and empowerment. The results are joy, forgiveness of oneself and others, awareness and acceptance of hardships and mortality, a heightened sense of physical and emotional wellbeing, and the ability to transcend beyond the infirmities of existence.
“Clinician’s Guid to Spirituality” a doctor, Bowen White and Spiritual Care giver, John MacDougal, write

- "In a culture where the fountain of youth is sought and death denied, most people will learn less about living meaningful lives and more about survival skills, which are important but not enough. People can survive their whole life and never live it. ‘The unexamined life is not worth living’ could be rephrased to: ‘The unexamined life is not worth surviving’. Living fully is what it is all about.”
Research: Spirituality of patients recovering from an acute MI

- Spirituality described as a life giving force
- Involved developing faith, discovering meaning and purpose, and giving the gift of self.
- Provided inner strength, comfort, peace, wellness, wholeness, and enhanced coping

(Journal of Holistic Nursing, Mar. 1999)
Life or No Life
“I’ve never seen you like this,” she said bemused.
“That’s because you’ve only seen me spinning my wheels. I’m basically a problem solver, and now I have a problem to solve.” He muttered, “At long last”
“And you love it, don’t you? It makes you come alive.” He shrugged. “At least it makes me feel alive”
Now my spirit is in bed.
The Greater Needs

- Companionship
- Soothing
- Authentic interest
- Hope and Joy
- Intimacy/Connection
- The power of conversion
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**CAGE PLAN**

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Spirituality:
The Search to be Alive!
Breakout Groups: First Opportunity

- Share the definitions that you wrote at the beginning

- 5 minutes
Breakout Groups: Second Opportunity

- A sharing of ideas and aha! moments that help you clarify the concept of spirituality
- everyone jot down each other’s ideas

- 15 minutes
Breakout Groups:  
Third Opportunity

- Develop a group definition of spirituality
- write the definition on flip chart paper and tape it to wall

- 15 minutes
Breakout Groups: Fourth Opportunity

- A reading of the group definitions: read while you wander
- 10 minutes