



B.C. Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

Wednesday June 9, 2021



The 'Power' of Spirituality

My 9-year-old was the source for this week's topic. As I scratched my head, thinking of topics for our final ReFresh articles for the year, I asked my son, *"Do you have any ideas about something I could write about, something about being healthy that is not related to exercise or nutrition?"* He paused, only for a moment, and said, *"Spirituality!"* The Universe, God, a Higher Power — whatever you envision — had spoken to me through the voice of a Grade 4 boy. So, I had to honour the message.

Spirituality can be defined broadly as a sense of connection to something higher than ourselves. Many people search for meaning in their lives. The sense of transcendence experienced in spirituality is a universal experience.

Spirituality means different things to different people. For some, it is primarily about a belief in God and active participation in an organized religion. Many people identify as spiritual but not religious; their non-religious experiences help them get in touch with their spiritual selves through quiet reflection, time in nature, private prayer, yoga, or meditation.

Religion and spirituality are not understood in the same way, though they often overlap. While spirituality may incorporate elements of religion, spirituality describes a much broader understanding of an individual's connection with the transcendent aspects of life.

This diagram illustrates one way to conceptualize this relationship:



Source: [“What is Spirituality?”](#) | Louise Delagran, MA, MEd, *University of Minnesota*

Spirituality and Well-Being

Many of the practices recommended for cultivating spirituality are similar to those recommended for improving emotional well-being. This is because there is a connection between the two; emotional and spiritual well-being influence one another and overlap, as do all aspects of well-being.

Spirituality is about seeking a meaningful connection with something bigger than yourself which can result in positive emotions, such as peace, awe, contentment, gratitude, and acceptance.

Emotional health is about cultivating a positive state of mind which can broaden your outlook to recognize and incorporate a connection to something larger than yourself.

Thus, emotions and spirituality are distinct but linked, and are deeply integrated with one another.

Although there has yet to be a direct causal link found, research has consistently found that religious involvement is correlated with better physical and mental health, including better sleep, lower blood pressure, and an overall lower rate of mortality. Higher levels of spirituality have also been linked to increased compassion, strengthened relationships, and improved self-esteem.

Studies show that our brains may react in similar ways to diverse spiritual experiences. When people described times they felt oneness, infinity, or connection to a higher power, they had less activity in their inferior parietal lobe which is usually active during representations of oneself in

space or time. This indicates people may temporarily lose their sense of self during spiritual experiences.

As we know, levels of depression continue to rise, and drug therapy has not had great success in eliminating the problem. However, a specific form of prayer that is said to have a healing effect on depressive symptoms is meditative or centering prayer (Johnson, 2018). Higher levels of psychological resilience, positive emotions, and improved immune response have all been linked with spirituality.

Spirituality is not a simple subject for experimental study. However, knowing that there is such a high correlation with physical and psychological well-being, most health practitioners would agree that including spirituality in practice would be beneficial.

Connect With Your Spirituality

Regardless of your spiritual or religious background, starting a practice to find moments of transcendence can have a profound impact on your life.

Here are some ideas on how to begin or refresh:

1. **Start small and make new habits easy.** There is no need to fully adopt a set of beliefs overnight. Becoming more spiritual can be as simple as staying silent for 5–10 minutes a day in a quiet, soothing environment.
2. **Commit.** Love yourself enough to attempt to find moments of transcendent emotions daily. Through increasing hope, kindness, self-compassion, gratitude, and awe, anyone can start being more spiritual right away. All it takes is one decision to change perspective.
3. **Practice.** Finding moments of transcendence to replace moments of frustration will not happen by waving a magic wand. Human beings must practice mindful attention to their thoughts, emotions, and behaviour to find experiences in spirituality.
4. **Study.** Explore others' experiences of spirituality, whether through religion or personal journeys. Find something you can relate to. Ask questions and get curious about people who have cultivated this beautiful way of being in the world. I personally recommend the book: *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. Even if you have read it, go back and read a chapter or two or, *better yet*, download the audio book. It is a deep read so I found listening to the audio book easier to absorb; Eckhart's voice is also very soothing. I go

back and listen regularly to help refocus. His concepts have had a life changing impact on my perspective.

5. ***Develop an optimistic explanatory style.*** While getting curious and beginning to ask more questions, slowing down how you speak and exploring your strongly held beliefs can open your mind to more possibilities.
6. ***Choose love and respect.*** With every interaction, lead with a loving and kind way of being. Even when dealing with awkward interactions, staying calm and in a loving mindset can deescalate the situation.

This [short video](#) by Jim Carrey – “What It All Means” – is a great way to end ReFresh this week. ***Warning:*** *There are a couple of parts that include ‘colourful’ language, so please use discretion, but it’s a deep message that will give you a pause.*

The invitation for you this summer is to connect or reconnect with your concept of transcendence. One thing the pandemic did was connect the world for survival. Now, as the sun starts to come out from behind the clouds, may we find ways to connect in spirituality.

If you would like to contribute, or have ideas about what you would like to see in the [ReFresh](#) series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.

Sources:

- Positive Psychology | [The Science of Spirituality](#)
- Psychology Today | [Spirituality](#)
- Louise Delagran, MA, MEd, *University of Minnesota* | [“What is Spirituality?”](#)