

What is spirituality?

Recognising the difference between spirituality and religion can be a great way to begin to understand what spirituality means to different people. There are many types of spirituality that people sometimes base their beliefs around and also many different reasons people practice spirituality.

Spirituality is something that's often debated and commonly misunderstood. Many people confuse spirituality with religion and so bring pre-existing beliefs about the impact of religion to discussions about spirituality. Though all religions emphasise spirituality as being an important part of faith, it's possible to be 'spiritual' without necessarily being a part of an organised religious community.

What's the difference between religion and spirituality?

Spirituality and religion can be hard to tell apart but there are some pretty defined differences between the two.

Religion is a specific set of organised beliefs and practices, usually shared by a community or group.

Spirituality is more of an individual practice and has to do with having a sense of peace and purpose. It also relates to the process of developing beliefs around the meaning of life and connection with others.

One way that might help you to understand the relationship between spirituality and religion is imagine a game of football. The rules, referees, other players, and field markings help guide you as you play the game in a similar way that religion might guide you to find your spirituality.

Kicking the ball around a park, without having to play on the field or with all the rules and regulations, can also give you fulfilment and fun and still expresses the essence of the game, similar to spirituality in life.

People may identify as being any combination of religious and spiritual, but to be religious does not automatically make you spiritual or vice-versa.

Different types of spirituality?

Mystical spirituality is based around a desire to move beyond the material world, beyond the senses, ego and even beyond time. This approach centres on personal relationships and a sense of unity with all things.

This might help if...

- > You're looking for information on spirituality
- > You want to know the difference between spirituality and religion
- > You'd like to become a more spiritual person

Take action...

- > Learn more about different ways to express spirituality
- > Try going to a meditation class to gain some perspective
- > Look into the history and practice of different types of spirituality

Authoritarian spirituality is a particularly strong form of spirituality based around a need for definition and rules. This type of spirituality is particularly common in specific religious practices.

Intellectual spirituality focuses on building knowledge and understanding of spirituality through analysing history and spiritual theories. This approach can be found in the study of religion, also known as theology.

Service spirituality is a common form of spirituality in many religious faiths. This is predominantly built around serving others as a form of spiritual expression.

Social spirituality is often practiced by people who experience a spiritual feeling in the company of others. Social support is often seen as one of the important aspects of spirituality in general.

Why do people practice spirituality?

Many people see spirituality as a great way of seeking solace and peace in their life. It can often be practiced alongside things like yoga, which ultimately focus on stress relief and release of emotion.

Spirituality is also used as a way of gaining perspective, recognising that our role in life has a greater value than just what we do every day. It can separate a person from dependence on material things and establish a greater purpose. Some people also see spirituality as a way of coping with change or uncertainty.