



Presents

# The Brain and Spirituality

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Brain References



# Historically . . .

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**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**

# More Fear—Less Spirituality

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**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



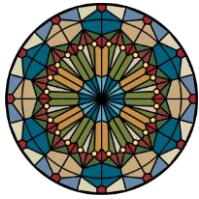
# Research Studies

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**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)**



# Research Definitions

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**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)*



# Working Definition

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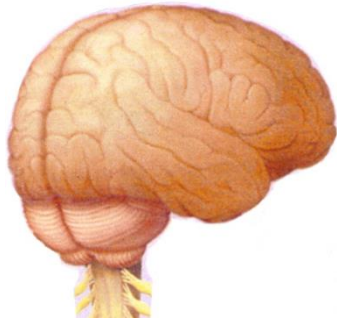
**Spirituality encompasses the spirit in which you live life, including ethical and moral choices; a sense of something greater than yourself (such as a Higher Power); the recognition of a meaning to existence that transcends immediate circumstances; a sense of awe, affiliation, vision, or goals to achieve the highest possible levels of brain-body health and a Longevity Lifestyle**

# **Brain is Innately Spiritual**

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**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**

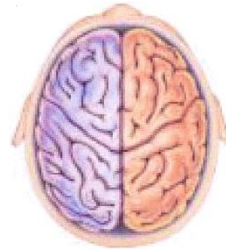


**There are portions of the brain that appear to be more involved with specific spiritual practices, however**

# Cerebral Hemispheres

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**Left hemisphere:  
Directive  
Obeying rules**



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

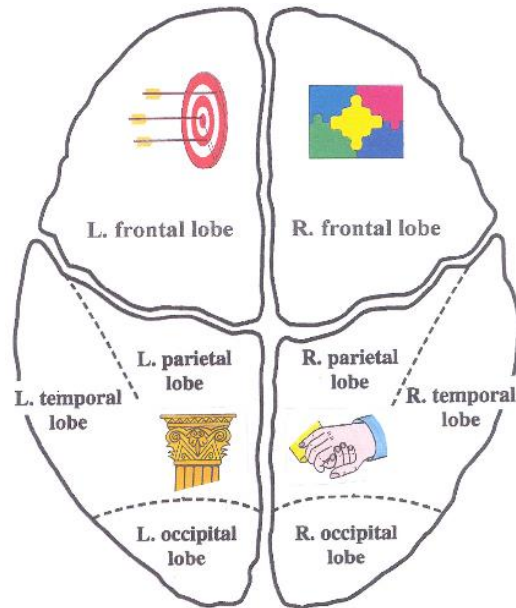
**Right hemisphere:  
Relational  
Spiritual, trusting**

**A desire to connect  
with a power outside  
yourself; a sense of  
awe (nature, music)**



# Connected via Participation

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**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**

# Survey Conclusions

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**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***

# Survey Conclusions, Cont'd

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**Most people surveyed considered themselves to be both religious and spiritual**

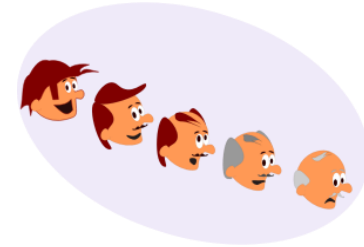


**Their self-rated religiousness and spirituality were associated with frequency of prayer, church attendance, religious orthodoxy, and an intrinsic religiosity that used religion as a guide for everyday decisions**

—D. O. Moberg

# Aging

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**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**

# Aging, Cont'd

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**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**

# Prayer

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**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**

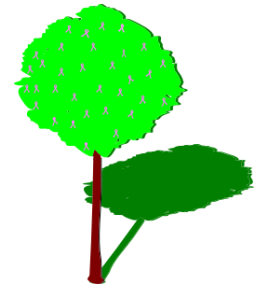
# Mental Health

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**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**

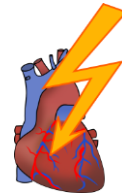
**—D. D. Coward**





# Emerging Concept

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**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**



# Heart

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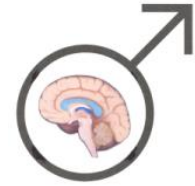
**The heart is now recognized as a sensory organ and a sophisticated information encoding and processing center, with an extensive intrinsic nervous system (neurons) capable of making functional decisions independent of the brain**

**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**



# Gender Differences

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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

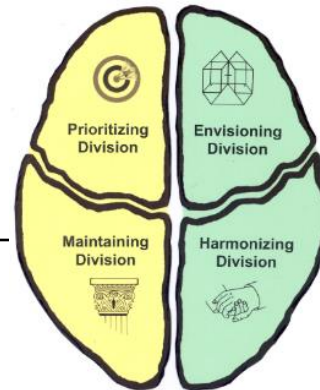
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## Prioritizing

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

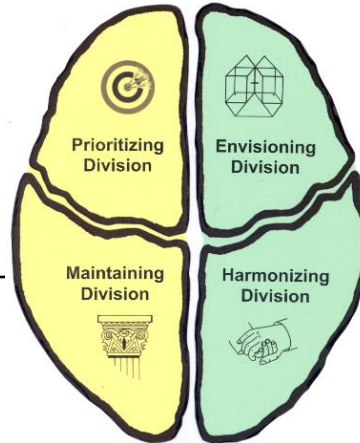
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## Prioritizing

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)

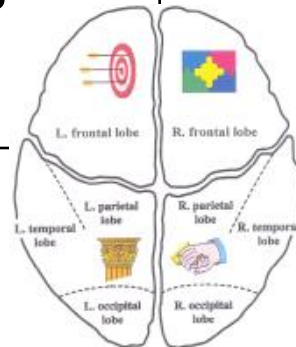
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## Prioritizing

Knowledge and the  
'wisdom of Solomon'  
Preaching, Evangelizing  
Leading directly

## Envisioning

Knowledge  
Prophecy, Innovating  
Faith (perceive patterns)  
Leading charismatically



## Maintaining

Knowledge  
Administering, Teaching  
Serving, Ministering (clerics)  
Interpreting tongues

## Harmonizing

Knowledge  
Encouraging, mercy  
Faith (feeling the "spirit")  
Speaking in tongues  
Healing (lay on hands)

# Approach to Spirituality

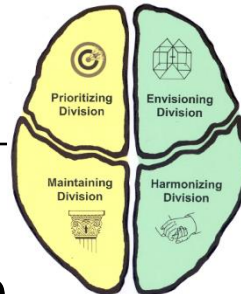
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## Prioritizing

Intellectual - Analytical  
Hierarchical, Goal-oriented  
Drawn toward decision-making, doctrinal study, and proving theology

## Envisioning

Intuitive - Conjectural  
Meditative, Unorthodox,  
Change-oriented  
Drawn to innovation and nature



## Maintaining

Organized - Conservative  
Rules-oriented  
Drawn toward routines and rituals, memorizing, reading, maintaining the status quo

## Harmonizing

Relational - Expressive  
Experience-oriented  
Drawn toward relating, praising, encouraging, and a personal connection (God)

# 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 ...**