



## Spirituality and Mental Health of Children

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Nurturing the Spirit, Healing the Mind: The Interwoven Path of Spirituality and Mental Health in Children.

Spirituality shared by a nurse in CMC has mentored me to follow Jesus Christ and I survive by His grace.

In today's rapidly changing world, children face a multitude of challenges that can affect their mental well-being — from academic pressure and family instability to exposure to violence and social media overload. While mental health interventions are crucial, one often underutilized yet profoundly impactful dimension is spirituality. As we reflect on the holistic growth of a child, it becomes increasingly clear that spirituality can offer a strong foundation for emotional resilience, hope, and identity formation.

Spirituality in children does not necessarily refer to religious doctrine but encompasses a sense of meaning, purpose, connectedness, and inner peace. It is the innate human capacity to seek significance in life experiences and relationships, including with the divine, the self, others, and nature. When nurtured gently and appropriately, this aspect of a child's being can become a source of strength during emotional turbulence.

Research has shown that children who grow up with spiritual support tend to exhibit higher levels of empathy, self-esteem, optimism, and coping ability. These attributes are critical protective factors against anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues. Spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, storytelling, and participation in community rituals can foster mindfulness, gratitude, and a sense of belonging — all essential for good mental health.

In pediatric care and education, there is growing recognition of the importance of integrating spiritual care. Pediatric nurses, teachers, and caregivers who are sensitive to the child's spiritual expressions — their questions about life, death, fairness, and God

— can provide the compassionate guidance that mental health alone may not address. A simple act of listening deeply to a child's fears or guiding them to reflect on their experiences through a spiritual lens can facilitate healing.

Furthermore, spirituality offers a framework for meaning-making, especially for children facing chronic illness, grief, or trauma. When life becomes overwhelming, the spiritual dimension can anchor the child in hope, foster forgiveness, and encourage resilience. For children who come from diverse cultural and faith backgrounds, spirituality often intertwines with identity, family values, and community life. Hence, a culturally sensitive spiritual approach can enhance therapeutic engagement and trust.

However, promoting spirituality in mental health must be approached with intentionality and respect. It should never be imposed but rather encouraged through open dialogue, reflective questioning, and supportive environments. Spiritual development in children flourishes in spaces where love, respect, safety, and curiosity are present. Schools, hospitals, and homes must therefore serve as nurturing grounds for both the spirit and the psyche.

As we strive to build a healthier, more compassionate society, let us remember that mental health and spirituality are not separate silos but two interwoven threads of the same human tapestry. The well-being of a child depends not only on what they know and feel, but also on what they believe and hope for. In honoring their spiritual journey, we affirm their full humanity — mind, body, and soul.

Let us invest in the spiritual well-being of our children with the same commitment with which we approach their physical and mental health. For in doing so, we lay the foundation for a generation that is not only emotionally resilient but also deeply rooted in purpose and compassion.