



SHLEAC Position Statement on Spirituality & Religion in mental health recovery

The Spiritual Health Lived Experience Advisory Committee (SHLEAC) under the auspice of Spiritual Health Association (SHA) since June 2021 has worked to advance and embed the role of spirituality & spiritual care provision in mental health service delivery.

This position statement emphasises the need for a genuine holistic approach to mental health care that includes spiritual wellbeing.

Introduction:

In our diverse world it is crucial to recognise and respect different identities, meet diverse needs, expectations, and rights. This approach underpins equitable health outcomes for all.

This statement aims to guide health professionals, educate communities, amplify lived experience views, and influence decision makers on how the recognition and integration of spirituality in health care can improve outcomes for people with mental health challenges.

Adopting SHA's definition of spiritual care that is responsive to the range of people's beliefs, traditions, values, and practices; and a definition of spirituality that broadly encapsulates how a person derives meaning, purpose and connection in their daily lives; this may or may not include the practice of religion.

This approach aligns to the Biopsychosocial-Spiritual (Sulmasy, 2002) model of care that compliments the World Health Organisation's four dimensions of wellbeing that include: physical, social, mental, and spiritual (WHO Geneva Charter, 2021).

Spiritual values:

Spiritual values provide a source of energy and hope, fostering mutual support that enables a person to live with and maintain dignity through recovery. Values such as courage, compassion, kindness, and creativity significantly impact greater healing. Positive experiences support learning, growth, and full engagement in life.

Key Messages:

- Spiritual and religious beliefs significantly influence positive mental health. These beliefs shape societal attitudes toward those facing mental health challenges.
- Health systems and professionals must acknowledge the importance of spirituality in patients' lives and treatment plans.
- Integrating a person's spirituality in clinical assessment processes and treatment care plans can and do enhance recovery outcomes.
- Respect for a person's beliefs, traditions, values, and practices remains tantamount. Avoiding the imposition of one's own world view is essential for health professionals.
- There is a wealth of expertise in the lived and living experience community. People need to feel empowered to share how spirituality has supported their mental health and wellbeing.

Conclusion:

Our mental health matters. Our spiritual health matters. Let us attend to both.

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