Presents

The Brain and Spirituality

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Brain References
Spirituality was perceived as the relationship of each human being with a power greater than any human power on earth; truth, faith, hope, love, dignity, and integrity, were said to be the main ingredients of spirituality.

Positive emotion and feeling states—love, care, gratitude, appreciation, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness—were recognized as a cornerstone of spirituality and their practice encouraged.
Sustained positive emotion and feeling states are not as pervasive in most people’s lives today – they are transient experiences, occurring randomly, and dependent primarily on external events.

Moments of heightened spiritual connectedness are rare … rather than being intentionally chosen and generated.

—Doc Childre, Rollin McCraty PhD
In the past most research studies lumped religiosity and spirituality together—although these words describe different concepts.

Some of the inherent challenges of defining and measuring spirituality lie in separating religiosity from spirituality, particularly important when studying participants who consider themselves spiritual but not necessarily religious (9 recent studies).
Organized religions: groupings of individuals who usually have a defined set of doctrines or beliefs along with regular worship practices.

Spirituality: the practice by the individual of love-based attitudes that are integrated into an individual’s everyday life and that can be shared with others but do not require organized grouping for their practice.

Religion and spirituality are not always aligned (Crusades, Holy Wars).
Spirituality encompasses the spirit in which you live life, including ethical and moral choices; a sense of something greater than yourself (such as a Higher Power); the recognition of a meaning to existence that transcends immediate circumstances; a sense of awe, affiliation, vision, or goals to achieve the highest possible levels of brain-body health and a Longevity Lifestyle.
The brain may not be innately religious…

There isn’t just one part of the brain that is the spiritual center of who you are, rather the whole ‘self’ seems to be deeply affected by spiritual ideas and practices.

There are portions of the brain that appear to be more involved with specific spiritual practices, however.
Cerebral Hemispheres
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Left hemisphere:
Directive
Obeying rules

Right hemisphere:
Relational
Spiritual, trusting

Affiliation with an organization that espouses a set of rules, rites, rituals, or dogma

A desire to connect with a power outside yourself; a sense of awe (nature, music)
A bridge connects the Left temporal lobe (doing, rituals) with the Right temporal lobe (being, spiritual)

Participating in a Left hemisphere ritual can trigger a R. hemisphere spiritual response in a way that simply observing the ritual does not
Spirituality is a lifelong developmental task, lasting until death.

Spirituality tends to increase during later adulthood.

93% identified themselves as spiritual: some rated themselves high on spirituality and low on religion; others were moderate on both.

—G. Gallup, *Assessing Religion in USA*
Most people surveyed considered themselves to be both religious and spiritual.

Their self-rated religiousness and spirituality were associated with frequency of prayer, church attendance, religious orthodoxy, and an intrinsic religiosity that used religion as a guide for everyday decisions.

—D. O. Moberg
Spirituality appears to play an important role in aging that seems to lead to a better quality of life as well as longevity in the older practitioners.

The most important factor in healthy aging is one’s personal perspective of life satisfaction: enjoyment of daily activities, a positive mind-set, a positive and worthwhile self-image, a belief that one’s life has meaning, and satisfactory achievement of major goals.

—Bernice L. Neugarten PhD
Activities that engage the two frontal lobes protect against age-related deterioration (shrinkage) associated with loss of memory, overall loss of mental functioning, and dementia.

Prayer, a form of meditation, if done regularly for at least 12 minutes a day, may slow age-related decline of the frontal lobes.
Studies have indicated that personal meditative prayer provides the greatest personal benefits (pondering spiritual things and listening) as compared with other types of prayer.

While a few minutes of occasional prayer may not result in significant improvements, studies have shown that more frequent prayers for longer periods of time produce tangible benefits to brain and body.
There is abundant evidence that spirituality is associated with positive mental health outcomes—spiritual interventions can help relieve psychological distress and fear of death, as well as the stresses of caregiving for loved ones with chronic illnesses in later years.

In women with advanced breast cancer, spirituality appeared to improve their emotional wellbeing.

—D. D. Coward
While religion can exist as a cerebral exercise, it appears that spirituality requires the heart (it contains a minimum of 40,000 neurons)

Honing one’s spirituality is Scriptural

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*  
—Galatians 5:22-23
The heart is now recognized as a sensory organ and a sophisticated information encoding and processing center, with an extensive intrinsic nervous system (neurons) capable of making functional decisions independent of the brain.

Patterns of cardiac neurological input to the brain not only affect autonomic regulatory centers but also influence higher brain centers involved in perception and emotional processing.
Can translate spiritual information into physical or intellectual modes or can respond through direct feeling states that are outside physical language and intellectual definition

—Joe Tannenbaum
*Male and Female Realities*

Tend to translate spiritual information into either a physical mode (build cathedrals, create works of art or music / other symbolic objects) or intellectual mode (rules, doctrines, regulations, dogma, rituals, philosophies)
Four Cerebral Divisions

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**Prioritizing**
Set and achieve goals
Objective (inductive-deductive) decisions
Direct and delegate

**Envisioning**
Anticipate/make changes
Rational decisions
Visualize, innovate, and meditate

**Maintaining**
Supply services for sustaining life
Rational decisions
Maintain routines and habits

**Harmonizing**
Build trust/connection
Subjective-rational decisions
Assess and promote harmony
Four Divisions - Four Gospels

Prioritizing

Luke (reported thorough investigation)

Envisioning

Mark (emphasized the unusual)

Maintaining

Matthew (detailed historical narratives)

Harmonizing

John (emphasized connection, faith, and the comforter)
Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12)
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**Prioritizing**
Knowledge and the ‘wisdom of Solomon’
Preaching, Evangelizing
Leading directly

**Envisioning**
Knowledge
Prophesying, Innovating
Faith (perceive patterns)
Leading charismatically

**Maintaining**
Knowledge
Administrating, Teaching
Serving, Ministering (clerics)
Interpreting tongues

**Harmonizing**
Knowledge
Encouraging, mercy
Faith (feeling the “spirit’’)
Speaking in tongues
Healing (lay on hands)
## Approach to Spirituality

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<td>Drawn toward routines and</td>
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<td>rituals, memorizing, reading,</td>
<td>praising, encouraging, and a</td>
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<td>maintaining the status quo</td>
<td>personal connection (God)</td>
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Hone Your Spirituality
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The quality of your spirituality impacts every aspect of your life, health, and longevity

‘Ask to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom’
—Colossians 1:9-10

Choose to live a positive spiritual journey with love, caring, gratitude, appreciation, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness …