**Spiritual Health**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, our physical and mental health has been continually tested. But there is another aspect of health that is also being tested and that is worth paying attention to: our spiritual health. Spiritual health refers to our sense of belonging, our feelings of shared humanity, and our sense of purpose in life. For many people, spiritual health is fed through a shared belief system or faith tradition (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, for example). But even for people who do not ascribe to a faith tradition, spiritual health is still relevant and important as it brings a sense of meaning and purpose to life.

During this pandemic, when so much that we care about is at risk or has already been lost, we are becoming acutely aware of what really matters in life. The pandemic is forcing us to reassess our values, causing us to question our priorities, and inspiring many of us to seek solace and understanding in a connecting to a higher power or deeper meaning. Having a strong sense of purpose and meaning in life has been shown to positively affect all aspects of health. Research has shown that people with a strong sense of spirituality have less hypertension, cardiac and respiratory diseases, depression, and reactivity to stress.

But, like everything else, spiritual health requires some time and attention. If you could benefit from re-examining beliefs, the following exercises are a good place to start:

- **Conduct a Values Exercise**: Make a list of your values (just google “list of personal values” to get you started). Then start crossing off and prioritizing. You can also google “Values Clarification Worksheet” for a lot of online resources for similar exercises.
- **Written reflection**: Do some journaling about what matters most. Here are some prompts to get your writing juices flowing: “I felt most alive when...”; “The things that give me a feeling of peace come from...”; “I am grateful for...”. These exercises can help you clarify what truly matters in the big picture.
- **Keepsake & photo collection**: Gather up old photos and keepsakes from your life and put them all together in one place. Spend some time with these items and see if you notice any themes. Are you with family in each photo? Are your keepsakes all related to travel? Is there a nature theme among the items? Do the keepsakes and photos mostly relate to time with family? This exercise can help reveal the things you didn’t even realize were meaningful to you.

Once you have spent some time examining what brings a sense of meaning to your life, it’s time to implement strategies that help keep those values and priorities in the forefront of your daily life. Here are some tips for keeping your priorities in check:

- **Read, Watch, Listen**: There is a huge industry of spirituality-related media that can provide you with constant inspiration. Think of a book you’ve read or show you’ve watched and see what other content is recommended for people who like those authors or producers. The podcast industry is also full of great resources for every faith and spiritual tradition.
- **Daily Reminders**: What quotes are meaningful for you? Do you have a favorite passage from a holy book? Is there an image that conjures a meaningful memory? Print these things out and hang them where you will see them frequently (at your desk, in your car, on your nightstand, your smartphone screen). Frequent reminders to reconnect with what’s really important to us is a powerful way to stay connected to feelings of a higher purpose.
- **Be a Joiner**: Although physical gatherings are not really permissible right now, they will return. And online groups, chat rooms, Zoom meet ups are still taking place, bringing likeminded people together to share faith and community.
- **Find Mentorship**: If you belong to an organized religion, you may find solace in speaking with your faith leader. If you’re more secular, you may find mentors in personal relationships with family members, teachers, coaches or others who have a shared sense of values and purpose.

If you are struggling with your spiritual health, or anything else, give Family Services EAP a call. Our counselors are available for **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** appointments! Contact us at 978-327-6666, info@FamilyServicesEAP.org or submit an in-