

# Spirituality and Stroke

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SSEEO Teleconference

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BROTHERS

H E A L T H   S Y S T E M

# Alexian Brothers Hospitals Are Centers of Excellence in Stroke Care



# Recognition by Joint Commission For Advanced Stroke Care

- Alexian Brothers Medical Center and St. Alexius Medical Center were among the first hospitals in Illinois to receive certification as Primary Stroke Centers





**OUR HOSPITALS ARE RECOGNIZED  
FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE IN  
NEUROLOGY & NEUROSURGERY  
IN 2011-12 BEST HOSPITALS RANKINGS.**

Alexian Brothers Medical Center and St. Alexius Medical Center are ranked among Chicago's Top 10 Hospitals.



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**Neurosciences Institute**

**A Healthy Community Begins with Alexian Brothers.**

# Defining Spirituality

- Spirituality is an inner drive to enter into relationship with others and with the ultimate Other. It is innate in all human beings.



*"We are not human beings  
having a spiritual  
experience . . .*

*We are spiritual beings  
having a human experience"*

# Defining Religion

- Religion in contrast, is a specific system of beliefs about a diety.



# Stroke Can Cause Loss of Relationship On Many Levels



## **Sense of Disconnection from Ourselves:**

- physical, mental or emotional challenges
- self-image issues

# Loss of Relationships (con't)



## Loss of Connection with Others:

- isolation
- not being understood
- not being supported
- stress and conflict with changing role and relationships
- dependence on others

# Loss of Relationships (con't)

## Loss of Connection with the Ultimate Being:

- why?
- sense of unfairness
- anger



# All aspects of spirituality can be affected by crisis

- Hope
- Holy
- Community
- Meaning

What has been your experience?

# Steps in Spiritual Development

- Immature Faith
- Disillusionment
- Mature Faith



# Paradox of the Spiritual Life

- In the spiritual life, we move more and more into that which we do not comprehend. Yet, simultaneously, we feel God's presence increasingly in our life.
- The closer we get, the darker it seems.



# Recovering What Is Already Present



"There's a part of every living thing that wants to become itself, the tadpole into the frog, the chrysalis into the butterfly, a damaged human being into a whole one. That is spirituality."

Ellen Bass

# Getting Stuck

- Strong Ego
- Being Too Self-Deprecating
- Guilt/Shame/Anger
- Intellectual Arrogance
- High Achievers

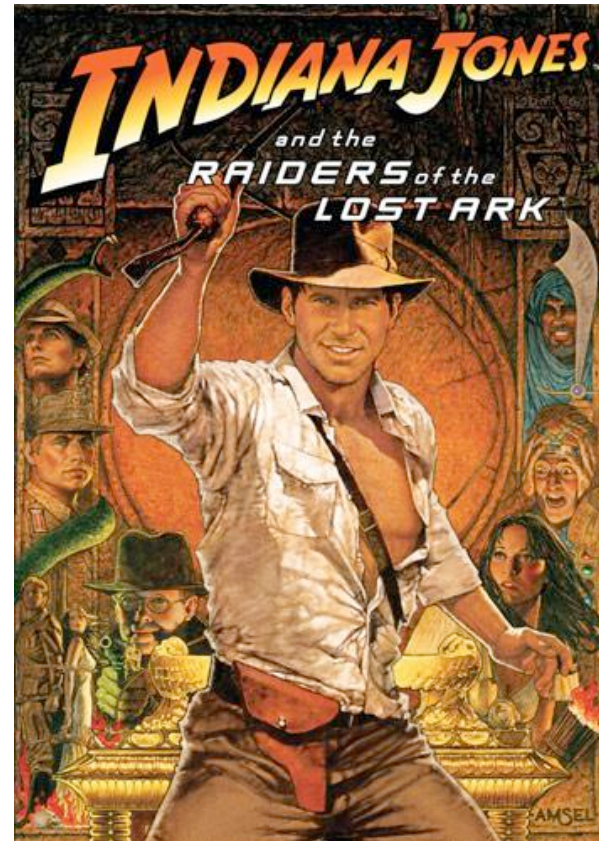


# How Do We Re-Claim Spirituality After Stroke?

## 1) Honor Stroke as a Journey

All transformative experiences have mythic characteristics

- call to adventure
- supernatural aid
- belly of the whale
- road of trials
- atonement with the father
- refusal of the return
- crossing the threshold home
- freedom to live



# Re-Claiming Spirituality (con't)

2) Redefine Your Spirituality, such as:

- Hope - progress in recovery
- Holy - God does allow suffering, but is with us
- Community - SSEEO, therapy groups
- Meaning – life is precious, don't waste it

# Re-Claiming Spirituality (con't)

## 3) Develop New Spiritual Practices

- “Desert time”
- Sacred music/texts
- Giving to others in new ways
- Prayer groups
- Aesthetic endeavors
- Meditation
- Spiritual director

Practices help us to examine ourselves in conversation with God and live a more virtuous life.

# What Evidence is There of Spiritual Growth?

- Living a virtuous life leads to the “fruits of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23)

Love

Generosity

Joy

Faithfulness

Peace

Gentleness

Patience

Self-Control

Kindness

# Resources

- Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*
- Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*
- *The Cloud of Unknowing*
- Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith*
- Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*
- Gerald G. May M.D., *The Dark Night of the Soul*