

## Finding meaning, connection, and support

The B.C. Ministry of Health recognizes **spiritual health** as an integral part of person-centred care that encompasses all dimensions of a person: the spiritual; the physical; the mental; the social; and the emotional.



**Spiritual health** needs may arise in response to an illness, injury or loss. In these types of situations, many individuals find themselves looking for ways to find meaning, ways to express themselves, or ways to connect to their faith or beliefs.

**Health** is a large word. It embraces not the body only, but the mind and spirit as well.

*James H. West*



## Spiritual Health

supporting person-centred care

Attending to **spiritual health** is vital to overall well-being and should be considered in each person's healthcare plan.



Each one of us has a unique story. Significant life situations, such as celebrations, illness, injury, grief and loss can affect us differently.

To **respond** to challenging situations in your life journey, **family and friends, the community, and healthcare providers, including spiritual health professionals,** can offer the help and comfort you need.

## Supporting individuals to overcome challenging situations in their life journey



Situations that may cause **spiritual distress** in patients, family members and caregivers include:

**Waiting for a diagnosis** – When a patient or their family is waiting for a diagnosis feelings of anxiety may be strong – especially if a life-threatening disease is being confirmed or ruled out.

**Major or repeated setbacks** – When there is a series of setbacks, complications, or other unexpected events. This applies especially if the patient’s discharge date keeps being delayed or the prognosis for recovery worsens.

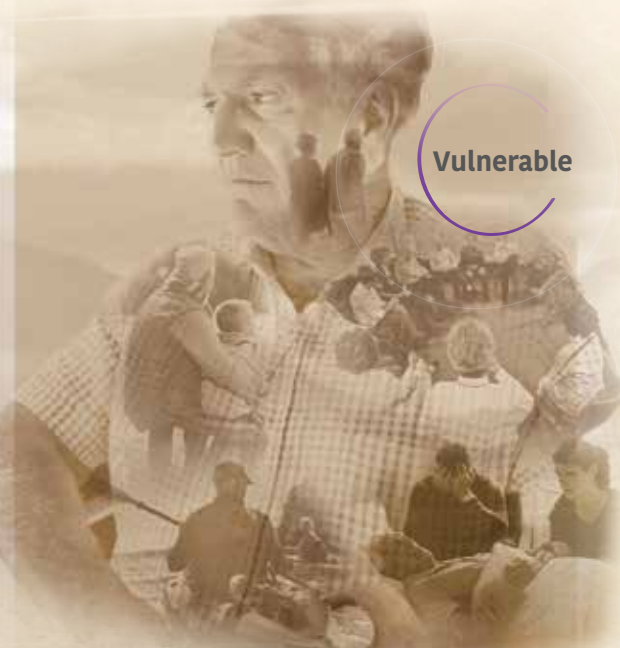
**Pain** – When someone complains of feeling pain even after all appropriate pain management measures have been taken, and you sense it is about something deeper.

**Family member making decisions on behalf of a loved one** – When family members are responsible for making difficult, sometimes life-changing, decisions on behalf of their family member (e.g., a Do Not Resuscitate Order, withdrawing life support, long-term care placement).

**Wishing for some ritual of their faith** – When someone feels a ritual of their faith or culture is needed. Examples may include the blessing of a stillborn baby, anointing of the sick, or a smudging.

**Compassion fatigue** – When a caregiver feels physically or mentally exhausted or emotionally withdrawn from caring for a sick, injured or traumatized person over an extended period of time.

**Beliefs that don’t support treatment recommendations** – When the patient or family is struggling to consent to a medical intervention that is not allowed, or is not in line with their religious, spiritual or cultural beliefs or traditions.



Addressing **spiritual needs** may result in:

- Increased ability to cope with pain, nausea and discomfort
- Lowered blood pressure
- Decreased feelings of anxiety, depression, loneliness and anger
- Decreased alcohol and drug abuse
- Shorter hospital stays
- Greater use of palliative care at end of life



## Connecting with **Spiritual Healthcare** Services

**Spiritual Health Professionals work as part of the interprofessional care team;** they support patients, families, and health care staff emotionally and spiritually in moments of need, based on the person’s beliefs, cultural background, values, traditions and practices.

If you think a **Spiritual Health Professional** can help you or someone you care for, contact your health care provider.