

Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I'm Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Deb Forstner. She is the chaplain director at Lake Region Healthcare, and she joins me today as we focus on spiritual wellness during our Community Health Challenge. Good morning, Deb.

Deb Forstner: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Well, as I mentioned, we are in spiritual wellness week. We're actually in the seventh of eight weeks already, and each of the weeks, we're focusing on a different component of the components of wellness. From our challenge website, I'm going to set the stage here by reading just a little portion of the definition of spiritual wellness.

It says that while different individuals may have different views on what spiritualism is, it is generally considered to involve the search for meaning and purpose in human existence and that living with meaning and purpose in life guided by personal values is key to feelings of well-being and connection to a larger world. Given that definition, Deb, how do you like to define spiritual health?

Deb Forstner: Well, to me, spiritual health would be, key characteristics of it would be hope and joy, hope being more than wishing, a deeper sense of good things to come, and joy deeper than happiness, so it's a sense of trust despite the tough times. I have seen online before, and I'm not even sure, different people have been attributed to it, but I love a list that we will put on our link. It's the symptoms of inner peace. To me, a spiritual, healthy person, we all get stressed out, but to be able to access a deeper sense of inner peace, these are some of the symptoms, so to speak.

One symptom is a tendency to think and act deliberately rather than from your fears. Another is an unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment. A loss of interest in judging others. A loss of interest in judging yourself. A loss of ability to worry. Wouldn't that be nice?

Katie Johnson: It sure would.

Deb Forstner: You sure would love that symptom. Frequent attacks of smiling through the heart. All those kind of feelings connected with others, feeling a sense that you can go either to your higher power, your guide, to your church community, to your friends, and seek out those symptoms of inner peace.

Katie Johnson: Those sound excellent. We will definitely post those on the spiritual wellness page at lrhc.org/wow. Do people confuse spirituality and religion, and what do you say is the difference between the two?

Deb Forstner: Yeah, sometimes they do, and I think that's when people say, "Well, I'm not spiritual," because they're thinking they don't belong to a church but I see there's a lot of things that, you can access your spirituality, that sense of hope and joy outside of a church. For example, some things that might be spiritual but not religious, I think of certain sports teams experiences like in the Olympics we just witnessed or the Super Bowl, how many get interviewed afterwards, and they, right away, are thanking God. There's an experience there that brings them a profound sense of awe. That can be in choral music, not necessarily religious music, but just the beauty of it, the beauty of art.

I see the difference between religion and spirituality not as a difference as much but like one of those, I used to be a math teacher, so if you remember back to the Venn diagrams, there'd be two circles, and then there'd be an overlap among the circles, and sometimes, the overlap's very small, and sometimes what's shared between the two circles is very large.

Hopefully, if you have a religion that's really speaking to you that's really moving you spiritually that you really believe in, that overlap between spirituality and religion is very large, and that would be great, but there could be some things on the religious side that aren't necessarily moving you spiritually. That might include tasks your church needs to get done. These are important for running the parish or your congregation, but they might not necessarily be a spiritual thing. Another would be like an intellectual study of world religions, but overall, I think spiritual wellness is living out your unique gifts and whatever God has created for you and whatever you've been given. Hopefully, you would find a religion where you feel like "this is a place I can express my gifts."

Katie Johnson: I like those examples of the Olympics for example, a connection to something bigger than yourself is so-

Deb Forstner: Yes.

Katie Johnson: ... evident-

Deb Forstner: Yes.

Katie Johnson: ... in those moments, and that's a really good example. I mentioned the Wheel of Wellness is our theme and the concept of balance is something we've been talking a lot about because each pie in that wheel is an equal size, and if each is getting full attention, our wheel is supposedly balanced. Do you think spiritual health is one of those maybe more difficult pieces to keep in balance than others, and why might that be?

Deb Forstner: Well, I think sometimes it's hard to keep the spiritual in focus, and it gets ignored in day-to-day life and busyness, but my favorite quote, or one of my favorite quotes is, "We are spiritual beings having a human experience." In that respect, I think we all are spiritual. I used to teach, again, and when I did teach a wellness

wheel, I actually put spirituality right at the center, and I like to think that all the other parts would collapse if we didn't have a center.

Katie Johnson: Oh, that's interesting.

Deb Forstner: That's my personal take, I suppose, as a chaplain, would be liken to put it in the center so that it doesn't get ignored, that we need to have a center that says, "I have hope. I have a purpose. There's meaning in all of this."

Katie Johnson: Some suggestions on some ways that we can practice it then. If it needs to be that central to keeping our wheel balanced, let's give our listeners some suggestions. What are some of the physical ways that we can practice our spiritual wellness? I know for me this morning, the beautiful, white, fresh snow was a way that I could just feel connected to something much bigger than myself.

Deb Forstner: Exactly. I did think right away of nature too. That's often where people will say that they get a sense that there must be more as far as God's creation. Also, when you're exercising, maybe consider using some inspiring or faith-based music to run to or exercise with. I recently heard an example of a idea for walking called the prayer walk where, as you're taking your walk, you would, if you're walking in a neighborhood, to silently say a prayer for the people that live in each home, or if you're walking the downtown area, say a prayer for each business, and just, kind of an intentional walk or a intentional walk of noticing the beauty around you-

Katie Johnson: Very-

Deb Forstner: ... and not just being so "in your head" with other thoughts and worries.

Katie Johnson: Right, right. When you mentioned those thoughts and worries, what about the mindful mentally-focused ways to practice our spiritual health?

Deb Forstner: I think it's a real discipline of trying to live in the now. There's books that have talked about the precious present. I have a app on my phone that's, it recently said, "Try your best to be as close to now as you can be." A lot of times, again, we're reliving the past, we're thinking ahead to the next thing. That's a discipline. Yeah, I know-

Katie Johnson: Yeah, for sure.

Deb Forstner: ... and then journaling can be a mental or mindful way to relive the day, or first thing in the morning, journal your thoughts and wishes, also, spiritual breathing. I think helpful to do some memorization, to have a verse or to have a prayer that you have actually committed to memory so that when you're waiting in line or when you're having a stressful moment, you can say that to yourself.

Katie Johnson: All of those are great tips. You've mentioned a lot of ways we can make spiritual health part of our everyday lifestyle. You've mentioned maybe apps or quotes. Can you give us some of your tips for making spiritual health a part of our everyday health and resources that you like to use?

Deb Forstner: I think it's helpful to try to start each day out by, even before you get out of bed, to have a little prayer or thought of thanks or a request for help for the day. You can do that any time during the day, or again, before you go to sleep at night. I just think trying to attend to your spirit asking for the help of your higher power, asking for help of others, the 12-step spirituality is very important in that, praying as a family like at meal time. Everybody could say something they're grateful for, a blessing of the day. Time for silence. I think silence doesn't get enough attention-

Katie Johnson: Oh, yes.

Deb Forstner: ... and just that using the silent time for spiritual listening. What might God be trying to say to you? Then I think to my own parents, and as parents, you can be examples for your children, but even today as my parents are seniors, I see my mom when I'm visiting doing a daily devotion book, you can subscribe to these by mail or email. I see my dad still kneeling bedside before he goes to bed. I mean, these are things that, for all of us and my family just, warms our heart.

Then we're lucky with apps and things like that. I right now have a Holy Bible app on my phone, and it's, you can get all kinds of translations of the Bible, but it's set that once a day, bing, I get a message, and it's a verse. It catches me off guard every time. Then there's one 7S Meditation. That one just will let you know that it's time to breathe. It gives you a quick thought, and then it asks you to smile.

Katie Johnson: Aw.

Deb Forstner: It always ends with "smile."

Katie Johnson: Great [inaudible 00:10:58].

Deb Forstner: Then another one is called Virtual Hope Box, and that one has a lot of meditations, guided meditations and inspiring quotes. I like a lot of authors, spiritual authors like Edward Hays, Joyce Rupp, Joyce Meyer, Max Lucado. Think a lot of people will recognize, especially those last two because they have books on devotion, I think even in our gift shop. I think it, and it would also challenge people to think about spending time in a church or chapel, even if that isn't your typical way because we have a lot of great churches in this area and a lot of great pastors to talk with.

Katie Johnson: Yeah, yeah, and what better place. You mentioned silence. It's really hard to find places of silence in today's world, but a chapel or a church is certainly a place where we could find some silence and time for that meditating and listening. I

think that's a great tip. Anything else that you want to add or share with our listeners as we focus on our spiritual wellness this week?

Deb Forstner: I'd just like it to be known that we do have two chaplains at Lake Region, and we are here too for you, even if you don't have a patient in the hospital. If there's some concern or thoughts that you'd like to run past one of us, Chaplain Bruce Norgard is here, and I am here full-time. We work at the Cancer Center, Mill Street Residence, and the hospital, and we'd like to be community resources as well.

Katie Johnson: I know that you are so well-connected to the other pastors and churches throughout the area. Like you said, we are a community organization, so you are community chaplains. You are certainly chaplains to the community, and we appreciate that and all that you do for those of us that work here and everyone who visits or is part of our community. Thanks for being my guest this morning on spiritual wellness week.

Deb Forstner: Well, thank you, Katie. You always make it very pleasant to have a conversation with you.

Katie Johnson: We wish you all inner peace this week and time for silence and meditation as you focus on your spiritual wellness during our Community Wellness Challenge, the Wheel of Wellness. It's spiritual wellness week. Again, check out our website lrhc.org/wow, and click on the spiritual link, and we will have all of those resources Deb mentioned along with several others for you to check out this week. For Lake Region Healthcare and spiritual wellness week, I am Katie Johnson along with Deb Forstner, and we remind you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.