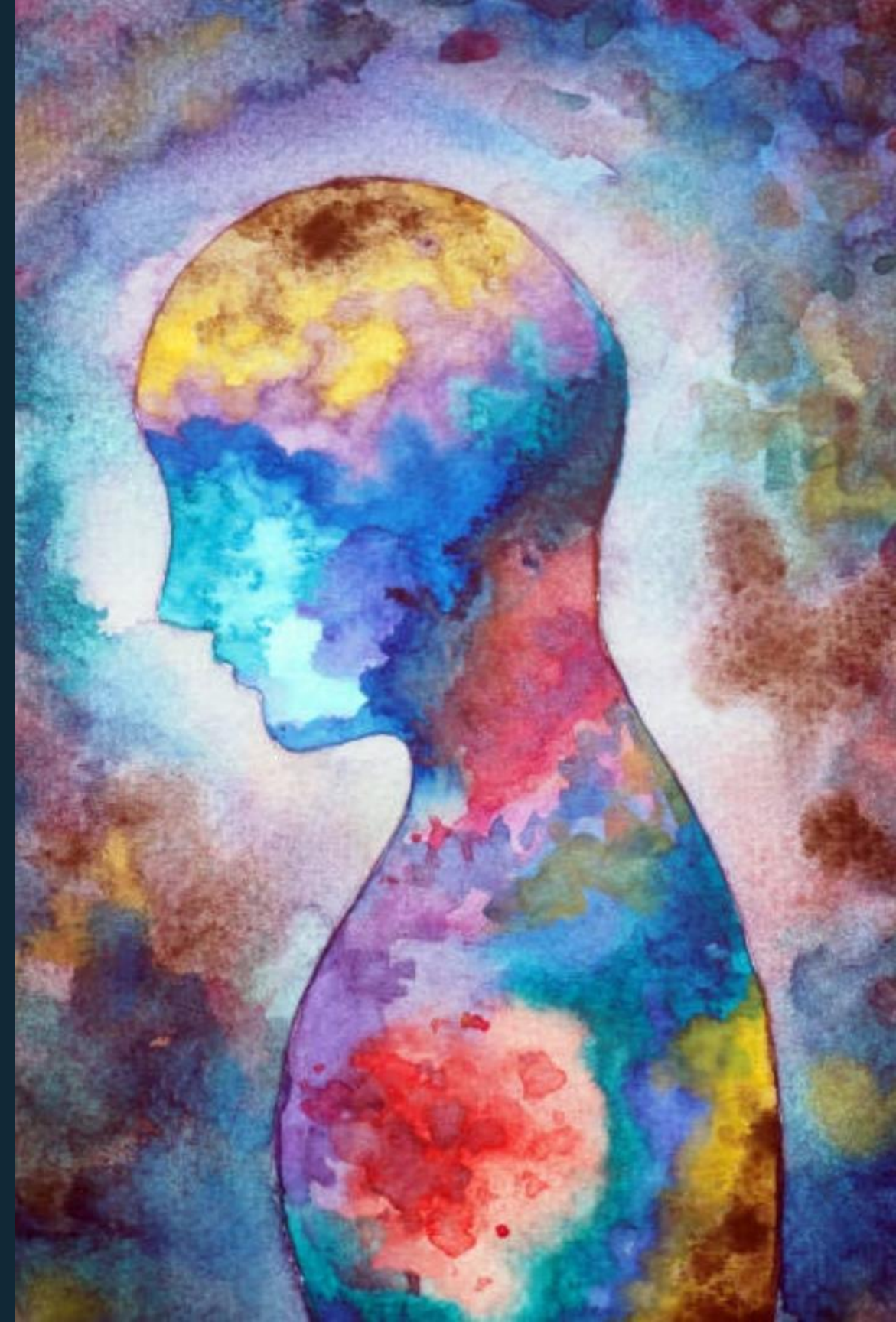


# Spiritual Pain: Cause, Effect, and Coping Strategies

Rev. Dr. Anthony Green, DMin, MDiv, BCC

Director of Pastoral Care and Chairman of the Ellis Ethics Committee



# Financial Disclosure

## Financial Interests

No relevant financial interests or relationships to disclose regarding the content of this presentation.

## Presentation Content

Materials covered are based on scholarly research and clinical experience in pastoral care.

# Learning Objectives

## Understand Spirituality

Differentiate between religion and spirituality. Learn what spiritual pain is.

1

## Identify Spiritual Pain

Use screening tools to recognize spiritual pain in patients.

2

## Apply in Medical Care

Learn how spiritual screening supports holistic patient care.

3

## Self-Awareness

Explore personal spiritual pain and develop coping strategies.

4



# Defining Spirituality

## Religion

Structured belief system addressing universal spiritual questions. Derived from Latin "religare" (to bind). Includes established rites and rituals.

## Spirituality

Personal quest for understanding life's ultimate questions. Search for meaning and relationship to the sacred or transcendent.

May be defined as "Whomever or whatever gives one transcendent meaning in life."

# Spiritual Pain Defined

It is an internal aching due to a disquieted self, an unsettled self.

Spiritual pain arises when one's sense of self is violated. It can manifest as existential challenges, value-based considerations, and breaches in religious foundations.

Compared to Psychological Pain —

**Psychological Pain**  
Distress originating from emotional or mental sources.

**Spiritual Pain**  
Discomfort linked to one's spiritual essence and beliefs.





# Søren Kierkegaard's Stages of Spiritual Growth

1

## Aesthetic Stage

Focus on pleasure, self-centeredness, and fleeting experiences.

2

## Ethical Stage

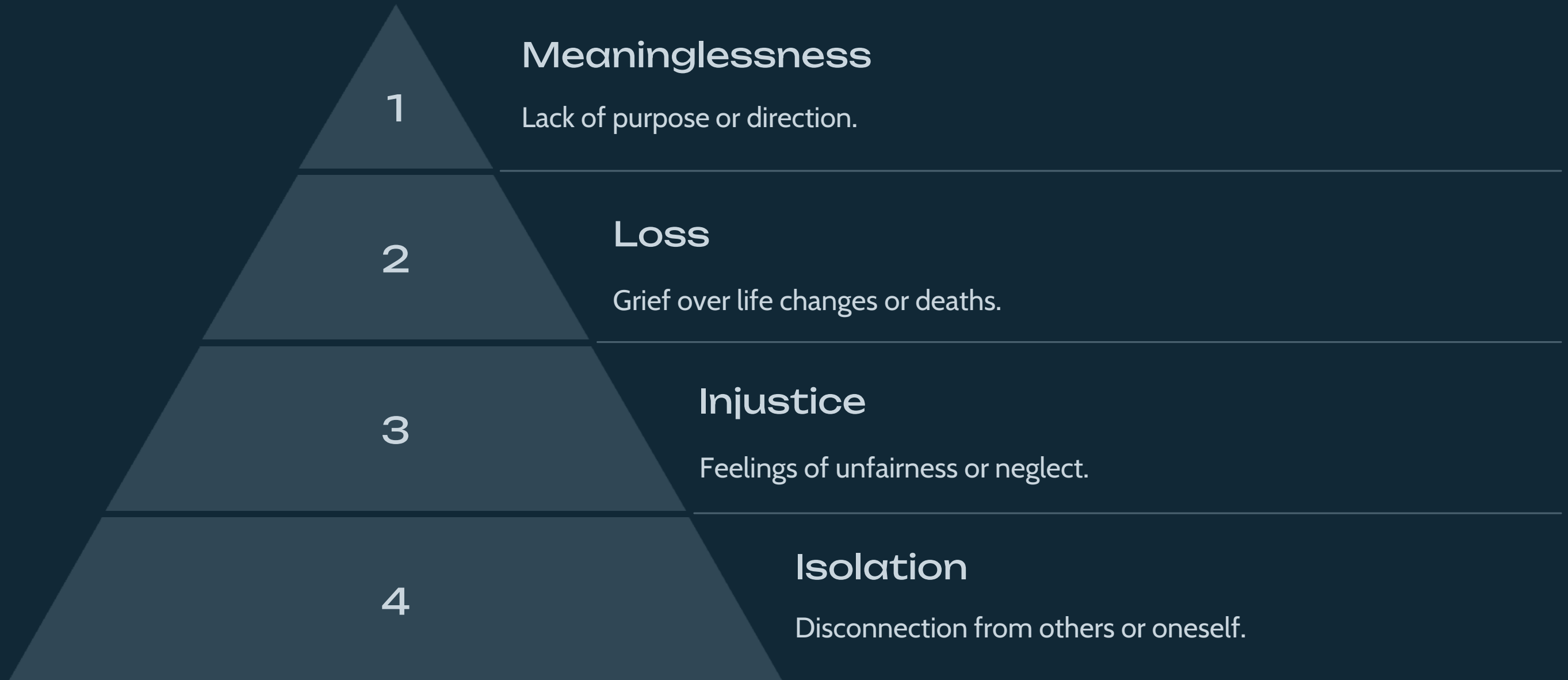
Development of moral principles and social responsibilities.

3

## Religious or Spiritual Stage

Embrace of higher truth, trust in life's meaning, and transcendence.

# Causes of Spiritual Pain





# The Multidimensional Nature of Spirituality

## Existential Challenges

Questions about identity, meaning, suffering, and death.

## Value-Based Considerations

Importance of relationships, work, nature, ethics, and life.

## Religious Foundations

Faith, beliefs, and practices related to a higher power.



# Dame Ciceley Saunders' Total Pain Concept



## Physical Pain

Somatic discomfort and bodily suffering.



## Social Pain

Relational and interpersonal challenges.



## Psychological Pain

Emotional and cognitive distress.



## Spiritual Pain

Mental suffering due to life's profound questions.



# Balance: Key to Spiritual Health

## Harmony - when we are healthy

Balance in life fosters spiritual well-being. It allows for holistic development and contentment.

## Imbalance - when we are unhealthy

Uneven aspects of life can lead to spiritual pain. It disrupts inner peace and outer harmony.

# Spiritual Pain: Part 2

## Definition

Spiritual pain arises from an internal aching due to a disquieted, unsettled self.

## Manifestation

Can present as during a health crisis – shows up in existential challenges, broken relationships, or loss of meaning, hope, or more generally a disruption of what was previously 'normal'.

## Impact

Affects overall well-being, quality of life, and ability to cope with health issues.





# Screening for Spiritual Pain

Doctors and Nurses - can and should do a spiritual screen to identify spiritual pain. A chaplain may be consulted for a more in-depth assessment.

■ **Open Dialogue**  
Encourage patients to share their spiritual beliefs and concerns.

■ **Non-Judgmental Attitude**  
Create a safe, supportive environment for discussion.

■ **Holistic Approach**  
Integrate spiritual assessment into comprehensive patient care.

# The FACIT-Sp 12

## Scale Development

Created by Peterman, Fitchett, Brady, and Hernandez for measuring spiritual well-being.

## Application

Used to assess patients' spiritual health in healthcare settings, particularly with chronic illnesses.

## Relevance

Helps healthcare providers understand spiritual aspects of patient care.





1

### **H - Sources of Hope**

What gives you hope, strength, comfort and peace in difficult times?

2

### **O - Organized Religion**

Are you a part of any religious or spiritual community?

3

### **P - Personal Spirituality and Practices**

What aspects of your spirituality do you find most helpful?

4

### **E - Effects on Medical Care and End-of-life decisions**

As your doctor/nurse is there anything I can do to help you access spiritual resources that help you?

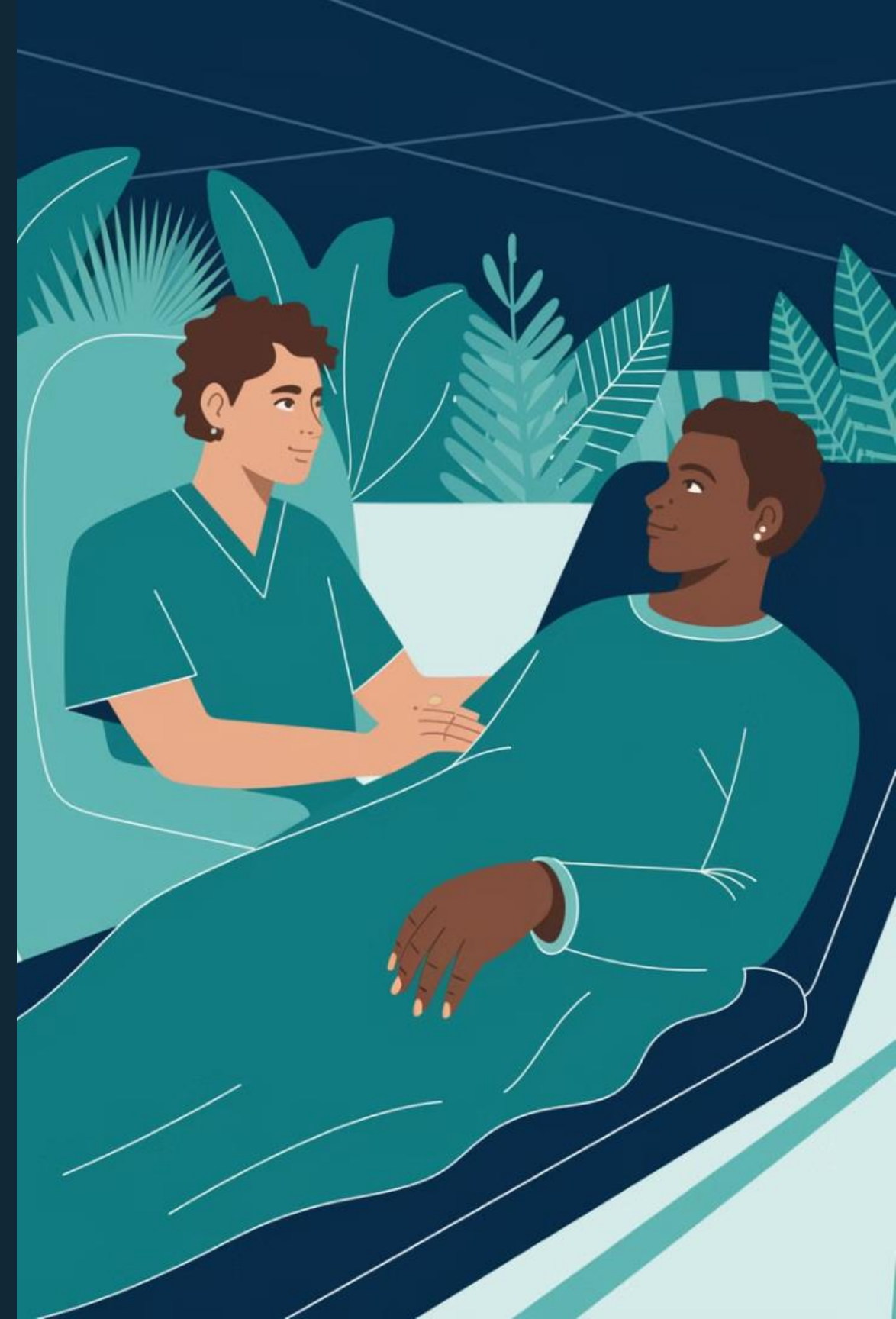
# **HOPE Spiritual Assessment Tool**

# FICA Spiritual Assessment

The FICA Spiritual Assessment is a structured clinical tool that helps healthcare providers evaluate spiritual distress and needs. This evidence-based method explores four key dimensions through the acronym FICA:

- Faith and belief: The patient's fundamental spiritual or religious beliefs
- Importance and influence: How these beliefs impact their healthcare decisions
- Community: The spiritual or religious support systems available to the patient
- Address/Action: How the healthcare team can incorporate spiritual care into treatment

This systematic approach enables healthcare providers to identify spiritual concerns and provide appropriate support or referrals as part of holistic patient care.



# Other Spiritual Assessments



## CASH

Care, Assistance/Help,  
Stress, Hopes/Fears



## Diamond

Focuses on five key  
spiritual themes



## PC-7

Seven themes for  
palliative care spiritual  
assessment



## SCAI

Spiritual Care and  
Assessment  
Intervention





# Timeless Qualities in Living

## ■ Meaning

Purpose and significance in life experiences.

## ■ Forgiveness

Ability to let go of resentments and negative emotions.

## ■ Relatedness

Connection to oneself, others, and the universe.

## ■ Hope

Positive outlook and expectation of positive outcomes.

# Spiritual Pain Scale

1/2

## Extreme Anxiety

Intense spiritual distress with feelings of hopelessness.

3/4

## Moderate Anxiety

Notable but manageable feelings of unease and doubt.

5/6

## Persistent Anxiety

Ongoing but less severe feelings of spiritual discomfort.

7/8

## Growing Peace

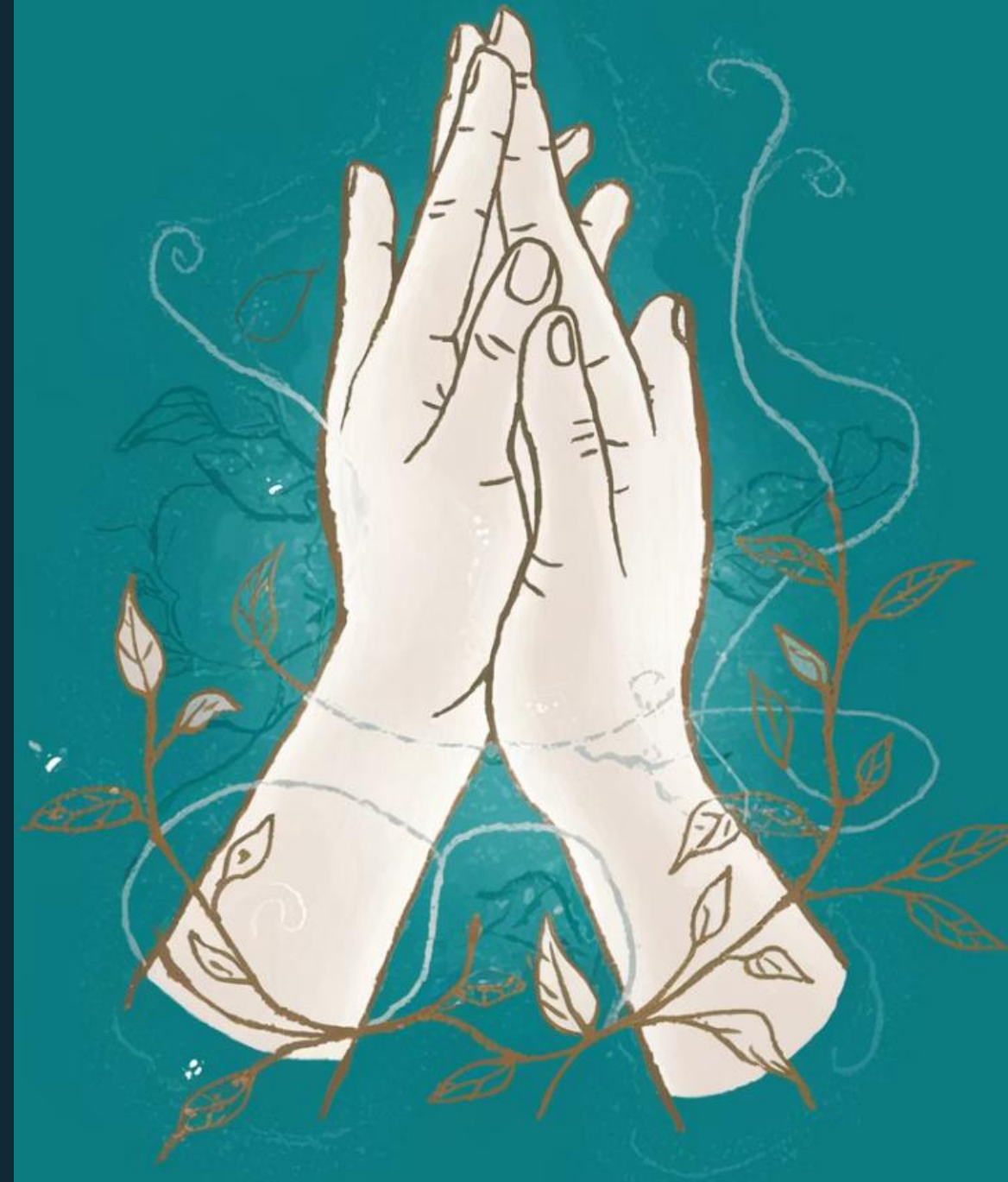
Increasing sense of spiritual calm and well-being.



# Meditation for Relatedness Pain

You are me and I am you. Is it not obvious that we are inter-we? You cultivate the flower in yourself. I transform the garbage in myself. So you will not have to suffer. We are in the world, to bring peace and joy to each other.

Thich Nhat Hanh provides wisdom for healing interpersonal spiritual pain, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all beings.



# Forgiveness: Types and Pain Scale

## Decisional Forgiveness

"Making a conscious decision to let go of hurt feelings, such as anger and resentment, putting them in the past, and moving forward free of the effects those feelings can bring."

## Emotional Forgiveness

"Replacing negative emotions toward the person who has wronged you with positive ones such as sympathy, compassion, or empathy."

# Forgiveness as a Healing Process

## Identify Hurt

Recognize and acknowledge the pain or wrongdoing.

## Reflect on Impact

Consider how the situation has affected you emotionally.

## Seek Understanding

Try to see things from the other person's perspective.

## Let Go

Release negative emotions associated with the situation.



# Benefits of Spiritual Screening in Medical Care

## Informed Decision-Making

Spiritual beliefs often influence treatment preferences and end-of-life care decisions.

## Strengthened Patient-Provider Relationship

Allows for more personalized and compassionate care.

## Coping Strategies

Identifies patients who could benefit from spiritual support during challenging times.

# Importance of Patient-Centered Care that includes Spiritual Healthcare

## ■ Listening

Attentive listening diminishes feelings of isolation in suffering patients.

## ■ Evaluation

Proactively assess patients' needs for counseling and pastoral care.

## ■ Comprehensive Approach

Integrate spiritual care into the broader scope of patient assessment.



# Self-Care: *Balancing* Personal and Professional Life



## Meditation

Regular mindfulness practices for stress reduction and focus.



## Nature Connection

Spending time outdoors to enhance emotional well-being.



## Physical Activity

Regular exercise to maintain physical and mental health.





# Building Resilience for Healthcare Professionals

1

## Open Communication

Encourage team discussions about stress and challenges.

---

2

## Peer Support

Foster a culture of mutual understanding and help.

---

3

## Skills Development

Provide training in compassion fatigue and burnout prevention.

---

4

## Self-Awareness

Promote recognition of personal limits and needs.



# The Quest for Meaning: Coping Strategies

1

## Journaling

Write about your experiences and reflections regularly.

2

## Meditation

Practice mindfulness to connect with your inner self.

3

## Connection Activities

Engage in meaningful social interactions and community service.

4

## Spiritual Practices

Explore various spiritual disciplines for personal growth.





# Building Relatedness: Creating Connections

1

## Active Listening

Practice attentive, non-judgmental listening to others.

2

## Empathy Cultivation

Develop skills to understand and share others' feelings.

3

## Compassion Practice

Engage in acts of kindness and support for others.

4

## Volunteer Work

Participate in community service to foster connections.



# Cultivating Meaning in Daily Life

## ■ Gratitude Practice

Regularly reflect on things you are thankful for.

## ■ Hobby Engagement

Explore creative interests and passionate pursuits.

## ■ Goal Setting

Identify and pursue meaningful personal and professional objectives.

## ■ Legacy Thinking

Consider the impact you wish to have on the world.



# Nurturing Hope: Coping with Spiritual Pain



## Positive Outlook

Cultivate a mindset of possibility and growth.



## Social Connections

Strengthen relationships with supportive individuals.



## Educational Pursuits

Engage in learning and personal development.



# Conclusion: Healing and Growth

## Awareness

Spiritual pain is as important as physical pain in patient care.

## Compassion

Empathy and understanding are crucial in addressing spiritual pain.

## Integration

Comprehensive care includes spiritual assessment and support.



# Final Thoughts: Our Continuous Journey

1

## Self-Reflection

Ongoing personal exploration of our spiritual journey.

2

## Skill Development

Continuous learning in spiritual care and assessment.

3

## Team Collaboration

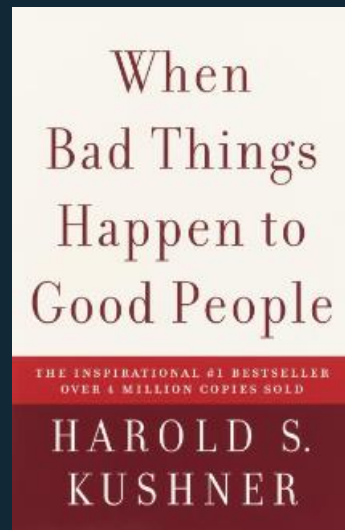
Fostering a supportive environment for professional growth.



# Resources for Further Exploration



## Recommended Reading



## Conferences

Spirituality in Healthcare annual conference



### Conference - Spiritual Care Association

12th Annual Caring for the Human Spirit® Conference and Westberg Symposium April 28 – 30, 2025 VIRTUAL Registration is Now Open! 11th...

# Bibliography and References

Anandarajah G, Hight E. Spirituality and medical practice: using the HOPE questions as a practical tool for spiritual assessment. *Am Fam Physician*. 2001 Jan 1;63(1):81-9. PMID: 11195773.

(2019, November 22). CAPC Spiritual Screening. Center to Advance Palliative Care. Retrieved January 29, 2025, from <https://www.capc.org/toolkits/spiritual-care/>

de Brito Sena MA, Damiano RF, Lucchetti G, Peres MFP. Defining Spirituality in Healthcare: A Systematic Review and Conceptual Framework. *Front Psychol*. 2021 Nov 18;12:756080. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.756080. PMID: 34867654; PMCID: PMC8637184.

Best, M., Leget, C., Goodhead, A. et al., An EAPC white paper on multi-disciplinary education for spiritual care in palliative care. *BMC Palliat Care*. 19, 9 (2020).

Kuckel DP, Jones AL, Smith DK. The Spiritual Assessment. *Am Fam Physician*. 2022 Oct;106(4):415-419. PMID: 36260898.

Lichtenfeld S, Buechner VL, Maier MA, Fernández-Capo M. Forgive and Forget: Differences between Decisional and Emotional Forgiveness. *PLoS One*. 2015 May 6;10(5):e0125561. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0125561. PMID: 25946090; PMCID: PMC4422736.

Mako C, Galek K, Poppito SR. Spiritual pain among patients with advanced cancer in palliative care. *J Palliat Med*. 2006 Oct;9(5):1106-13. doi: 10.1089/jpm.2006.9.1106. PMID: 17040148.

McCord G, Gilchrist VJ, Grossman SD, King BD, McCormick KE, Oprandi AM, Schrop SL, Selius BA, Smucker DO, Weldy DL, Amorn M, Carter MA, Deak AJ, Hefzy H, Srivastava M. Discussing spirituality with patients: a rational and ethical approach. *Ann Fam Med*. 2004 Jul-Aug;2(4):356-61. doi: 10.1370/afm.71. PMID: 15335136; PMCID: PMC1466687.

Peterman AH, Fitchett G, Brady MJ, Hernandez L, Cella D. Measuring spiritual well-being in people with cancer: The Functional Assessment of Chronic Illness Therapy–Spiritual Well-Being Scale (FACIT–Sp) *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*. 2002;24:49–58. doi: 10.1207/S15324796ABM2401\_06. doi: 10.1207/S15324796ABM2401\_06.

Pew Research Center. (2024, January 24). *Religious 'nones' in America: Who they are and what they believe*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/religious-nones-in-america-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe/>

Quill, T., & Snyder, L. (2001). *Physicians guide to end-of-life care*. American College of Physicians.

(2023, December 27). Spirituality Among Americans. Pew Research. Retrieved January 29, 2025, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/spirituality-among-americans/>

Taylor E. Initial Spiritual Screening and Assessment: Five Things to Remember. *Hanguk Hosupisu Wanhwa Uiryo Hakhoe Chi*. 2020 Mar 1;23(1):1-4. doi: 10.14475/kjhpc.2020.23.1.1. PMID: 37496889; PMCID: PMC10332711.

# Gratitude

Thank you for your attention and openness to this important topic.