

Keys to Wellness: Resilience, Spirituality and Purpose
Kathy Marshall, National Resilience Resource Center
Website: www.cce.umn.edu/National-Resilience-Resource-Center/

Kathy Marshall gives a broad framework for understanding resiliency by connecting Resilience, Spirituality and Purpose. Wellness is an outcome, an end product of what we understand how we learn to live. Well-being is not something we directly create: we are simply hard wired to strive for and realize it when we are at our best. For a person who lives with purpose, there is inner direction, and knowing, a felt confidence about and commitment to, one's life path. We all strive to find our individual purpose or we might say, our souls path.

Every human being has an inner life. The path to wellness recognize and nurtures a quest for personal spirituality. Spirituality and religion are distinguishable. Spirituality is a formless—universal experience of knowing and being that is felt by all human being. Religion has form including doctrine, belief, worship, practice, and affiliation. We can identify ourselves as human beings with a guiding spiritual nature or essence. In contrast we, believe, practice or profess a certain religion, belong to or are members of a specific faith community. Both spirituality and religion are vitally important to individual and societal wellness. Psychiatrist Steven Wohin says that his most effective work is done in spiritual relationship with his client when they co-create “sacred space.” How can we as Stephen Ministers create the sacred space with our care receivers.

It is useful to understand resilience as a natural, innate human capacity for navigating life successfully. This does not mean that every person manifests resilience or that social support is not essential. However, a goal for us, as Stephen Ministers, might well be to have faith in the availability of resilience in our care receivers (and ourselves) and to nurture that strength through our caring relationship.

It is important of note that life happens from in inside out. We may tend to blame the circumstances of our life when it may well be our attachments to particular thoughts that need our attention. The moment we notice a thought, it has already happened. The hopeful lesson is that we are more than our thinking, that this thought will pass, that another more helpful one will come. “Wait, the wisdom will come.”

As a spiritual being, we can trust that life will unfold in a good way and we are equipped to meet each moment. We can learn to trust the unknown, to invoke that “still small voice within,” to trust in that which is greater than us. As holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl says, “Man and women can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom...there are always choices to make...all people can decide what will become of them, mentally and spiritually. It is this spiritual freedom, which cannot be taken away, that makes life meaningful and purposeful.”