

The Questions

H: Sources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love and connection

We have been discussing your support systems. I was wondering, what is there in you that gives you internal support?

What are your sources of hope, strength, comfort and peace?

What do you hold on to during difficult times?

For some people, their spiritual or religious beliefs act as a source of strength and comfort in dealing with life's ups and downs; is this true for you?

O: Organised Religion

Do you consider yourself to be part of an organised religion?

How important is this to you?

What aspects of your religion are helpful or not so helpful to you?

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 that are independent of organised religion? Would you like to tell us about them?

Do you believe in God? What kind of relationship do you have with God?

What aspect of your spirituality or spiritual practices do you find most helpful to you personally? (e.g. prayer, meditation, reading, listening to music, walking, nature, etc.)

E: Effects on medical care

Has your current situation affected your ability to do the things that you usually do spiritually? (Or affected your relationship with God?)

Are you worried about any conflicts between your beliefs and your medical situation/care decisions?

Would it be helpful for you to speak to a chaplain/priest/faith community leader, etc

Are there any practices or restrictions you would like to tell us about? (e.g. dietary restrictions, prayer needs, etc

Spiritual & Pastoral Care Team

Mersey Care operates its own Spiritual & Pastoral Care Team which offers support to service users, relatives, carers, and staff, especially around spirituality, faith, and religious concerns. This service is open to everybody.

All members of the team are specially trained and experienced in health care and we offer one-to-one and/or group support to people

wishing to connect with, or deepen, their own personal spirituality.

The Spiritual & Pastoral Care Team also offers training and education support to staff groups and individuals. We are always happy to offer advice in the assessment and provision of appropriate religious, spiritual and pastoral care for service users and carers.

Contact Details

The Spiritual & Pastoral Care Service is available Monday to Friday from 9am – 5pm.

The Team can be contacted either through staff, or the Mersey Care Switchboard 0151 473 0303. Alternatively, email us at: spirit@merseycare.nhs.uk



LIVING IN HOPE

Exploring Spiritual Strengths and Needs

Information for Service Users, Carers & Staff

This information leaflet has been produced to encourage service users, relatives, carers and staff to feel more confident and comfortable in talking about spiritual matters.

HOPE LIVING FAITH

Mersey Care's 'Manifesto: For Improving The Care Experience' pledges to deliver 'care worth receiving, care that matters'. We are committed to providing holistic health care where physical, mental and spiritual health is interwoven and interdependent.

Mersey Care believes that it is necessary and important to take people's spiritual and religious values into consideration when developing care plans for those referred to our services.

The way people think about and organise their lives is often an indication of the sense they are making of their part in a family or community.

Challenges or threats to this way of life will affect a person's mental health and wellbeing.

Some recent studies suggest that positive values and belief systems may protect people from mental health problems and assist in recovery.

'Taken Seriously'

The Mental Health Foundation's Somerset Spirituality Project report, written in close collaboration with service users, noted that:

'Religion and spirituality are most often thought of in terms of the support they can give to those who are spiritually inclined. Some users wanted to understand the meaning of their ill health in religious and spiritual terms and looked to staff to help them with this.'

A service user commented: 'I'm tired of being talked about, treated as a statistic, pushed to the margins of human conversation. I want someone who will have time for me, someone who will listen to me, someone who has not judged who I am, or what I have to offer. I am waiting to be taken seriously.'

Our Trust's vision is 'to see the person, meet the need, and challenge the stigma' and we are committed to ensuring that all care needs, including religious and spiritual ones, are 'taken seriously'.

What is Spirituality?

There are many definitions of spirituality and many perspectives on how it relates to mental health and wellbeing. This reflects the fact that spirituality is experienced differently by different people. For some it will involve a traditional faith framework or formal belief system yet others might think of themselves as being spiritual without being at all religious.

Essentially, spirituality is about values, meaning, hopes, loving and being loved, believing and trusting. In other words it is what provides our individuality and our sense of identity – it's what makes us a whole person, what makes us human, what makes us tick!

'Spirituality includes our relationship with art and nature, and our experience of 'the other' and of our place in the universe. It can embrace diverse religious experiences. It is an essential part of our humanity. It is in essence mentally healthy because it grounds us and provides us with a perspective from which to see our individual concerns and anxieties that is more powerful than rational reflection alone.' (Department of Health 2007)

Within Mersey Care we recognise that mental illness, learning disability and addiction affect the whole of a person's life – body, mind and spirit. At times of change, crisis or illness, we can often struggle to find answers. As a Trust we strive to ensure that meaningful time, space, care and attention are given to this issue.

The HOPE Tool

The questions that follow have been adapted from the HOPE assessment tool developed by Gowri Anandarajah and Ellen Hight.

H: Sources of hope meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love and connection

O: Organised religion

P: Personal Spirituality and practices

E: Effects on medical care

Exploration of these areas calls for sensitivity and respect and it is important to remember that, while for some people spirituality may include religious faith, but this is by no means the case for everyone.

The questions suggested have been used by people in practice as well as in research. There are no correct answers but some of them may help you enter into meaningful reflection and conversation about spiritual and religious care needs.