



Spiritual wellbeing and brain health

Research indicates that spirituality is a major definer of quality of life and that the positive benefits of spirituality on brain health are much higher than other factors. Whether we choose formalized religion or non-religious forms of spiritual practice, our brains respond favorably to spiritual activities

In a recent study overseen by the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 200 adults completed assessments of overall satisfaction with life, physical and mental health, social support, confidence in the ability to care for one's self, physical activity, and spirituality and religiousness. Physical activity, social support and spirituality ranked as the highest influences on perceived well-being. Participants who considered themselves more spiritual reported a more positive overall health status than those who did not.

Likewise, spiritual activities can help relieve stress, bring peace and find perspective. Studies have shown that consistent meditation can change the structure and function of the brain.

Emotionally, finding a purpose and passion is also key in building brain health.

“What are you most passionate about?” Paul Nussbaum, Ph.D., ABPP, clinical neuropsychologist and founder of Brain Health Center, Inc., asks. “What makes you animated? What gets you excited? Because those are the things, if you can do them, you're going to really change a part of the world. You're going to be happier and healthier because you're doing what you're called to do... It's a little bit risky, it's a little bit scary, but it's OK... But keep going, because there is someone out there who is going to need to receive that purpose from you.”

Spiritual and emotional health checklist

- ✓ Do daily breathing exercises
- ✓ Meditate daily
- ✓ Practice yoga
- ✓ Pray daily
- ✓ Have a meaningful hobby
- ✓ Serve others
- ✓ Attend religious services
- ✓ Practice forgiveness and kindness

- ✓ Work to remove hostility, resentment, jealousy and gossip from your life