

# SPIRITUAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

## Healing through Self Awareness



Based on "Healing the Four Dimensions of Spiritual Pain" in the classical Sacred Art of Living and Dying tradition

NAME/CARE RECEIVER \_\_\_\_\_ CARE GIVER [optional] \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_ LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Quiet yourself and take a moment for reflection or prayer.
- 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	2	3	4	5
Life is filled with purpose and meaning		I feel generally motivated		Life has become meaningless

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

### FORGIVENESS

1	2	3	4	5
I feel a deep sense of reconciliation towards myself and others		There are no outstanding issues that are calling for forgiveness in my life		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 seek forgiveness? \_\_\_\_\_

### RELATEDNESS

1	2	3	4	5
I feel a strong sense of connection with the persons and things that matter most to me		Most important areas of my life seem balanced		I feel seriously alienated from someone/thing that is important to me

Who are you and 'whose' are you? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Who or what do I fear losing? \_\_\_\_\_

### HOPE

1	2	3	4	5
I feel hope-filled and optimistic		I generally trust what the future holds for me		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 developed originally as part of a palliative care initiative in North America to help care givers and care receivers better understand the nature of existential suffering and pain.
- **SHA** was designed by Spiritual Care educators, Richard and Mary Groves, co-founders of the Sacred Art of Living Center in Bend, Oregon USA. Following twenty years of clinical caregiving experience they developed the *Sacred Art of Living & Dying* series, an international training program for caregivers.
- 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 in a variety of faith community venues].
- The purpose of the **SHA** is to assist persons living with chronic or terminal illness through enhanced awareness of emotional and spiritual concerns. The presumption of the tool is that awareness is the first step towards inner healing.
- 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** utilizes four dimensions\* of existential suffering [Meaning, Forgiveness, Relatedness and Hope] that are universal qualities, regardless of a person’s age, gender, culture of 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 to persons living with chronic or terminal illness through enhanced awareness of their related emotional and spiritual needs. Caregivers and care receivers consistently indicate that awareness provides the first step towards inner healing. The **SHA** is always optional. Utilization rates of the **SHA** among care receivers range from 86-93%.
- Responses to the four dimensions of spiritual suffering should be offered only after caregivers have studied and received mentorship appropriate to their profession and experience. It is highly recommended that, before instituting the **SHA**, profession organizations and their personnel receive training and education through the *Sacred Art of Living & Dying* programs. To learn more about this series and related Anamcara Project, which are offered worldwide, contact the **Sacred Art of Living Center**: [www.sacredartofliving.org](http://www.sacredartofliving.org) To date, more than 18,000 caregivers have graduated from the *Sacred Art of Living & Dying* series.

“The Sacred Art of Living & Dying is necessary  
because spiritual suffering is the least diagnosed cause of pain.”  
Dame Cicely Saunders