Spiritual Care for the Spiritual But Not Religious

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Spirituality

• “the personal search for meaning and purpose, and relationship with and trust of “Something Greater Than Oneself” that is personally meaningful”

• Sam Keen: in the presence of the spiritual when we feel: “wonder, awe, gratitude, anxiety, joy, grief, reverence, fascination, empowerment, vocation, compassion, outrage, hope, humility, trust, absolute dependency”
Religion

• ‘the beliefs, practices, and attitudes associated with an organized group or community that usually has a common authoritative text or narrative that mediates the community’s relationship with a commonly agreed upon “Something Greater than Oneself”'
In 2007, the Pew Research Institute began a study of the religious demographics of the US

- 2007: 16.1% religiously unaffiliated
- 2014: 22.8% religiously unaffiliated. Nearly 37% of these said they were SBNR, approximately 7% of the US.
- 2017: 11% and growing of the US SBNR.
Who?

• SBNR: those who say they are spiritual but also say that their religious faith is not very important in their lives

• SBNR: those who say they are spiritual but do not claim any religious faith
Why SBNR?

as varied as the personal stories of the individuals
Often in the varieties.

- They value individual freedom.
- View spirituality as deeply personal and often private.
- View all religions as teaching basically the same thing.
- Truth in all religions.
- No religion has a monopoly on ultimate reality.
• Hold views of God that differ from traditional points of view
• Few take part in religious practices like scripture reading or prayer or group activities
• More participate in silence, solitude, nature
• Often mix beliefs & practices from a variety of religions and traditions
• May have been hurt or abused by religious institution or person but not necessarily
Do not view religious institutions as contributing to their life in a personally relevant way.

View religious institutions as not offering anything they can’t get on their own.
The Spiritual But Not Religious are often “distinct among their irreligious peers in their spiritual curiosity and openness.” often “internally leaning toward the spiritual side of life.”

“displaying an uncommon inclination to think beyond the material and to experience the transcendent.”
Where/How to Start

• Humility

• Compassion

• Nurturing Storytelling

• Giving the greatest gift
Spiritual Care is offered and when invited, the spiritual caregiver enters into relationship with a patient or family member with an open mind and an open prayerful heart in a way that nurtures feelings of safety, security, trust, and welcome so the patient or family member can choose to share their story, joys and all, hurts and all, with the full confidence that their story will be heard with compassion, care, and never judgment or rejection, but acceptance.
Vitals

Their narrative  Their story

Your openness  Your hearing  Your listening

Innovation and Excellence in Advanced Illness at End of Life
• How would you describe yourself?
• What is most important to you in this situation at this time in your life?
• What are you the proudest of in your life?
• If you could be granted three wishes, for what would you ask?
• When have you felt the most content, the most peaceful?
• Forgiving, grieving, and caregiving the three hardest things?
The Four Things That Matter Most

• “Please forgive me.”
• “I forgive you.”
• “Thank you.”
• “I love you.”

The Four Things That Matter Most, by Ira Byock, Atria Books-Simon and Schuster, June 2014. (I would add a fifth: Goodbye.)
HOPE Assessment Tool

H: sources of hope

From whom or from what do you receive comfort?
What are your sources of hope, strength, comfort, and peace?
What gives you strength when life is challenging?
What sustains you and keeps you going?
What do you hold on to during difficult times?
O: organized religion

Are you part of a religious or spiritual community?
Does it help you?
How?
P: personal spirituality and practices

Do you have personal spiritual beliefs?

Do you have personal beliefs that have helped you in living your life and help you now in this situation?

What parts of your personal spiritual beliefs or spiritual practices do you find most helpful?

Do you have personal practices or activities that you find helpful?
HOPE Assessment Tool

E: effects on care and end-of-life issues
Does your current situation affect your ability to do the things that usually help you spiritually?
Do you have any specific beliefs or practices you especially want me to know about as I care for you?
How do your beliefs affect the kind of health care you would like to receive?
Wildflowers along life’s path

- Five sheets of paper with the headings:
  Sounds
  Sights
  Tastes
  Smells
  Touch (feelings/textures)

List your 10 favorites of each. Cut them into slips of paper. Place them in a container.
Listen to the story
Listen to the story
Listen to the story
Listen to the story
Listen to the story
Listen to the story
Listen to the story
And then, Listen to the story