Spirituality And Resilience

STEVEN DINGLE, M.S, M.D.
Involves belief, practices, and rituals related to the transcendent, typically organized and socially based. The transcendent depends upon the culture: God, Allah, HaShem, Higher Power, Brahman, Buddha, Dao, etc. Often involves the mystical or supernatural. Often organized. Intent is to present an organized way to approach the transcendent.
Spirituality

- Personal quest for understanding to the ultimate questions of life
- Encompasses the journey from nonbelief to devotion to surrender
- Involves a search for meaning related to the sacred
- Is intimately connected to the supernatural, the mystical, and to organized religion
- It extends beyond organized religion
SAMSHA 8 dimensions of wellness

- Emotional: coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships
- Environmental: good health by occupying pleasant stimulating environments
- Financial: satisfaction with current and future financial situations
- Intellectual: Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
SAMSHA 8 dimensions of wellness

- Occupational: Personal satisfaction and enrichment from work
- Physical: Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods and sleep
- Social: Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system
- Spiritual: Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life
Evolving Literature

- 110 “original reports” prior to 2000
- 344 studies between 2000-2010
- Cover a wide variety of conditions, general medical illness, chronic pain, diabetes, cancer, bereavement, natural disasters, terrorism, and mental health
- In overwhelming majority, positive correlation noted
General Trends

- Well being: 79% of studies showed a positive relationship
- Hope: 73% positive
- Optimism: 81% positive
- Self esteem: 61% greater self esteem
- Sense of control: 61% greater sense of personal control in challenging life circumstances
General Trends with Religiosity

- Often one of the first resources turned to in times of significant stress
- Higher levels of religiousness associated with empowerment, and associated in some studies with improved adherence to treatment
- Related to lower levels of perceived pain
- For those with SMI: reported comfort, meaning, compassion, hope, love, acceptance
Health Benefits of Spirituality

- Religious activities may enhance subjective well-being through social interaction of like-minded people
- Contributes to psychosocial adjustment to diseases with poor prognosis
- Supports improved recovery from physical illness
- Increased support for those with chronic illness
Depression

- At 400 studies have been done on this topic dating back to the 60s
- 61% reported significant positive effects of spirituality on depression
- 6% showed the reverse
- Of 60+ prospective cohort studies, 56% demonstrated amelioration of depression correlated to spirituality
- Some evidence that spiritual interventions were as efficacious as standard treatments
- Trends with suicide are similar (75% studies show inverse relationship)
Anxiety

- In general results are more mixed here
- Can be a reciprocal relationship between anxiety and religiosity, depending on the characteristics of individuals
- “religion comforts the afflicted, and afflicts the comforted”
Psychotic Disorders

- More difficult to assess studies due to teasing apart symptoms from resilience
- Noted 40+ studies, 33% reported an inverse relationship with psychotic symptoms
- Naturally, high degree of religiosity in acute and chronic psychotic symptoms
Substance Abuse

- Clearly the most effect seen in this arena
- At the core of the AA program
- Greater than 95% positive effects seen on the ability to maintain improvements in this area.
- Also see positive effects in the many studies done with young adults.
Spirituality in Health Management

- Acceptance
  - Search for meaning: acceptance, understanding, peace
  - Letting go of blame, responsibility
  - Focusing on new meaning in life, transcendence

- All can lead to health and subjective well-being, which can have a positive effect on treatment
Spirituality in Health Management

- **Coping**
  - Gaining/re-gaining sense of control
  - Self discipline through meditation, prayer, sacred readings

- **Support**
  - A sense of place: activities, religious services, study groups
  - Greater autonomy, can foster less dependence on external factors
Spirituality and Psychiatry

- With Freud, psychiatry lost its soul
- With DSM, it has lost its mind
- Now all that is left is the brain!
**Spirituality in the Assessment Process**

- **The Biopsychosocial formulation**
  - First proposed by Engel in 1977
  - Focuses on RISK
  - Biological elements, psychosocial elements, and social elements interact as risk factors for health and disease processes
- Other elements must be considered as mitigation to the risk factors
- Spirituality can exist as a mitigation factor
- Research hampered by lack of reliable and valid measurements
Disease versus Dys-ease

- All human suffering has both a biological and a psychological component
- The 21\textsuperscript{st} century medical emphasis on treatment of disease over-idealizes biological interventions
- This concept is tied to alienation of “medical model” from the principles of recovery
- The early psychoanalytic tradition stigmatized the spiritual dimension, while characterizing suffering as a product of conscious-unconscious dynamics and repression
- Early 20\textsuperscript{th} century movements in behaviorism created a dipole
Disease versus Dys-ease

- The alleviation of Dys-ease requires a more holistic approach
- This approach should seek to unify all of the resources available to an individual
- The “helper” need not understand all aspects of the individual's resources
- The “helper” needs to reinforce and encourage these resources, despite the bias of the “helper”
The Quest of Humanity

- Most cultures have sought spirituality
- This search for meaning can feed the “better angels of our nature”
- The acceptance of a higher purpose, of guiding principles, can unite our drives, conscience, perceived limitations, and self realized shortcomings into a coherent framework
- This coherence can lead to a sense of peace, acceptance, and provide the cognitive structure to seek solutions
- These solutions, so derived, will be consistent with our own internal framework, and so be more effective.
What Is Resilience?

- Positive adaptation despite adversity
- Most see resilience occurring in the presence of demonstrable risk
- Aboriginal authors speak of resilience as being a natural human capacity to navigate life well
Development of Resilience

- Resilience is a process
- Resilience is biological, psychological, environmental, and social
- Resilience can be taught, nurtured, and developed.
- Resilience is maximized when all an individual's resources are in balance
The “Gifts of Spirituality” to Resilience

- Hope: the ability to marshal the positive expectations
- Love: the ability to see of our lives as being important to ourselves and to others
- Trust: the ability to let others in to give us the gift of their strength
- Self sacrifice: to see our pain and suffering as having meaning that we can bring into the service of others
The “Gifts of Spirituality” to Resilience

- Spirituality allows the expression of all of these aspects
- Grounds them and gives them meaning
- Can tie our suffering into the greater good of all
- Allows us a mechanism to turn our physical/emotional “defeats” into successes
Spirituality as a resource

- Spirituality grounds us to our community, our culture, ourselves
- Spirituality manifests our HUMAN nature:
  - We are more than our cognitions
  - We are more than our biology
  - We are more than our social supports
- We belong to something greater, and we stand for something more
- This movement towards “humanness” becomes self-sustaining through the effects on others
Moving Religion To Spirituality

- Religiosity can be either the first step, the outcome, or unrelated for the quest for spirituality.
- Religion can provide structure, community, and meaning/identity.
- It can become means unto itself, and unaccompanied by spirituality, can have unintended consequences.
- Most modern “religions” recognize this, and have stressed movement from religiosity to spirituality.
- Example of Jesus’ teachings.
You Raise Me Up (Rolf Lovland)

When I am down and, oh, my soul, so weary

When troubles come, and my heart burdened be;

Then, I am still and wait here in the silence,

Until you come and sit awhile with me.
You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;

You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;

I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;

You raise me up: to more than I can be.