



Spirituality & Health Care

*Richard LaMadeleine, MA, CAC
Director of Spiritual Enrichment
Talbott Recovery*

“The role spirituality has in health care”. How we answer this question will depend on how we define “spirituality” and from what perspective we ask this question. Our past history with and understanding of the word spirituality will influence our assessment of its role in our own lives and in patient care.

One important distinction is that between religion and spirituality, not to put them in opposition to one another, but to recognize that they are different. Or perhaps it is the distinction between the practice of religion as ideology and promotion of dogmatic belief from authentic religious practice leading to spiritual awakening.

And, so, what about spirituality? What if spirituality is a way of life, a combination of attitudes and actions that assist persons in coming in touch with their most profound yearnings and promoting well-being in every aspect of their lives? What if spirituality is slowing down enough to recognize what promotes one’s deepest actualization and what cripples such vision, and then “choosing life”? What if spirituality is a “home-coming,” coming home to oneself, coming home in one’s relationships with others, coming home to one’s existential relationship to the Universe, and to whatever one comes to accept as “Life-Source” or “God”? What if spirituality is finding those situations and trusted guides that help bring the past to healing and bring hope for the future? What if spirituality is admitting powerlessness, asking for help, gratefully accepting it, and knowing both peace and empowerment? What if spirituality is learning to acknowledge hurt, properly feel and express anger, let go of the anger and come to forgiveness and the experience of unconditional love?

What if spirituality is coming to such a sense of oneness with all creation, the universe, and the “Reality Greater Than I”, or with a personally experienced “God” that I can welcome death as a homecoming? What if spirituality is enjoying self as human and fragile while enjoying a community to hold me in moments of fear and grief? What if spirituality is “fullness of life on every level” and knowing how to foster that life in thought and action?

If THIS is spirituality, then it is neither peripheral nor superfluous. It is at the core of and a strategic ally to every area of healthcare, be that medical, physical, or mental.

***Richard LaMadeleine, MA, CAC**, Director of Spiritual Enrichment, was born of French-Canadian parents in Waterbury, CT, and along with his identical twin, is the youngest of 7 children, raised Catholic in a French-speaking community. Devoutly religious, Richard determined that he would be a priest at age 6, entered the Seminary at age 18 with the LaSalette Missionaries, obtained an M.A. in Philosophy and a B.A. in Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome, Italy) and Catholic University (Washington, D.C.), and an M.A. in Counseling Psychology and Spirituality at Duquesne University (Pittsburg, PA). He was ordained a Catholic priest in 1969, served as Director of Students with LaSalette and then as parish priest in Atlanta, GA and Dagenham, Essex, England. Richard began his own personal recovery from alcoholism in 1977, leaving the priesthood in 1988 and seeking to continue to do spiritual counseling in the field of recovery. He has been the Director of Spiritual Enrichment at Talbott Recovery Campus since Dec. of 1999, along with being involved in various ministries to the LGBTQ Community and persons living with HIV/AIDS, while still maintaining membership in a Roman Catholic Church and counseling gay & lesbian couples there.*

For more information about Talbott Recovery, visit: www.talbottrecovery.com