

Round Table 2 - Spirituality

Definitions

Spirituality - two dictionary definitions

1. of, relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things
2. of or relating to religion or religious belief

How much is spirituality related to the individual, to something very basic in the person themselves, and how much is it synonymous with religion?

In English the word spirit comes from the Latin spiritus - meaning breath - but also - soul, courage, vigour.

Quotes

Ian Heath - *'I do not equate spirituality with religiosity. A religious person can be spiritual, though a spiritual person does not have to be a religious.'*

Anon - *'Religion is for those who don't want to go to Hell. Spirituality is for those of us who have already been through it.'*

Questions to cover

How is spirituality separate from organised religion?

- is spirituality just a term that has been taken as an 'antidote to religion'?
- Is that the fault of religion?
- Is the spirituality a concept that is used in the religions represented here?
- Can we say in a few words what spirituality means to us?

Why are people often attracted by spirituality but shun religion?

- Is there a human need for the spiritual?
- Is religion the way to fill this need?
- Should religions try to change? Or reinvent themselves?

How is spiritual experience valued in our faiths?

- is the individual's experience valued? Should it be?
- Do all faiths have scriptural or traditional stories of spiritual experience?

How do our faiths handle the darker side of spirituality?

- Does it matter if someone chooses to explore the 'left-hand path'?
- Do the represented faiths have a line on this?
- Do they have ways of reacting, or helping, or guiding?

Where (if anywhere) does prayer - corporate or personal - fit in?

- Is prayer connected to spirituality? Or leads to it? Or from it?

Royal College of Psychiatrists research points

Patients have identified the following benefits of good quality spiritual care:

- improved self-control, self-esteem and confidence
- faster and easier recovery, achieved through both promoting the healthy grieving of loss and maximising personal potential;
- improved relationships – with self, others and with God/creation/nature;
- a new sense of meaning, resulting in reawakening of hope and peace of mind, enabling people to accept and live with problems not yet resolved.

Example Spiritual practices

- belonging to a faith tradition
- participating in community-based activities
- ritual and symbolic practices and other forms of worship;
- pilgrimage and retreats;
- meditation and prayer;
- reading scripture;
- sacred music (listening to, singing and playing) including songs, hymns, psalms and devotional chants;
- acts of compassion (including work, especially teamwork);
- deep reflection (contemplation);
- yoga, Tai Chi and similar disciplined practices;
- engaging with and enjoying nature;
- contemplative reading (of literature, poetry, philosophy etc.);
- appreciation of the arts and engaging in creative activities, including artistic pursuits, cookery, gardening etc.;
- maintaining stable family relationships and friendships (especially those involving high levels of trust and intimacy);
- group or team sports, recreational or other activity involving a special quality of fellowship.

Example spiritual values

- creativity - patience - perseverance - honesty - kindness - compassion
- wisdom - equanimity - hope and joy

Example spiritual skills

- being self-reflective and honest;
- being able to remain focused in the present,
- remaining alert, unhurried and attentive;
- being able to rest, relax and create a still, peaceful state of mind;
- developing greater empathy for others;
- finding courage to witness and endure distress while sustaining an attitude of hope;
- developing improved discernment, for example about when to speak or act and when to remain silent;
- learning how to give without feeling drained;
- being able to grieve and let go.