



Spiritual Distress Assessment Tool

INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE SPIRITUAL DISTRESS

Questions meaning / purpose of illness, pain, life itself

- Asks, 'Why me?'
- Expresses hopelessness, despair
- Withdraws from or loses relationships
- Grieving
- Cannot accept change/loss/illness

Expresses feelings of abandonment by religious group or God/Anger at God

Feels guilty / deserving of punishment

Feels self to be bad, sinful, unlovable

- Anxious about hell or the afterlife
- Questions the moral or ethical implications of therapies

Interruption of religious practices/activities

Raises religious issues/themes

DIRECT QUESTIONS FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO ASK

Do you feel at peace with the changes in your life that have come about because of your illness?

Are there any religious activities or practices that have been interrupted because of your illness?

Pain is a hard thing physically. Has it been a hard thing for you spiritually?

Would you like to speak with someone about your spiritual concerns?

PASTORAL CARE REFERRAL

Consider referral to Pastoral / Spiritual Care if answers indicate the possibility of spiritual distress, or if indicators of spiritual distress are present.

Ehman, J., Wieser, K., Ciampa, R, Abram, J.L. et al

North American Nursing Diagnosis Association diagnosis of Spiritual Distress

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FACT - Spiritual Assessment Tool

F - Faith (and/or beliefs, spiritual practices)

A - Active (or availability, accessibility, applicability)

C - Coping (and/or comfort, conflict, concern)

T - Treatment Plan

The FACT Spiritual Assessment Tool is a hybrid tool (three parts spiritual history, one part spiritual assessment)

QUESTIONS

F - What things do you believe that give your life meaning and purpose? Do you consider yourself spiritual or religious? What is your faith or belief?

A - Is there a person or group whose presence and support you value at a time like this? Are you active in your faith community? Is support for your faith available? Do you have access to what you need to apply your faith/beliefs?

C - How are you coping with your medical situation? Is your faith/belief system helping you cope? Is your faith/belief providing comfort in light of your diagnosis? Do any of your religious beliefs or spiritual practices conflict with the medical treatment that is recommended by your medical team? Do you have any particular concerns for us as your medical team?

T - Treatment plan:

- If patient is coping well, support and encourage, reassess at a later date.
- If the patient seems to be coping poorly, depending on their relationship with faith/belief, provide direct intervention-spiritual counseling, prayer, scripture reading, music-in patient's tradition; encourage patient to address these concerns with their own faith leader; make a referral to a chaplain or spiritual care counselor.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Faith is a 'complementary treatment modality'
2. A spiritual assessment is less about what a person believes and more about how their faith or belief functions as a coping mechanism.
3. Respect the privacy of patients with regard to their spirituality; do not impose your own beliefs.
4. Make referrals to professional chaplains, spiritual counselors, clergy, and community resources.
5. Addressing spiritual concerns can provide comfort and is, in itself, a therapeutic intervention.