The importance of addressing Spiritual needs when caring

Mary Ann Johnson, BS, MA
VHCA Workshop
June, 2021

**GOALS**

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- be able to define Spirituality
- How did Covid 19 effect Spirituality
- state the importance of nurturing the Spirituality when caring for older adults
- List ways to identify Spiritual needs for your residents
- list ways to build relationship with the older adult and his/her family
- list tasks that you and other staff can do to nurture each other
SPIRITUALITY

- What is it?
- Is it religious?
- Does everyone have Spirituality?
- What is Life’s purpose?
- Can you think of real life examples of Spirituality

WHAT MAKES YOU YOU?
SEVEN SPIRITUAL NEEDS

All people need to experience or have:

- empowerment of love
- beliefs that give some sense of meaning and hope to life
- values, priorities, and life commitments the need to discover and develop his/her inner wisdom, creativity and love of their unique transpersonal/spiritual self.
- a deepening awareness of relationships with other people and with the natural world.

Howard Clinebell, Pastoral Care and Psychological counselor

SEVEN SPIRITUAL NEEDS (CON’T)

- Every human being needs spiritual resources to help heal the painful wounds of grief, guilt, resentment, unforgiveness, self-rejection, and shame.

- We also need spiritual resources to deepen our experiences of trust, self-esteem, hope, joy and love of life.

Howard Clinebell, Pastoral Care and Psychological counselor
THE CHANGING SPIRITUALITY OF THE OLDER RESIDENT

- This is important for the older adult:
  - illnesses and death become a part of everyday life.
  - Changes in mobility may change the person’s lifestyle of his living arrangements.
  - Moving to a residential community may be from necessity not because the person chooses to move.
  - Loss of friends, relatives, a spouse to death may become a part of life.

THE OLDER ADULT

- is aware that he is having difficulty with daily activities.
- He/she does not want to admit any difficulties
NO ONE LIKES

- to be talked about as if he was not there
- to be told what to do and not involved in decision making

THE CARE PARTNER FAMILY MAY

- take over everything
- be in denial
- resent that they have to provide the care
- not realize the person needs the extra care
- want to keep the person at home so that the family is not embarrassed by the person’s behavior.
RELATIONSHIPS

- important
- nurtures the person
- gives the person value

TOOLS FOR NURTURING YOUR RESIDENTS
**THINGS TO REFRAIN FROM DOING**

- Sharing with the family that you know how they feel
- If there is a behavioral incident or a difficult diagnosis, don’t pretend nothing happened
- Talk behind the family or the person’s back

**WHAT CAN THE STAFF DO**

- Develop a care plan and make others aware
- Smile
- Train the team how to communicate
- Encourage the team and family support the person doing something that makes him happy
- Send cards to the families with pictures of the person doing happy things
- Help the person send cards or write letters for the person to send to the family
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH NOT ONLY THE PERSON BUT ALSO HIS FAMILY.

BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP
BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

- Don’t be afraid to offer a smile or a compliment
- Learn to sit down or walk with the person for your visit – you are in her world not yours
- Share things that are happening in the community
- If there is a special event that the person may enjoy and can handle, offer to go with and sit with the person
- If the person does not want to talk or to have someone with them, don’t push yourself on him/her.

COMMUNICATION

- Listen - it doesn’t matter if you don’t understand
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Face the person
- Sit or stand at her level.
- Slow your speech down
- Use one subject at a time
- Leave time for the person to respond
- Watch his body language - most of our communication is by our body language not words.
**Remember**

- This person is human and still needs a friend, to feel needed, to feel loved.
- Always introduce yourself or wear a name tag. Talk to the person when you are assisting with care.
- Include them in what you are doing
- Allow the person to help when possible
- Ask the person for assistance and tell you how to do a task

**Other Things**

- Send cards when the person has a special event in his life or is upset
- Sing with the individual
- Have a small group of your adults go to a facility to sing
- Allow the person to help with setting the table or asking the person for advice when you are doing an activity.
- Offer to sit with the person when she is lonely
WE HAVE TALKED BRIEFLY ABOUT MANY THINGS

- Don’t expect to conquer this problem in a few weeks
- You have people that you care for or that you come in contact everyday.
- What did you learn that will help you in getting to know him/her?
- What changes will you make in yourself that will help you in enriching the life of those you care for?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CNA OR NURSE WHO NURTURES SPIRITUALITY

- Empathy
- Compassion
- Confidential
- Prayerful/ meditative
- Patient
- Able to handle surprises
- Able to learn good communication techniques
- Someone who will not compare her situation with what the person is going through
**REMEMBER**

- Introduce yourself each time you visit
- Wear a name tag
- Approach from the front
- Sit down on the person’s dominant side
- Do not be rushed
- If you have a bad day, try to get someone else to work with that person
- Every person is different and every family has different ways of doing things—respect their wishes

---

**Always remember:**

1. All of these folks are gifts to us

2. They are all people who need support—both the family and the person

3. If you have your own faith or religious practice, pray for these folks daily

4. Keep a positive approach
This program was compiled by Mary Ann Johnson, BS, MA, Retired Program Director for the Alzheimer’s Association. No part of this program may be reproduced or presented without the permission of the author. February, 2020.