SPIRITUAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT
Healing through Self Awareness

Based on “Healing the Four Dimensions of Spiritual Pain” in the classical Sacred Art of Living & Dying tradition

INSTRUCTIONS
• Quiet yourself and take a moment for reflection.
• Circle the deepest truth that describes “How you are within yourself” today.
• Use the optional questions as a guide for insight.
• Record and compare your answers at regular intervals in order to discover patterns of spiritual health or distress.
• Trust that awareness is the first step towards healing. Instead of trying to fix spiritual pain, it only needs to be listened to and received.

MEANING

1 Life is filled with purpose and meaning
2 I feel generally motivated
3 Life has become meaningless

What is giving me life and energy right now?
Who or what keeps me from being fully alive?

FORGIVENESS

1 I feel a deep sense of reconciliation towards myself and others
2 There are no outstanding issues that are calling for forgiveness in my life
3 I feel a strong sense of un-forgiveness towards myself and/or another

Who or what do I need to forgive?
From whom do I need to seek forgiveness?

RELATEDNESS

1 I feel a strong sense of connection with the persons and things that matter most to me
2 Most important areas of my life seem balanced
3 I feel seriously alienated from someone/thing that is important to me

Who or what means the most to me?
Who or what do I fear losing?

HOPE

1 I feel hope-filled and optimistic
2 I generally trust what the future holds for me
3 I am experiencing deep depression and hopelessness

What dreams keep me alive?
Why might I feel depressed or hopeless?
Background for the Spiritual Health Assessment Tool

- The Spiritual Health Assessment (SHA) was originally developed as part of a North American healthcare education initiative to help caregivers and care receivers better understand and respond to the impact of existential suffering on physical health and emotional well-being.

- SHA was designed by internationally acclaimed educators, Richard and Mary Groves, co-founders of the Sacred Art of Living Center in Bend, Oregon USA. Based on more than thirty years of clinical caregiving experience they developed the Soul & Science of Living programs and the Sacred Art of Living & Dying series, as international training courses for health care professionals.

- The SHA tool was designed in consultation with physicians, nurse practitioners, mental health therapists and spiritual caregivers from a wide range of faith and cultural traditions. Underlying the SHA is the concern that, “Western Medicine has no model to help someone live through their suffering” (cf. Mortally Wounded: Stories of Soul Pain & Healing, Michael Kearney, MD, Medical Director for Sacred Art of Living Center).

- Since 1997 the SHA has been utilized as a ‘best practice’ in hundreds of care facilities in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia (including hospices, hospitals, long term care facilities and a variety of social and faith community venues).

- The purpose of the SHA is to assist persons living with serious, chronic or terminal illness through enhanced awareness of emotional and spiritual concerns. The presumption of the tool is that self-awareness is the first step towards healing and wellness.

- The goal of the SHA is to invite a person to reflect on “How you are within yourself” a question designed by Dr. Cicely Saunders, founder of the modern hospice movement. Saunders’ Total Pain Management approach to suffering attempted to measure not just physical pain but emotional, social and spiritual dimensions as well.

- The SHA measures four dimensions* of existential suffering: Meaning, Forgiveness, Relatedness and Hope which are universal experiences, regardless of a person’s age, gender, culture or belief system.

*For more background on related theory and practice of the four dimensions of spiritual suffering, consult The American Book of Living & Dying: Lessons in Healing Spiritual Pain, by SHA author Richard Groves.

- The benefit of the SHA is the support it provides for both caregivers and care receivers by assessing emotional and psycho-spiritual needs. The SHA is always optional however utilization rates of the SHA among care receivers range from 86-92%.

- Responses to the four dimensions of spiritual suffering should be prescribed only after caregivers have received mentorship appropriate to their profession and experience. It is highly recommended that, before introducing the SHA, institutions and their personnel receive appropriate training through the Soul & Science of Living or Sacred Art of Living & Dying programs. To learn more about these series and the related Anamcara Project, which are offered worldwide, contact Sacred Art of Living Center: www.sacredartofliving.org More than 20,000 caregivers worldwide have graduated from these education and training programs.

“The work of the Sacred Art of Living Center is essential because spiritual suffering is the least diagnosed cause of pain.”

Dame Cicely Saunders, MD