

# ASSESSMENT FOR SPIRITUAL DISTRESS

## o INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE SPIRITUAL DISTRESS

- o Questions meaning/purpose of illness, pain, life itself
  - o Asks, "Why me?"
  - o Expresses hopelessness, despair
  - o Withdraws from or loses relationships
  - o Grieving
  - o Cannot accept change, loss
- o Expresses feelings of abandonment by religious group or God
  - o Anger at God
- o Feels guilty / deserving of punishment
- o Feels self to be bad, sinful, unlovable
  - o Anxious about hell or the afterlife
  - o Questions the moral or ethical implication of therapies
- o Interruption of religious practices / activities
- o Raises religious issues / themes

## o DIRECT QUESTIONS FOR HEALTH PROVIDER TO ASK

- o Do you feel at peace with the changes in your life that have come about because of your illness?
- o Are there any religious activities or practices that have been interrupted because of your illness?
- o Pain is a hard thing physically. Has it been a hard thing for you spiritually?
- o Would you like to speak with someone about your spiritual concerns?

### PASTORAL CARE REFERRAL

**Consider a referral to Pastoral Care if the patient's answers indicate the possibility of spiritual distress, or if indicators of spiritual distress are present.**

**Indicators are based on, but not confined to, the North American Nursing Diagnosis Association diagnosis of Spiritual Distress. J. Ehman, K. Wieser, R. Ciampa, J.L. Abrahm, authors..**