

Spirituality and Recovery from Mental Illness

Chris Summerville, D.Min., CPRP

**CEO, Schizophrenia Society of Canada
Executive Director, Manitoba Schizophrenia Society**

Six Dimensions of Wellness



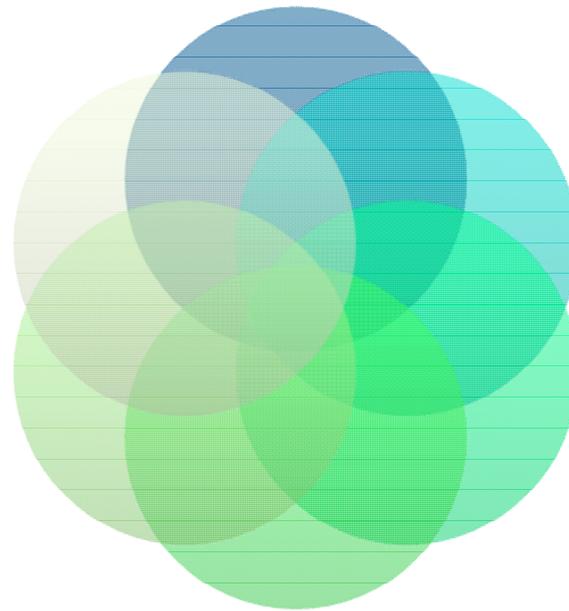
Physical

Mental

Social

Educational/
Vocational

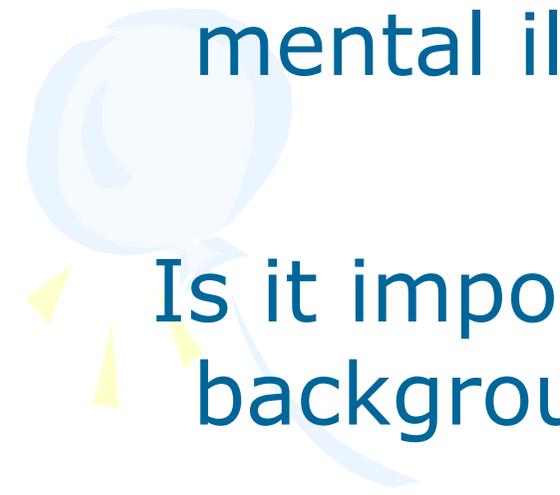
Spiritual



Emotional

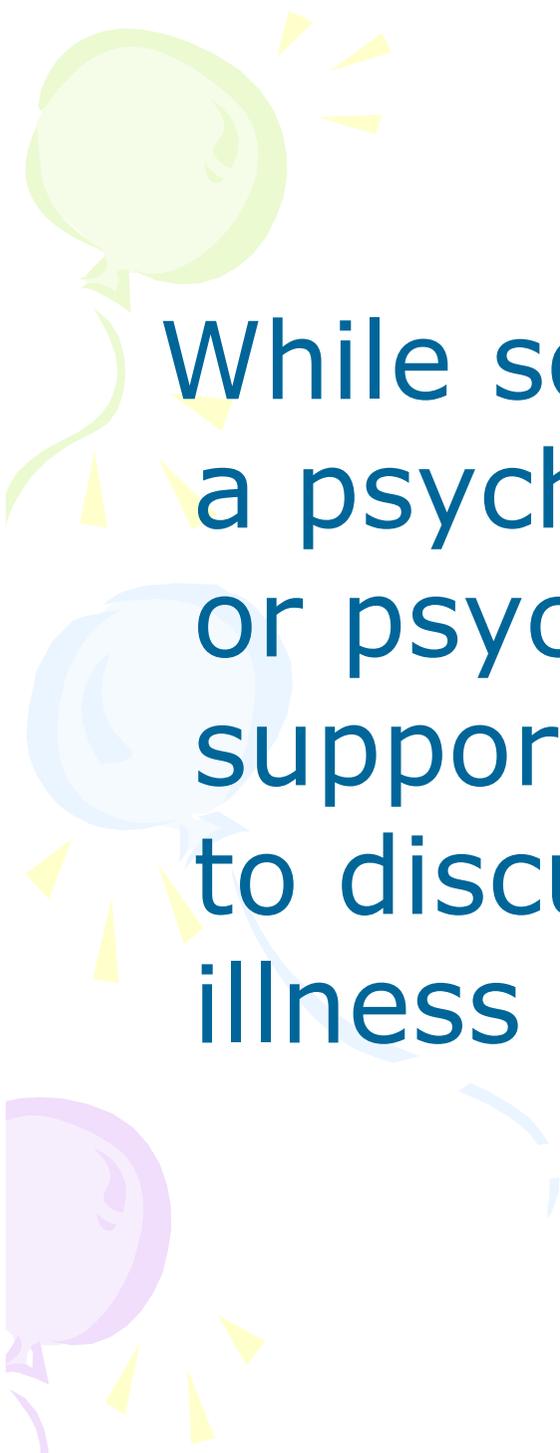


The question before us is, “What is the role of spirituality in recovery from mental illness?”



Is it important to know the faith background of those we work with?





While some individuals turn to a psychologist, social worker or psychiatrist, others want support and the opportunity to discuss their problems or illness in spiritual context.



Let's begin by asking several questions.

What is religion?

What is spirituality?

How are they related?

What is recovery?

What is the role of spirituality in recovery from mental illness? Or... recovery towards mental wellness and health?



How should healthcare providers approach the subject of spirituality?



What is religion?

- It is an organized system of beliefs and practices.

- 
- It is usually expressed by and within a community.





What is spirituality?

- It is a personal set of beliefs and practices.

- 
- It is very individual with less traditional connotations.





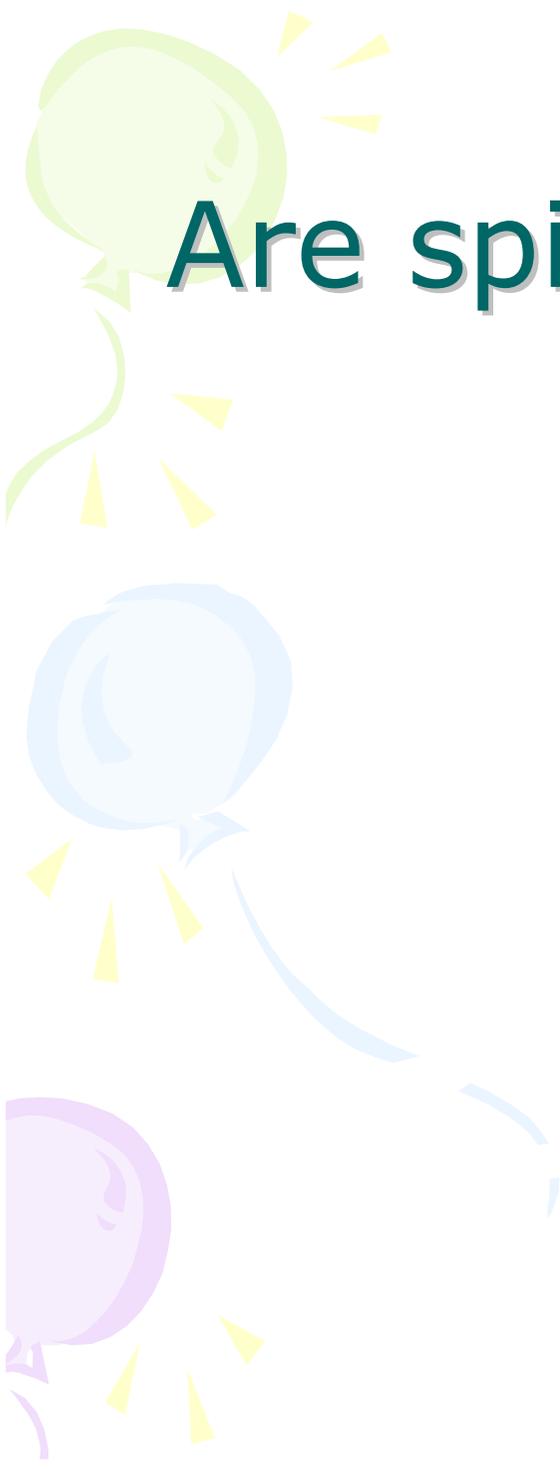
The Royal College of Psychiatrists in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.



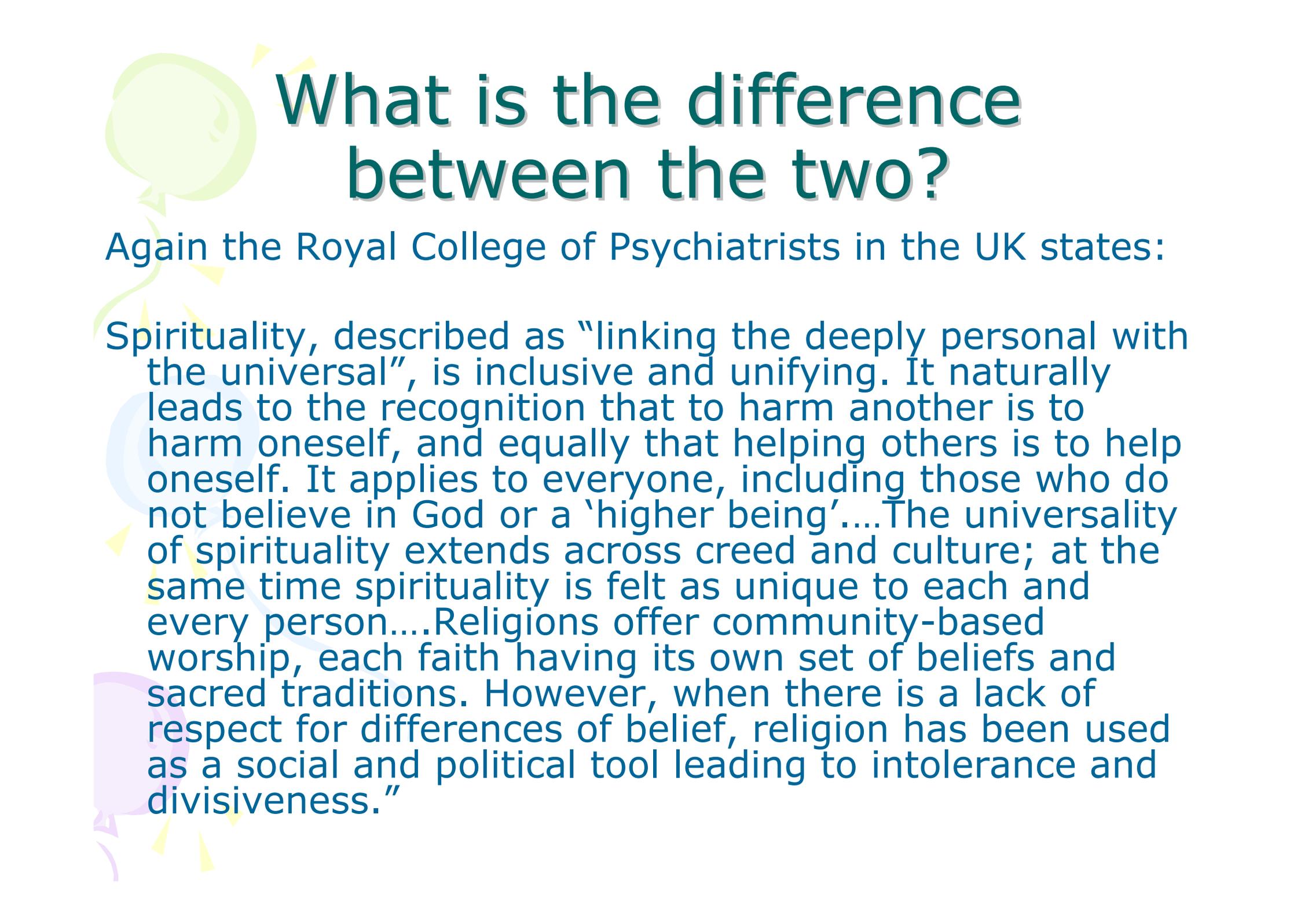
“In healthcare, spirituality is identified with experiencing a deep-seated sense of meaning and purpose in life, together with a sense of belonging. It is about acceptance, integration and wholeness.”



“The spiritual dimension tries to be in harmony with the universe, strives for answers about the infinite, and comes especially into focus in times of emotional stress, physical and mental illness, loss, bereavement and death. This desire for wholeness of being is not an intellectual attainment, for it is no less present in people with learning disability, but lies in the essence of what it means to be human.”



Are spirituality and religion
the same?



What is the difference between the two?

Again the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK states:

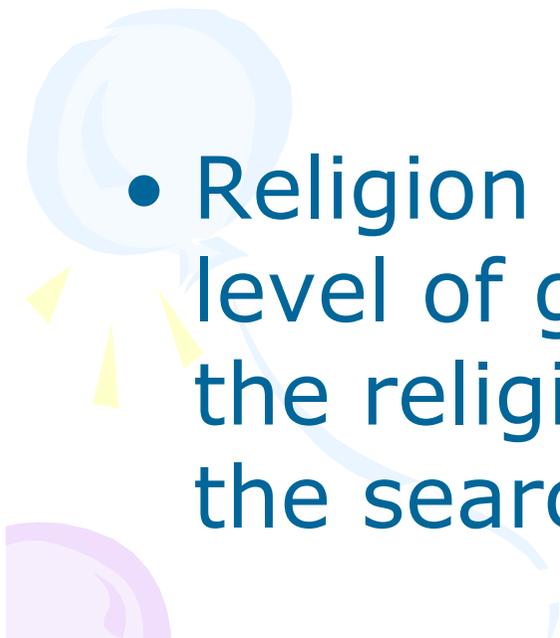
Spirituality, described as “linking the deeply personal with the universal”, is inclusive and unifying. It naturally leads to the recognition that to harm another is to harm oneself, and equally that helping others is to help oneself. It applies to everyone, including those who do not believe in God or a ‘higher being’....The universality of spirituality extends across creed and culture; at the same time spirituality is felt as unique to each and every person....Religions offer community-based worship, each faith having its own set of beliefs and sacred traditions. However, when there is a lack of respect for differences of belief, religion has been used as a social and political tool leading to intolerance and divisiveness.”

- 
- Spirituality can be seen to be more general and inclusive in its nature.

- 
- Religion is seen to be more specific and linked with a particular faith tradition or institution, and a belief in God.



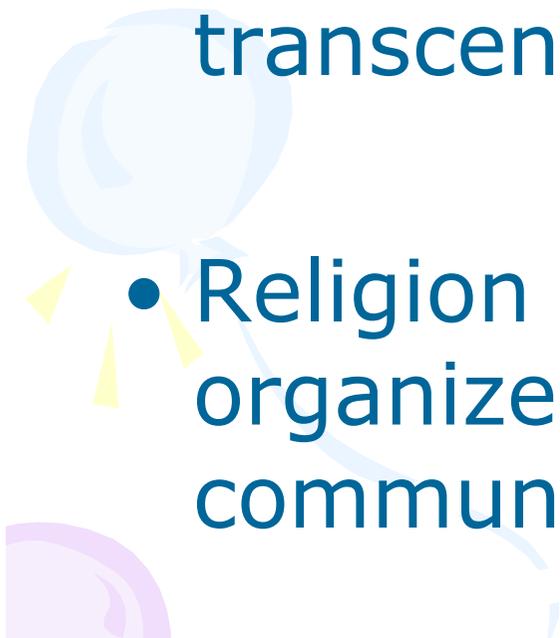
- 
- Spirituality can occur without specific guidance or codes.

- 
- Religion involves accepting some level of guidance or practices from the religion that is being followed in the search for God.





- Spirituality is a personal connectedness to God or a transcendent reality.

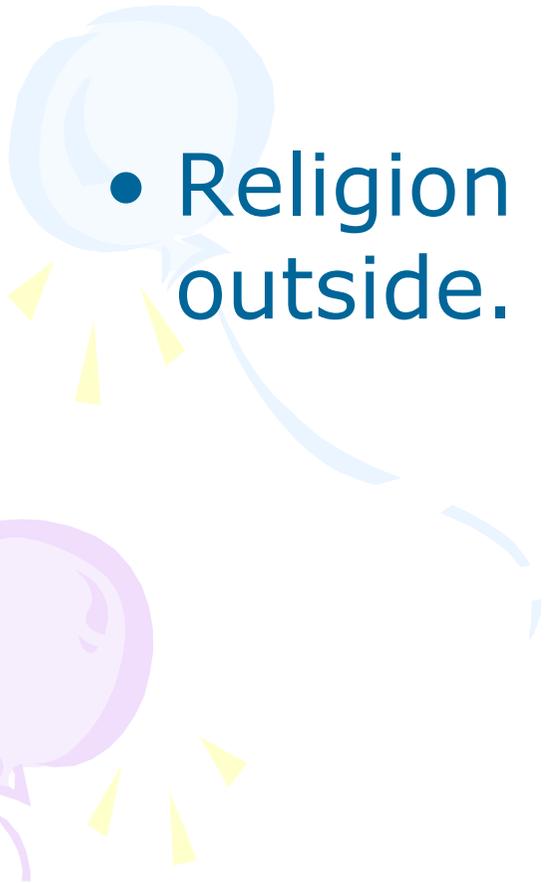


- Religion is an adherence to an organized body of beliefs and community.





- Spirituality is what you are on the inside.



- Religion is what you are on the outside.



- 
- Spirituality is experience (personal experiences of meaning).

- 
- Religion is cognitive (beliefs and ritual).





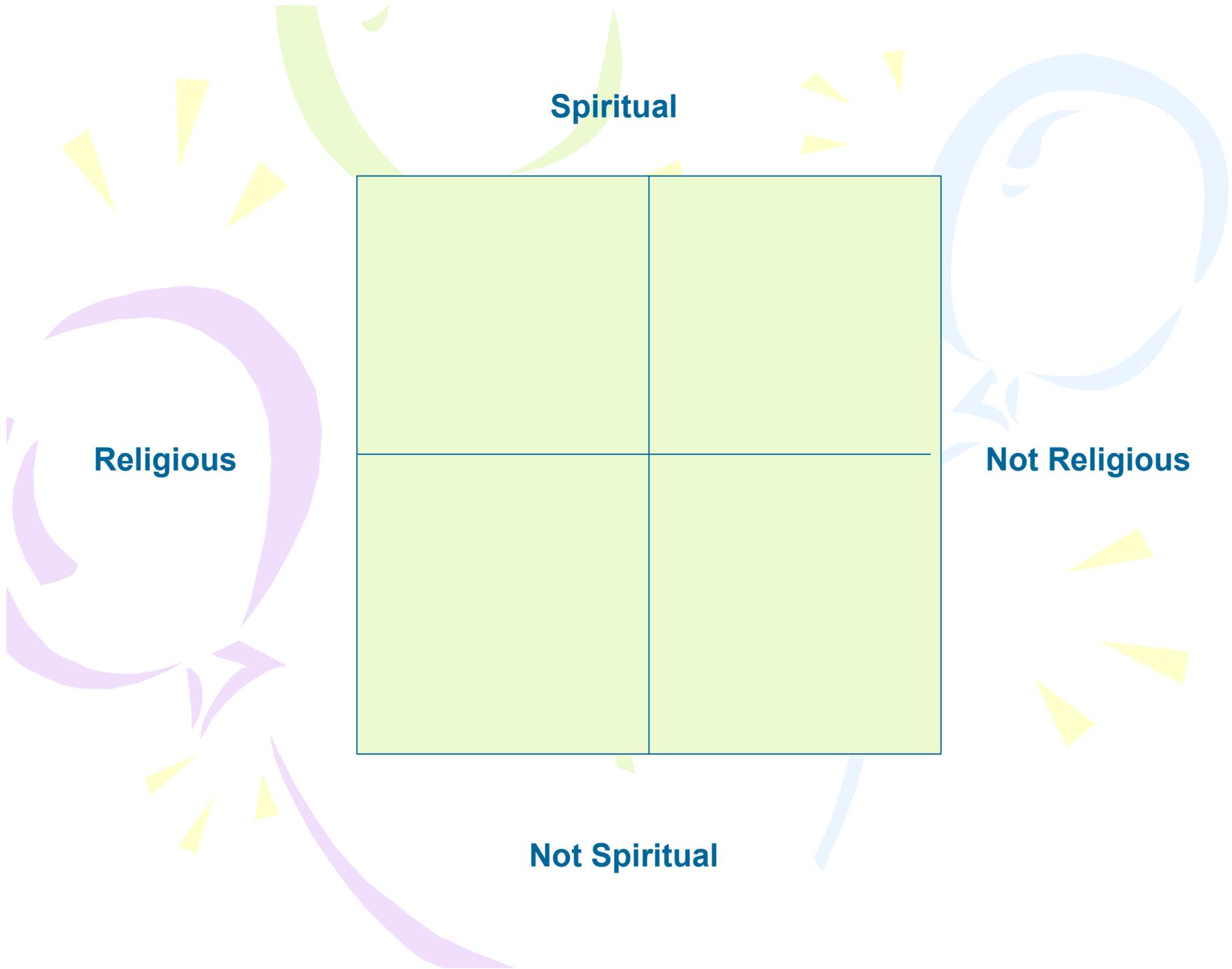
People can be spiritual and not religious.



People can be religious and not very spiritual.



Some are both spiritual and religious.
Others say they are neither.



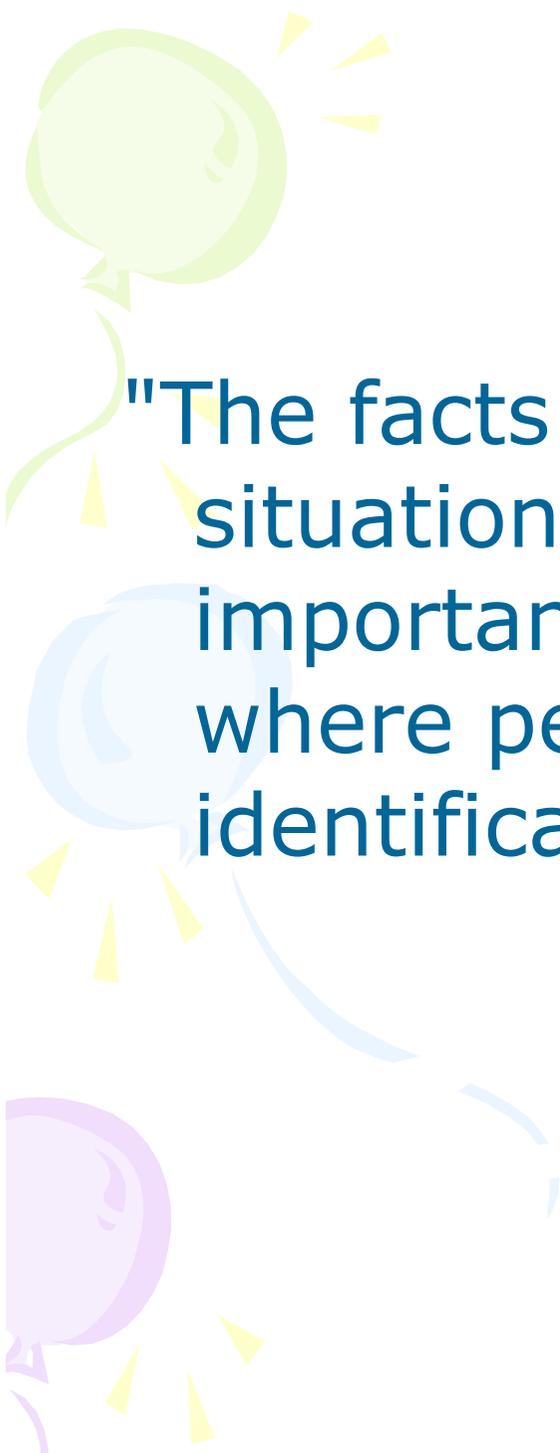


How religious is Canada?

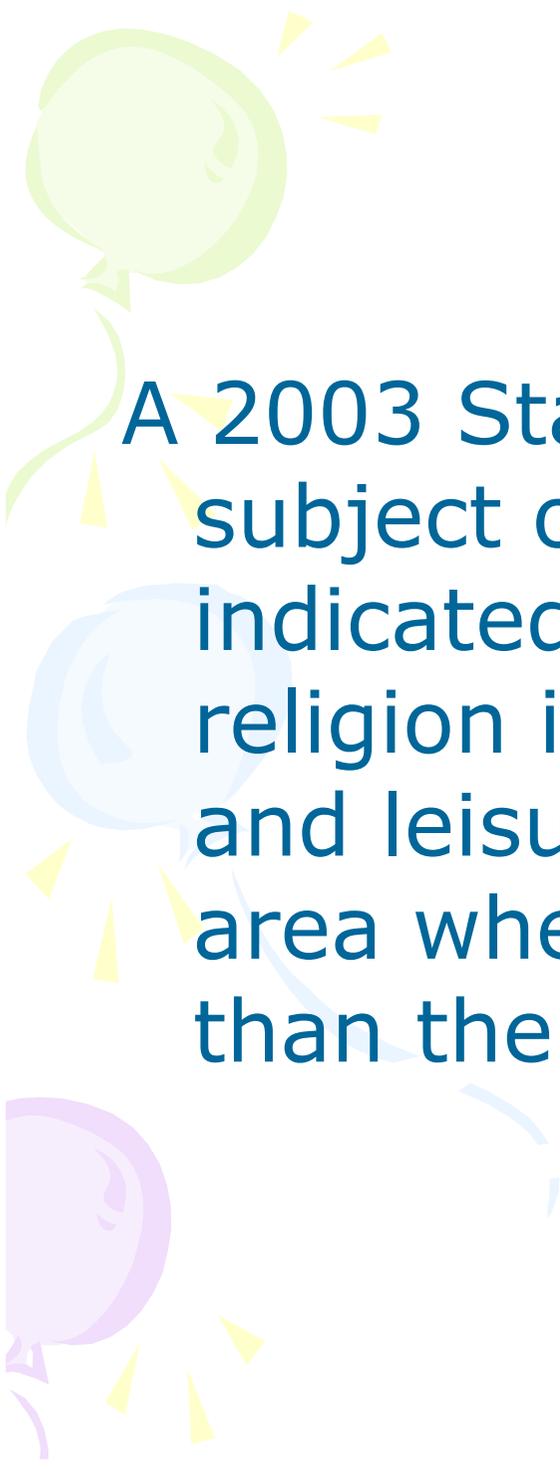


Nearly two-thirds of all Canadians say religion still matters.

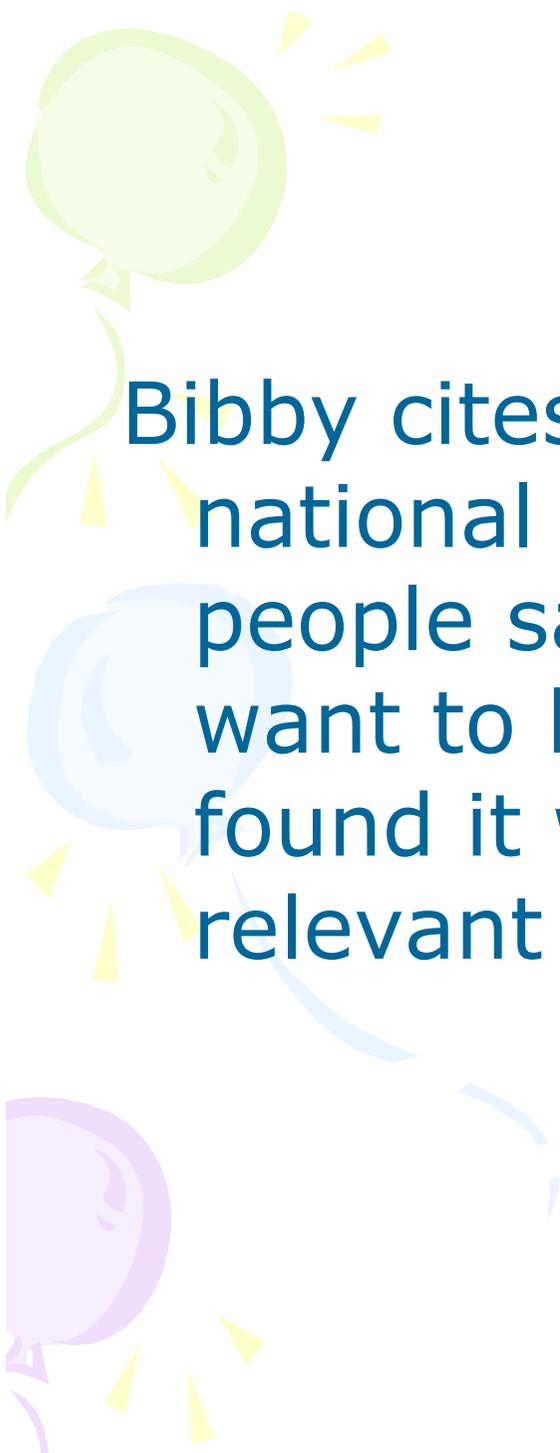


A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer that curves downwards. Small yellow triangular shapes are scattered around the balloons, resembling confetti or streamer details.

"The facts of the Canadian religious situation point to the ongoing importance of organized religion, where people value their ongoing identification." Dr. Reginald Bibby

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer with several yellow triangular flags. The text is positioned to the right of these balloons.

A 2003 Statistics Canada study on the subject of "Social Engagement" indicated that "involvement in religion is neck-and-neck with sports and leisure activities. There is no area where more groups are active than the religious sphere."

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer with several yellow triangular flags. The text is positioned to the right of these decorations.

Bibby cites one of his most recent national survey: "Out of 2,400 people sampled, 62 percent would want to be more involved if they found it was worthwhile, and relevant to their lives."



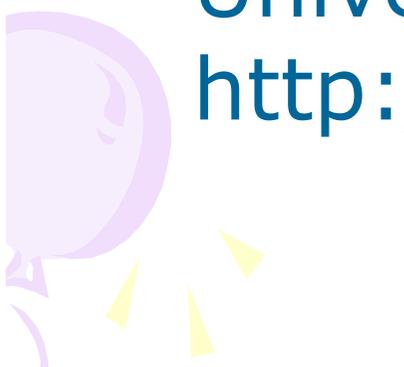
Political scientist Ronald Inglehart says, "... in nearly all advanced industrial societies, spiritual concerns more broadly defined are not declining. In fact, in most industrial societies, a growing share of the population is spending time thinking about the meaning and purpose of life."



35 percent of Canadians say that God is important in their life.



"Selected findings from the Baylor Religion Survey," Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion, Baylor University, 2006-SEP, at:
<http://www.baylor.edu>





**Do spirituality and religion
have positive impact on
recovery from mental
illness?**



Spirituality is “up there” as to what helps (among friends, family, work and medication).



Sullivan (1993) interviewed 40 persons with serious mental illness. 48% identified spiritual beliefs and practices as being central to their recovery process.

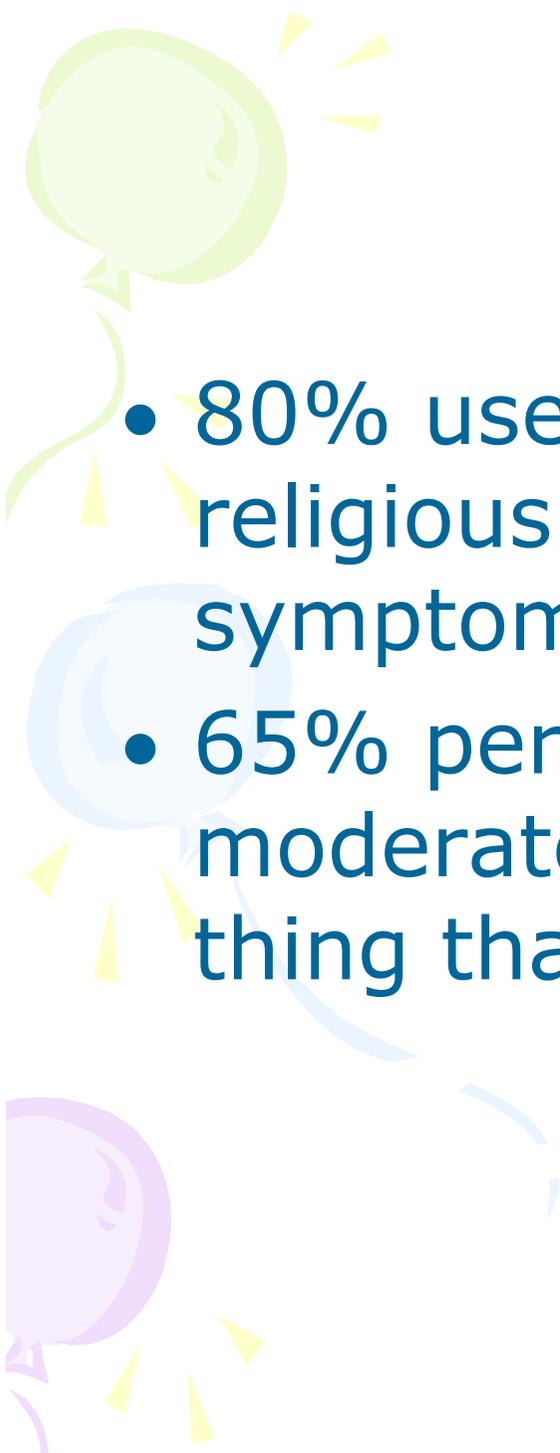


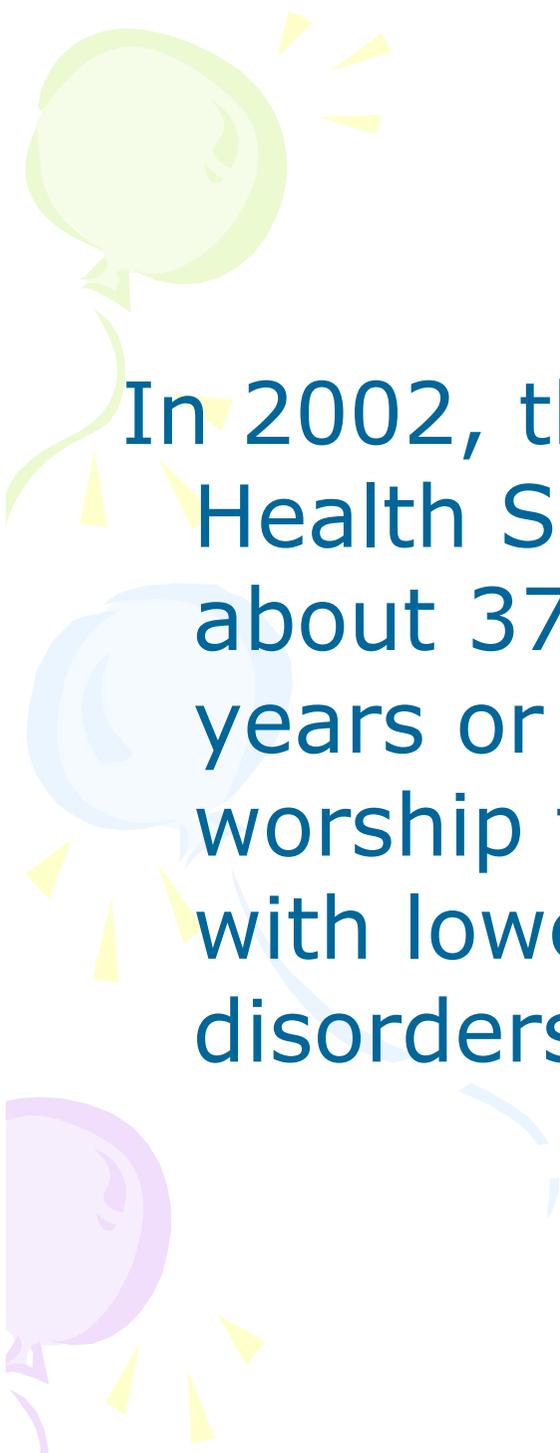
A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer and has several small yellow triangular shapes around it, resembling confetti or streamer ends.

Lindgren and Coursey (1995)
interviewed 30 persons with serious
mental illness and found 74%
reported that spirituality and religion
helped them in the management of
their illness.

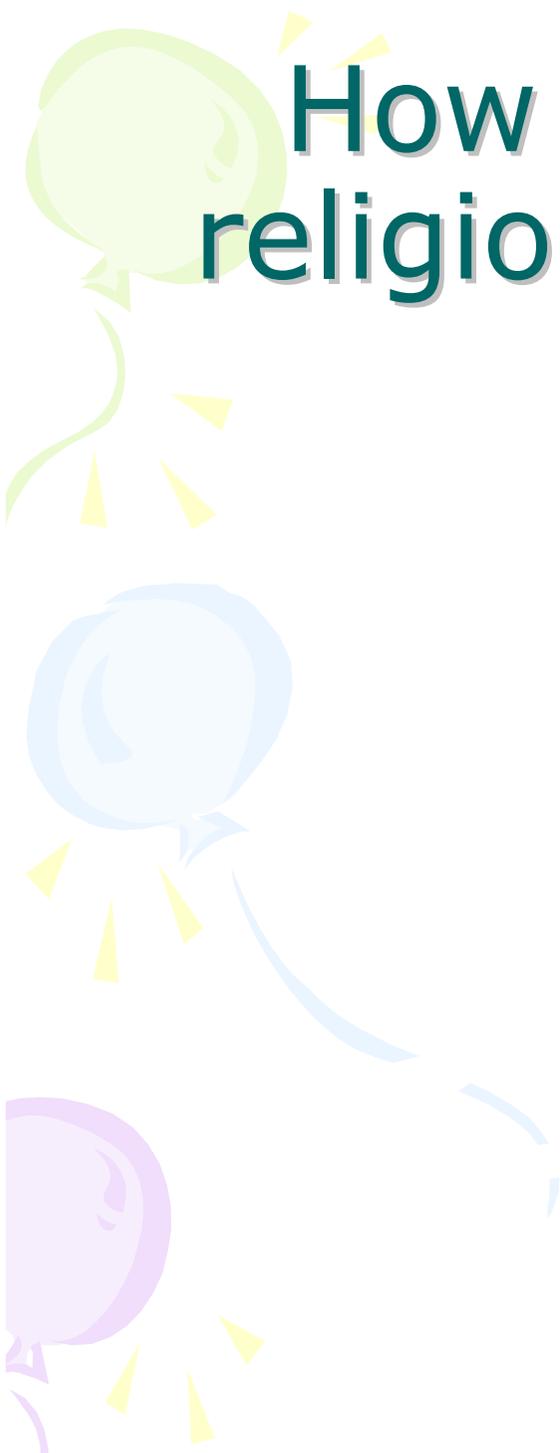


A huge study involving 406 persons with serious mental illness conducted in 2000 by Tepper, Coleman and Rogers found that 92% practiced at least one religious coping strategy. Included in the list were prayer, scripture reading, worship, meditation, singing religious songs, and meeting with a spiritual leader.)

- 
- A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer and has several small yellow triangular flags trailing behind it.
- 80% used a religious activity or religious belief to help cope with symptoms or difficulties.
 - 65% perceived religion to be moderately helpful or most important thing that kept them going.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer and has several small yellow triangular shapes radiating from it, resembling a sun or a burst of light.

In 2002, the Canadian Community Health Survey obtained data from about 37,000 individuals aged 15 years or older. It found higher worship frequency was associated with lower odds of psychiatric disorders.

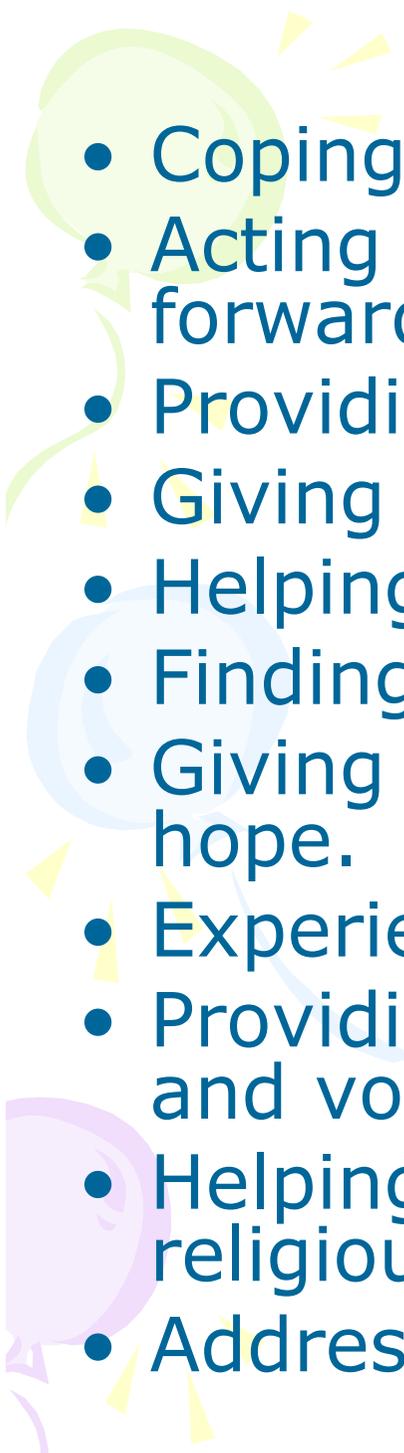


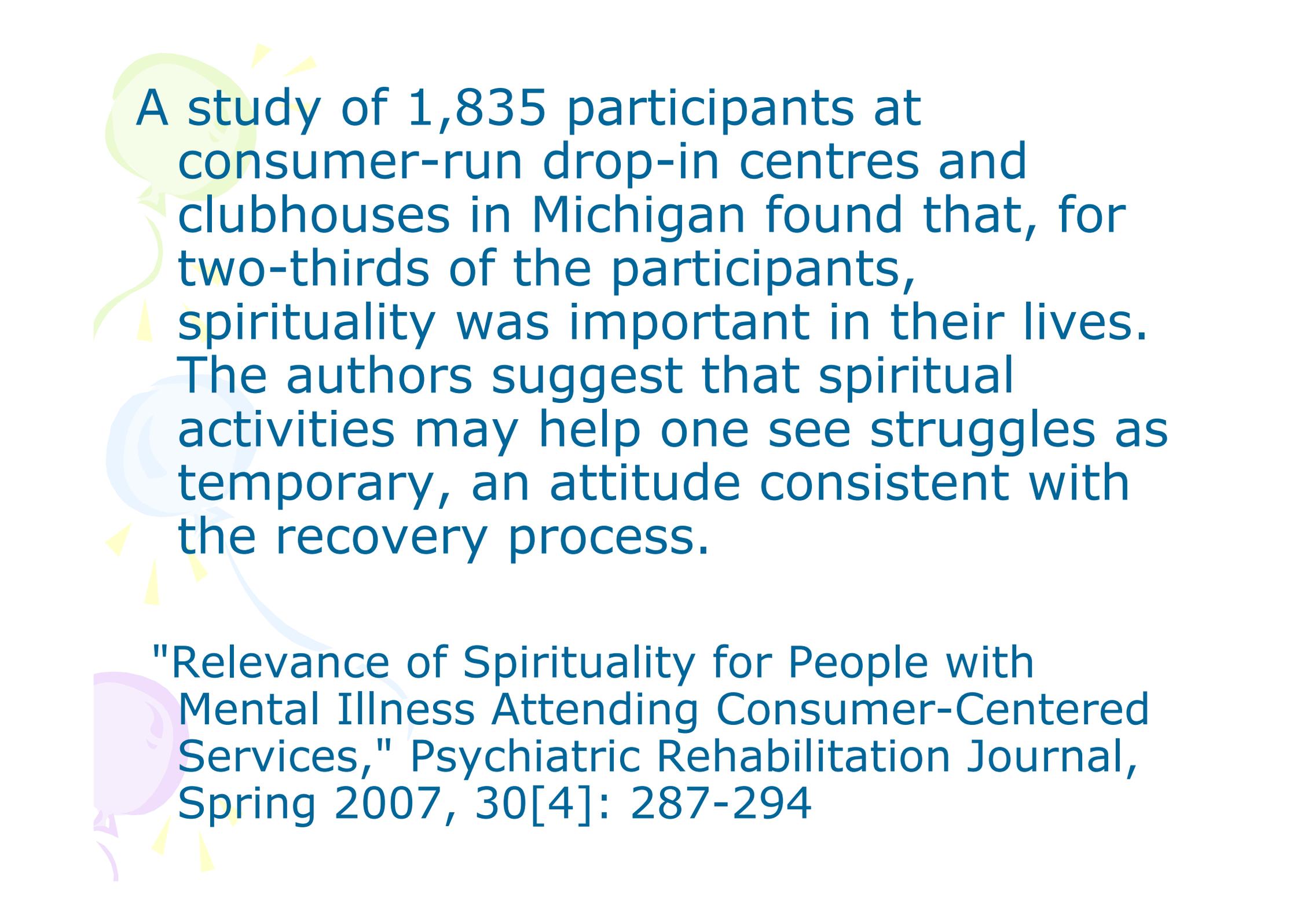
How do spirituality and religion support recovery?



Spiritual needs encompass questions of:

- Meaning
- Value
- Relationships

- 
- Coping and problem solving.
 - Acting as a compass in pointing a person forward when lost.
 - Providing authority and guidance.
 - Giving social support.
 - Helping with vocation.
 - Finding a place in community.
 - Giving coherence, meaning, purpose and hope.
 - Experiencing spiritual comfort and assistance.
 - Providing ritual and practice (visual, auditory and vocal).
 - Helping during times of crisis to address religious delusions from a spiritual angle.
 - Addressing some of the dysfunctional beliefs

A decorative background featuring several overlapping circles in shades of green, blue, and purple, with yellow triangular rays emanating from them. The text is overlaid on this background.

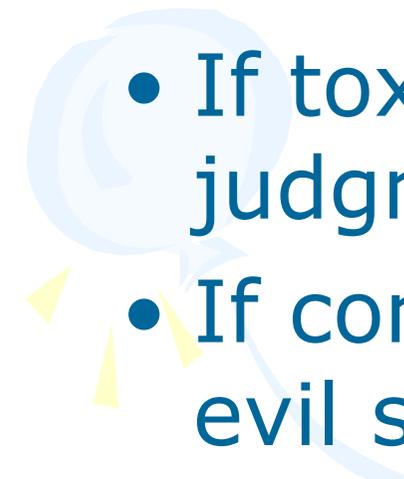
A study of 1,835 participants at consumer-run drop-in centres and clubhouses in Michigan found that, for two-thirds of the participants, spirituality was important in their lives. The authors suggest that spiritual activities may help one see struggles as temporary, an attitude consistent with the recovery process.

"Relevance of Spirituality for People with Mental Illness Attending Consumer-Centered Services," *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, Spring 2007, 30[4]: 287-294



Can spirituality or religion be harmful?

Yes.

- 
- If toxic, shame-based and judgmental.
 - If completely blames illness on sin or evil spirits.
 - If vulnerable person is exploited.
- 



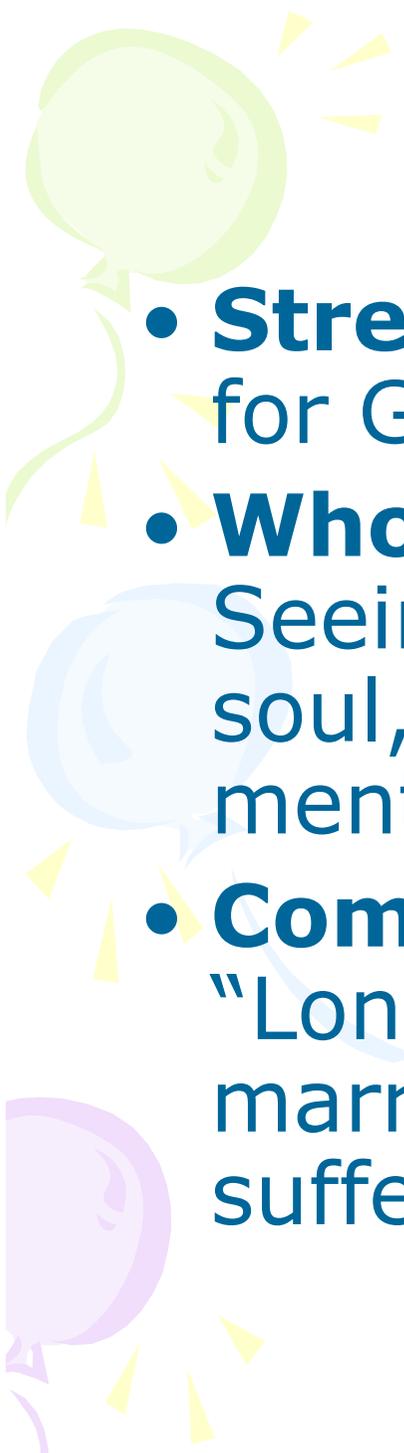
What is recovery?

Fundamentally recovery, *"....is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life even with the limitations caused by illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness,"* says William A. Anthony of Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation (Anthony, 1993).



Affinities or similarities shared between spirituality and the recovery model.

- **Meaning and Purpose.** People in recovery re-visit the age-old question: What is the meaning and purpose of my life? This is a “soulish” question and a spiritual pursuit.
- **Hope.** The desire for something good with the expectation that you will receive it. “A future with hope.”
- **Journey** as a metaphor of the process.

- 
- **Strength** for the journey. A need for God, the Creator, a Higher Power
 - **Wholeness and Personhood.** Seeing a person as a whole: body, soul, spirit (emotional, spiritual, mental, relational, physical...).
 - **Community.** Can't do it alone. No "Lone Rangers." (whether in marriage, family, faith community, suffering, growth...).



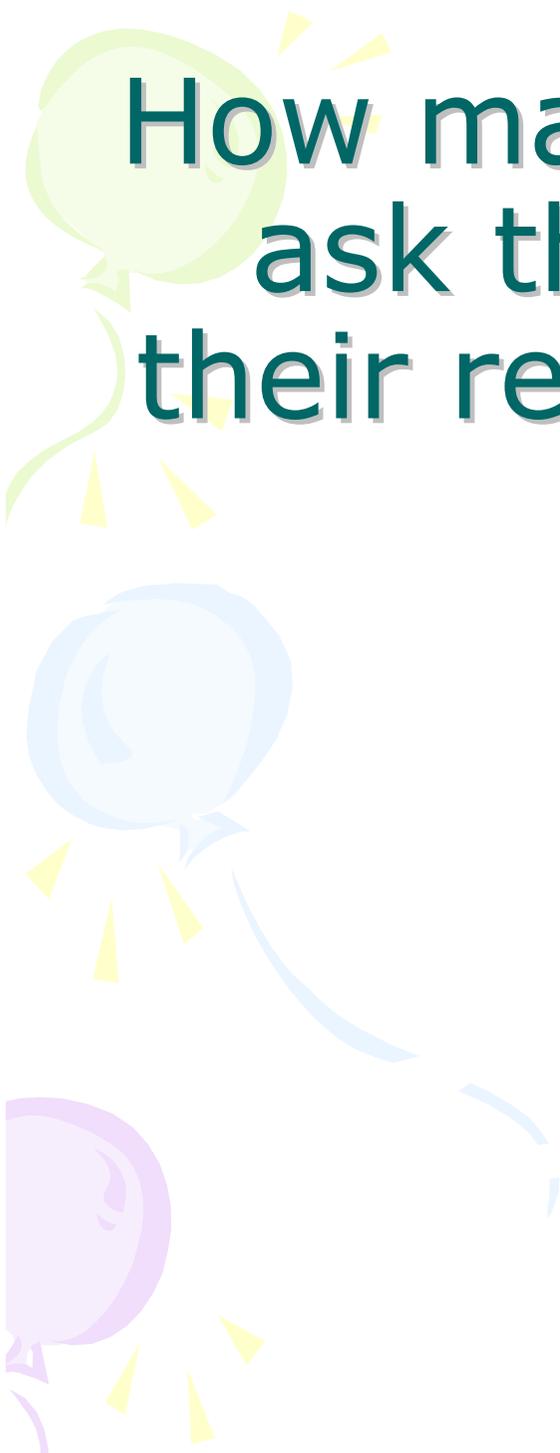
- **ReStorying.** “Come and meet a man....”

- From **Chaos to Order.** Genesis. The “good news.”

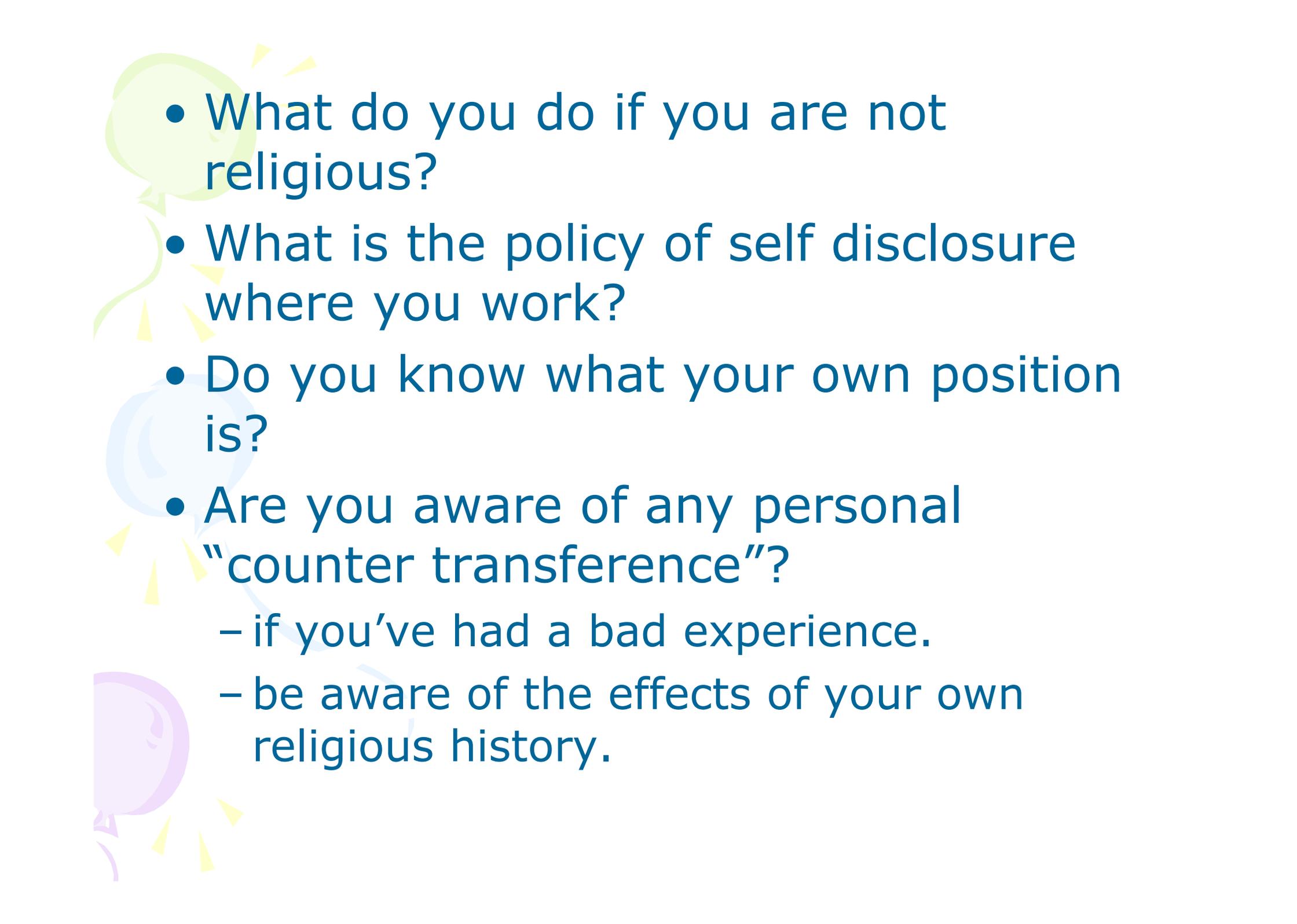
- **Resiliency** as “the keel of the ship.”

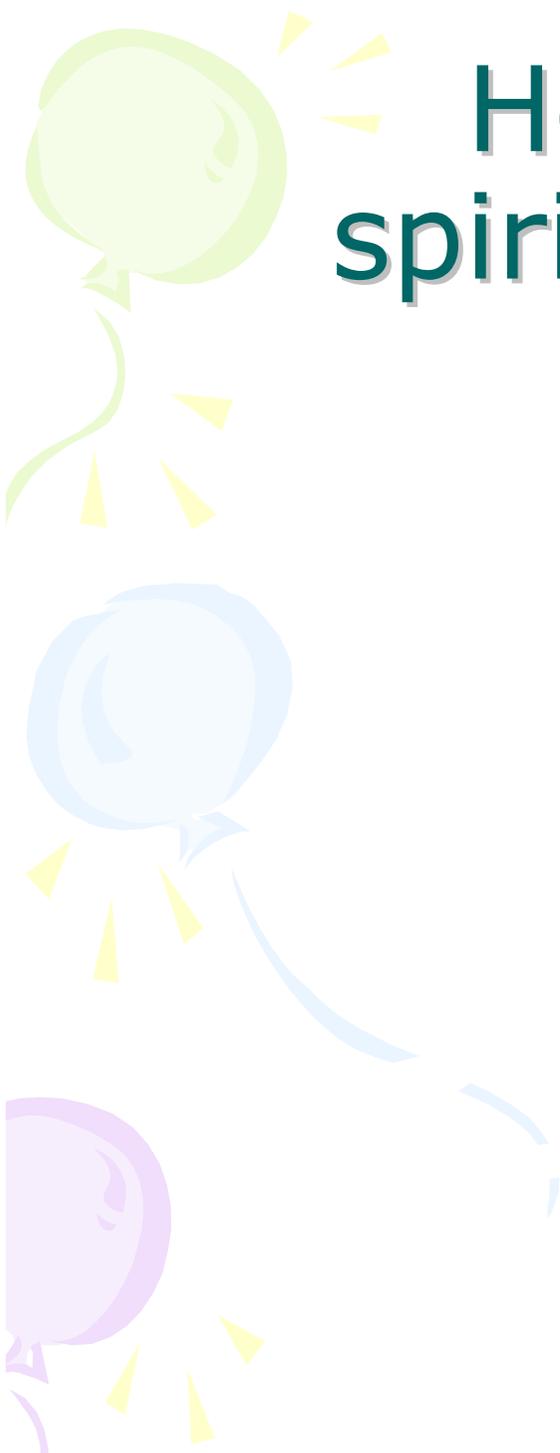
- **Empowerment.** The “paraclete,” the “Comforter,” “The one who comes alongside of.”



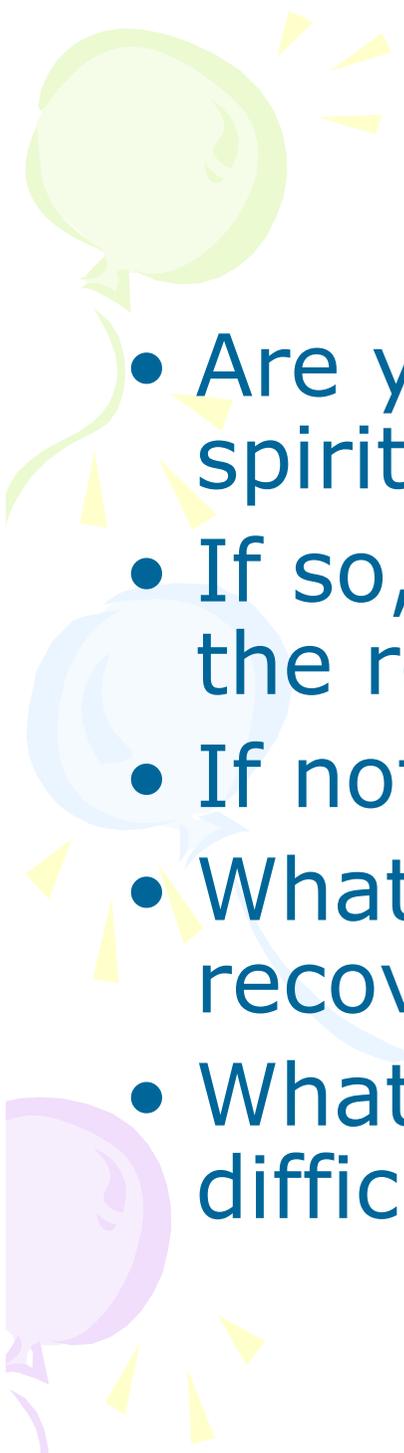


How many service providers
ask their patients about
their religion or spirituality?

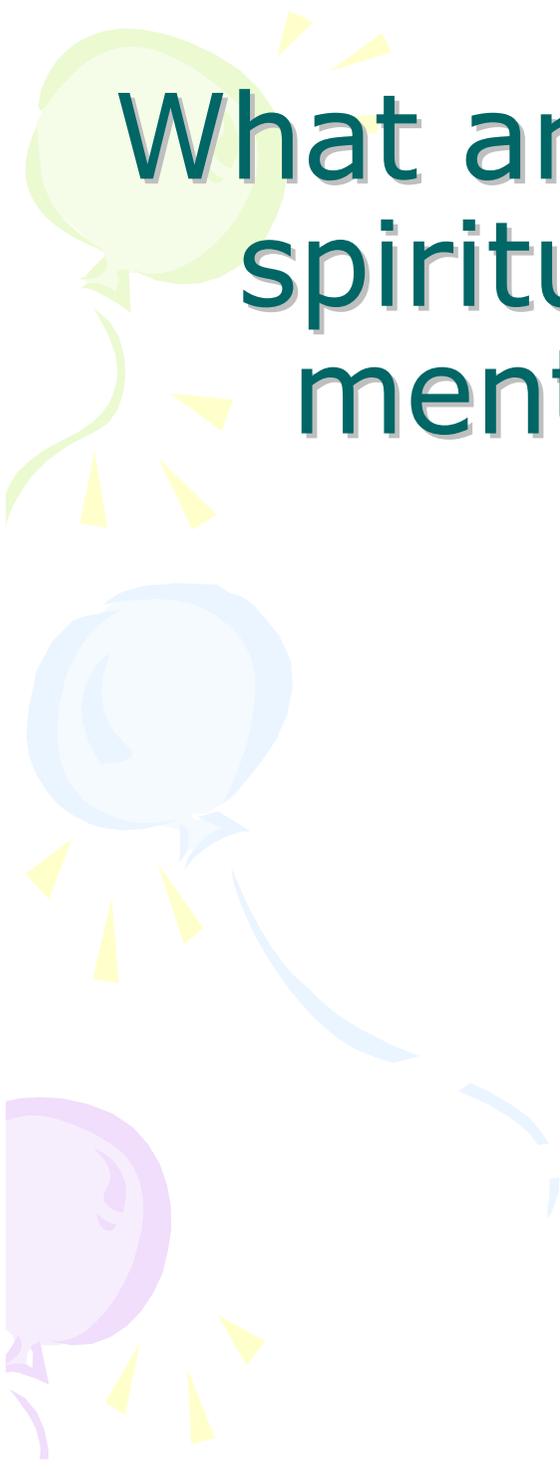
- 
- What do you do if you are not religious?
 - What is the policy of self disclosure where you work?
 - Do you know what your own position is?
 - Are you aware of any personal “counter transference”?
 - if you’ve had a bad experience.
 - be aware of the effects of your own religious history.



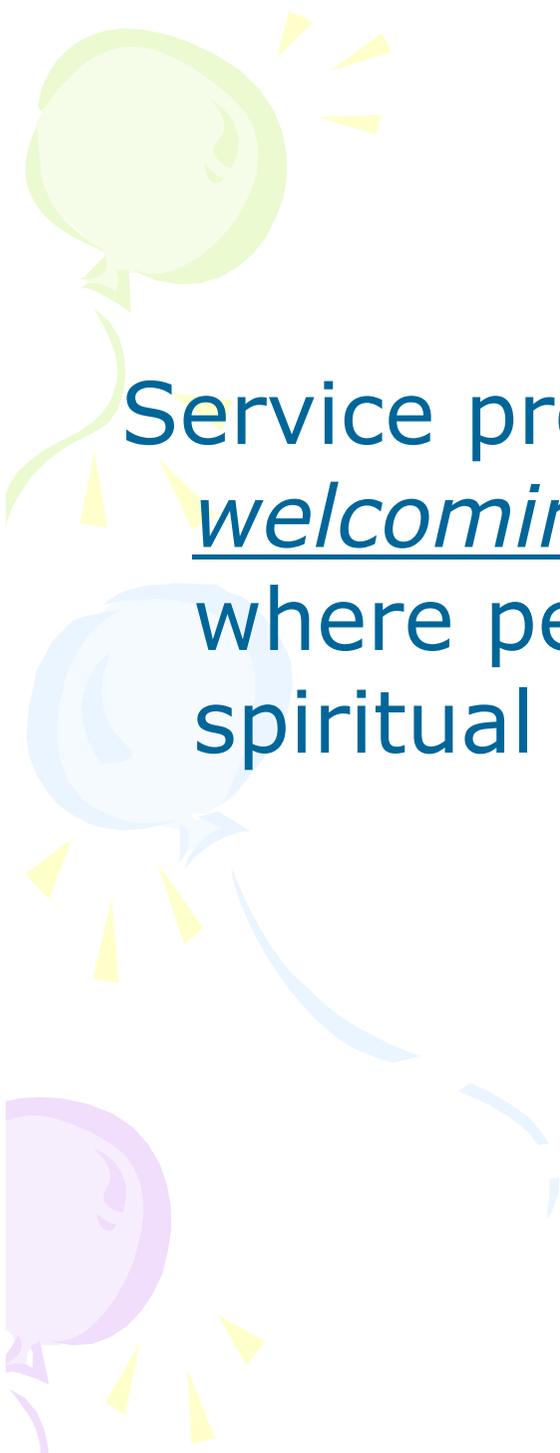
How do you do a
spiritual assessment?

- 
- A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer with several yellow triangular flags. The balloons and streamers are partially overlapping the text area.
- Are you currently involved in a spiritual or religious tradition?
 - If so, could you tell me about it and the role it plays in your life?
 - If not, were you ever involved?
 - What role does it play in your recovery?
 - What keeps you going in times of difficulty?

- 
- How does your connection with your tradition help you cope with symptoms?
 - Do you have a spiritual practice or meditation practice?
 - What does it consist of?
 - What gives you hope, what brings you a sense of peace, of courage?
 - When you are troubled or stressed, what helps you?
 - What do you think life is all about?

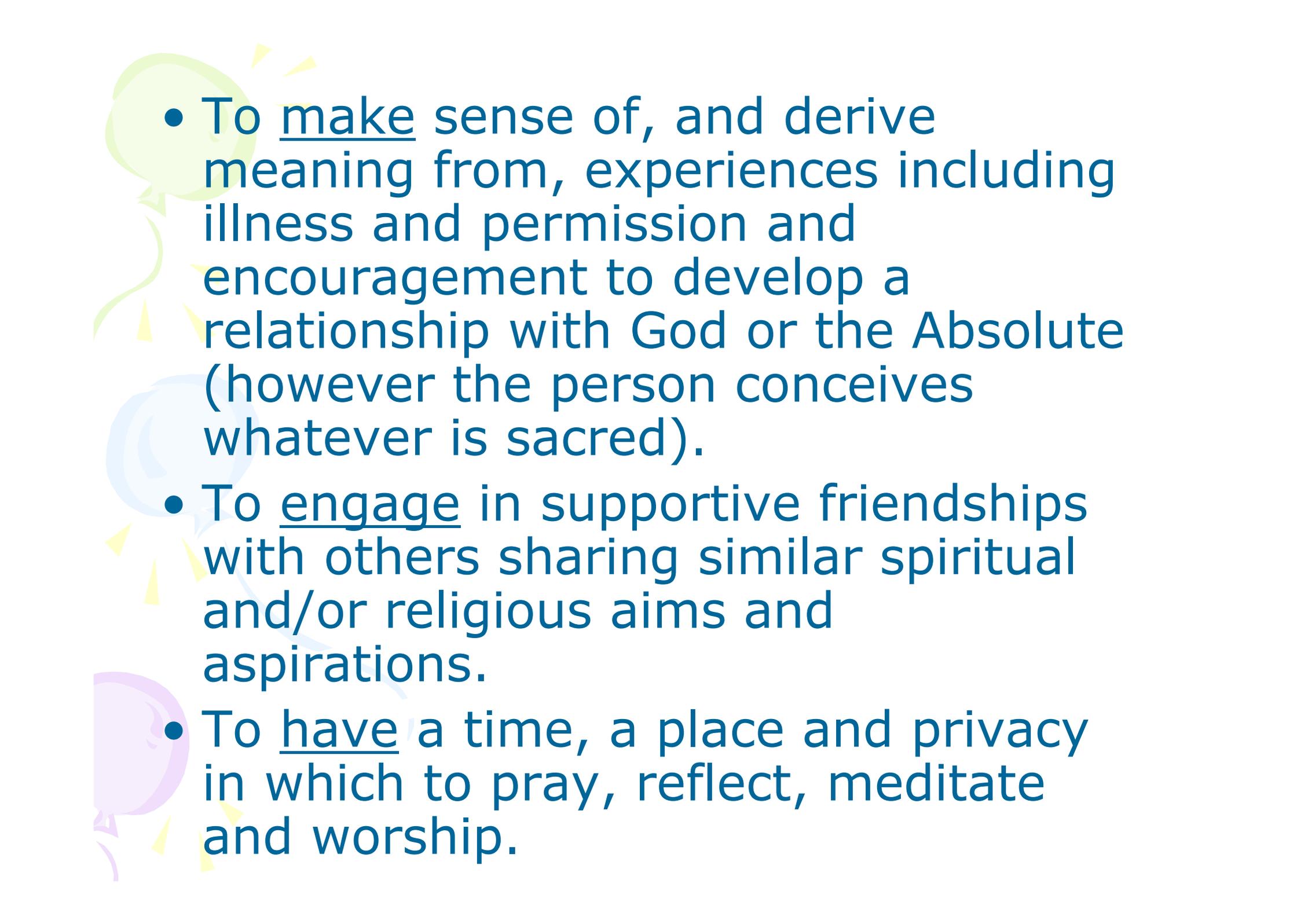


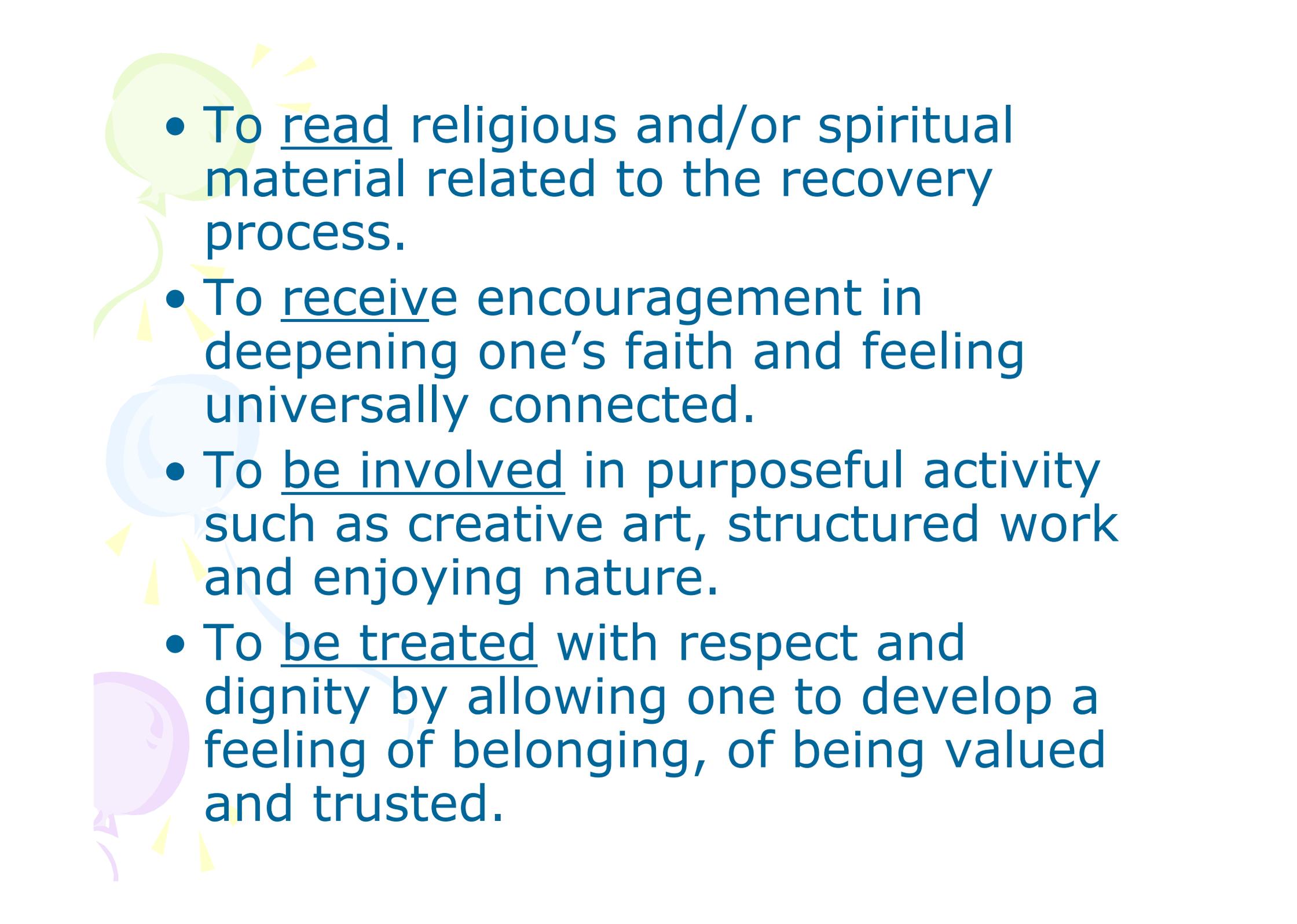
What are the components of spiritual health care in a mental health setting?

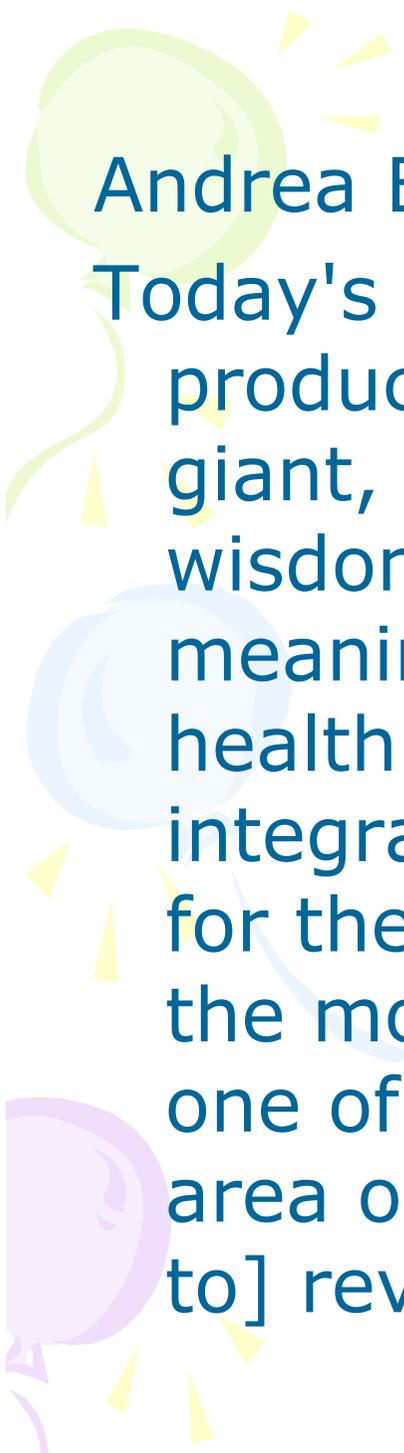


Service providers can create a safe,
welcoming and empathic atmosphere
where people can discuss their
spiritual beliefs and values.

- 
- A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons: a light green one at the top, a light blue one in the middle, and a light purple one at the bottom. Each balloon is attached to a streamer and has several small yellow triangular flags trailing behind it.
- To explore spiritual and religious matters.
 - To discuss one-on-one or in a support group setting their spiritual concerns and needs as related to their mental health/illness
 - To feel safe and secure in discussion spiritual and religious issues.
 - To express spiritual feelings to sympathetic and concerned members of staff.

- 
- To make sense of, and derive meaning from, experiences including illness and permission and encouragement to develop a relationship with God or the Absolute (however the person conceives whatever is sacred).
 - To engage in supportive friendships with others sharing similar spiritual and/or religious aims and aspirations.
 - To have a time, a place and privacy in which to pray, reflect, meditate and worship.

- 
- To read religious and/or spiritual material related to the recovery process.
 - To receive encouragement in deepening one's faith and feeling universally connected.
 - To be involved in purposeful activity such as creative art, structured work and enjoying nature.
 - To be treated with respect and dignity by allowing one to develop a feeling of belonging, of being valued and trusted.



Andrea Blanch says:

Today's mental health system is largely a product of western science. Like a one-eyed giant, it has great power, but it lacks the wisdom which makes life sacred and meaning-ful. The challenge for today's mental health system is to unite East and West; to integrate wisdom and science; to make room for the sacred as well as the practical. One of the most critical domains for integration—and one of the most difficult to address—is the area of religion and spirituality. ... [we need to] review the historical tension concerning



the integration of religion and the science of mental health; to explore current social trends that are creating new opportunities and pressures to move in this direction; and to discuss strategies for the integration of religion and spirituality in mental health services and practice.”



“Integrating Religion and Spirituality in Mental Health: The Promise and the Challenge.” *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*. Volume 30, Number 4/Spring 2007





For a complimentary word copy of a manuscript of this presentation please email Chris Summerville at chris@mss.mb.ca

