

# 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

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

**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	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 or what means the most to me? \_\_\_\_\_  
 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 originally developed as part of a North American healthcare education initiative to help care givers 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 Caregiving* 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 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 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 Caregiving* 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](http://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**