



Session Six: Establishing Spiritual Self-Care Goals

Hands-on session

Setting specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-limited (SMART) goals for spiritual self-care Organizing and writing your personal spiritual story

Formulating spiritual interest in your personal wellness and recovery goals

Session Six: Establishing Spiritual Self-Care Goals

This is a hands-on session that guides participants into the process of setting specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-limited (SMART) goals for spiritual self-care that can have a positive impact on participants' recovery and wellness. This session begins with a writing activity in which participants are asked to very briefly write their personal spiritual story. Questions are provided to assist in organizing the spiritual story and a template titled "my spiritual story worksheet" is available. The purpose of the spiritual story exercise is to provide a real-time snapshot to help locate an individual's personal connection to spirituality. This serves as a type of baseline upon which the person can formulate their personal spiritual interest in their personal wellness and recovery goals. The second part of this session guides participants through the process of goal setting by providing definitions, an easy-to-use template, and some examples of SMART goals. Participants draw upon the preliminary goals recorded on their "personal evaluation worksheets" from Sessions One through Five to develop these SMART goals and record them onto their "spiritual self-care goals worksheet." These self-care goals worksheets will be used in Session Eight to develop "action plans."

Goals:

- 1) Write a brief personal spiritual story to gain self-understanding and a baseline of spiritual experience
- 2) Write spiritual self-care goals drawing upon what was learned in this group
- 3) Connect spiritual self-care goals with principles of recovery

My personal spiritual story

Over the course of our lives each of us has acquired unique experiences that have shaped us and helped us become who we are today. These life experiences are like the brush strokes that create a painting, or the treads used to weave a colorful tapestry. Like any piece of great artwork that is observed and appreciated, when we pause to consider and understand our own lives, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and begin to find value in our life experiences. One important thread, or theme, in our lives is our personal spiritual story. We each have within us all that we need to create a meaningful spiritual story from the experiences of our lives. Knowing our own spiritual story will bring encouragement and fresh enthusiasm for the journey that lies ahead. Sharing our story with others will provide insight, encouragement, and hope to our companions in their own spiritual journeys.

Expressing your story creatively

The first thing to remember is that your story does not need to be long. If you think quietly for about 15 minutes and write down some of the main points of your spiritual story, you already have an outline. For now, all you need is a starting point. You can always add more sections and details to your story later. The thing to remember is that if you would like to share, you'll want to have something that you can share with the Spirituality group that is 3-5 minutes in length.

There are several creative ways for you to record your spiritual story:

- Simply write it as a short story
- Write it as a piece of poetry
- Design a collage using pictures and words cut from magazines, and arranged in an artful form on a piece of paper or cardboard
- Create your own artwork in pencil or with colored pens on paper or cardboard

Since we will work on setting spiritual self-care goals, we will use the first option, writing a brief personal spiritual story.

Help for organizing your spiritual story

One easy way to get started is to simply ask who, what, when, where, and why questions:

- **Who** first helped you understand the importance of spirituality or of faith? Who invested in you at different stages of your life? This could be a person, a group of people, a faith community, a school, etc.
- **What** spiritual awareness did you experience or learn from those who invested in you? What other experiences raised your awareness of spirituality? These could include music, scriptures, literature, art, a religious service, or a celebration of a festival, etc.
- **When** did some of the more significant spiritual experiences occur in your life? At what stages of life: childhood, adolescence, teenager, young adult, or adult. This could also include difficult experiences such as during a time of illness or hospitalization, separation from loved ones, death of a loved one, military service or wartime experience, etc. It could also include satisfying experiences such as a graduation, wedding, birth of a child, receiving an award or recognition, a special vacation, etc.
- **Where** did some of the more significant spiritual experiences occur in your life? This could be in the home, school, faith community, the outdoors, in a religious service, in quiet meditation, etc.
- **Why** were these experiences meaningful to you, and how did they shape your view or understanding of spirituality?

Use the My Spiritual Story Worksheet as a tool for writing down your story.

My Spiritual Story Worksheet

WHO was influential?

WHAT are some of the spiritual experiences that you value?

WHEN did you experience spiritual awareness and how has your spirituality developed?

WHERE have you found the best opportunities for spiritual growth?

WHY are your spiritual experiences meaningful to you?

WHAT are you most passionate about regarding spirituality? What most energizes you?

You can write additional comments on this page regarding your spiritual story

Spiritual self-care goals

You have completed the first important step in your Spiritual Self-Care Plan by writing your brief personal spiritual story. Your story has given you insight on the important people, events, and experiences that have shaped your spirituality and helped you on your spiritual journey.

Now, we are on to the next step in your Spiritual Self-Care Plan, which is writing down the goals that you are most passionate about accomplishing on your spiritual journey. There are several important guidelines to keep in mind when writing goals. Let's review them.

Guidelines for writing goals:

- 1) Stay focused and decide which goals are most important to you. It's best to write no more than three goals for the spirituality category, and three goals for the recovery category of your Spiritual Self-Care Plan.
- 2) Select goals that are important to you and that you feel passionate about.
- 3) Goals should be your own, not goals someone else has set for you.
- 4) Goals should be written and placed where they are easily available for your review
- 5) Goals should be SMART. This means they are:
 - **Specific**: Be as specific as possible yet be very brief
 - **Measurable**: How will you measure your progress?
 - **Achievable**: Set goals that will help you make progress and grow, not lead to frustration.
 - **Realistic**: Goals should be within the scope of your abilities and the available resources that you can access.
 - **Time-limited**: Goal should be completed within a certain period of time. It should not be open ended.

Examples of goals:

Example 1:

Broad goal: Become healthier by losing weight.

SMART goal: Become healthier by losing 10 pounds by walking five times per week for 30 minutes for the next three months.

Example 2:

Broad goal: Become more consistent at praying.

SMART goal: Become more consistent at praying by setting aside 15 minutes five times per week to pray, and to record my prayers in a journal for the next two months.

Use the Spiritual Self-Care & Recovery Self-Care worksheets to write your SMART goals.

Some examples of spirituality goals:

Spirituality goal #1

Goal: Become more consistent at being mindful by setting aside 15 minutes five times per week to practice a mindfulness exercise or activity, and to record these instances in my journal for the next two months.

Measuring progress: Checking my journal weekly to see if I'm holding to the schedule.

Resources needed: A small notebook. A quiet and comfortable place where I can collect my thoughts and concentrate.

Start date and end date: For example, start on January 14, and end on March 14.

Reward: Buy myself a new book about mindfulness.

Spirituality goal #2

Goal: Increase my spiritual appreciation of nature or the "divine" by spending 1 hour per week in a park or garden in quiet observation and reflection for the next two months.

Measuring progress: Mark my calendar for each trip. Record my thoughts and observations in a small notebook. How has my spiritual journey been helped by this activity?

Resources needed: Finding a park or garden. Bike, bus, or car transportation. A small notebook.

Start date and end date: For example, start on February 3, and end on April 7.

Reward: Take a friend to the park or the garden for a picnic.

Spiritual Self-Care Goals Worksheet

Instructions: Using the spirituality goals you listed on your Personal Evaluation Worksheets from Sessions 1 through 5, list below the three goals that are most important to you.

The goal should be: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and have a Time limit (SMART).

Spirituality goal

Goal:

Measuring progress:

Resources needed:

Start date and end date:

Recovery & Wellness that uses spirituality goal

Goal:

Measuring progress:

Resources needed:

Start date and end date:

Life goal

Goal:

Measuring progress:

Resources needed:

Start date and end date:

Connecting spiritual self-care and recovery

The ⁴⁶recovery model, which has been very successful in mental health care, can be helpful in any recovery, whether it be from an illness, a life-threatening event, or a difficult situation. It provides individuals with the ability to chart their own course of action and progress toward wellness. There are 10 basic principles within the recovery model, including:

- Recovery is **self-directed** by the individual
- Recovery is **person-centered** and unique to each person
- Recovery is about **empowerment** by providing the resources and support needed by an individual
- Recovery is **holistic**, taking into account the needs of the whole person while looking to provide support and opportunities through family, community, faith connections, agency relationships, and networks
- Recovery is **progressive** with occasional setbacks but also with many opportunities for growth, healing, and learning
- Recovery **identifies the strengths** of an individual and builds on these to develop new life skills and to engage in new life choices
- Recovery provides **peer support** in which individuals share experiences and stories and encourage each other in mutual support and community
- Recovery is about **respect**, ensuring that individuals are treated with dignity, fairness, and integrity, and that individuals participate in the life opportunities available to all citizens
- Recovery is about individual **responsibility** for self-care, healing, and wellness
- Recovery is about **hope** that there will be a better future and a more satisfying quality of life

⁴⁶ US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery*

