SPIRITUAL CARE FOR VETERANS

Hospice End of Life Care
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Religion and Spirituality

- Religion is the outward signs, rites, rituals of a certain belief system connected to a specific community.

- Spirituality is the capacity for transcendence and awareness of our individuality. Spirituality is the larger reality and may be expressed in a non-traditional religious term or humanistic term. Spirituality can be identified with little or no religious interest.

Crisis of Faith/Spirituality

- Crisis of faith is not necessarily a crisis of spirituality. Where is God? How could a loving God allow this?

- Crisis of spirituality asks the questions that refer to ones personal understanding of the relationship between one’s self and others.

- The Self includes: one’s spirit, one’s soul and body. The spirit is the part of us that relates to the other or the higher power. The soul is our imagination, emotions, will, reason, attitude, memory. The body is where we live.

Spiritual Issues

- Anxiety
- Hopelessness
- Spiritual Fears/Reconciliation
- Spiritual Distress
- Powerlessness
- Social Isolation-Abandonment

Anxiety

Problems of anxiety need to be identified for the Veteran.

- Explore the fear
- Guilt
- Survivor’s guilt
- Spiritual aspects of anxiety/fear/courage

Hopelessness

- Establish hope by finding meaning and purpose
- Facilitate personal narrative
- Offer pastoral presence, compassionate presence and faith based spiritual counseling
- Setting new goals
Spiritual Fears/Reconciliation
• Clarifying life experience within spiritual/faith context
• Develop sense of acceptance and forgiveness
• Help to understand the Divine compassion and forgiveness
• Help patient verbalize how he/she touches their Divine Other to reconnect to the spiritual aspects of life

Powerlessness
• Help patient identify what control he/she has
• Pastoral counseling of feelings of self control once again
• Help patient explore spiritual values

Social Isolation and Abandonment
• Offer assurance of divine presence
• Examine relationships and feelings of relationships
• Identify ways relationships can be maintained
• Help with the pain of disappointing relationships, loss of relationships, expectations of relationships and possible ways to reconciliation
• Encourage individual and community connections

Spiritual Distress
• Addressing Spiritual Distress can bring a sense of normalcy for veterans.
• Faith can help the veteran find answers to the question: Did my life have meaning? Was it worth the sacrifices made?
• Helping the veteran see the value and blessing of their life lessons for others
• Survivor’s Guilt is one of the strongest types of guilt. Why did this happen? Why was it him/her not me? Faith can help examine these questions in light of The Divine love.

The Big Picture
• Fostering sense of faith helps Veterans find peace and meaning at end of life.
• Spiritual needs can be addressed through attentive listening, pastoral counseling, ministry presence and religious rites such as prayer, communion, anointing of the sick or any other rite that would be meaningful to the Veteran

Questions???
• Remember Veterans often think about their relationships and their life experience in light of their military career.
• Including spiritual care at end of life with other hospice interventions can help the Veteran find reconciliation and resolution to experience peaceful transitions
References

US Department of Veterans Affairs
(www.va.gov/health) Supporting Veterans and their Families in Hospice Care: Spiritual Care at the Orlando VAMC

Empath Health
(www.empathhealth.org) Spiritual Care For Veterans At End of Life

HCR Manor Care
Heartland Home Care and Hospice Spiritual Care Manual
Problems/Goals/Interventions For Spiritual Issues