

SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

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WHAT TO EXPECT ?

- Understanding Spirituality.
- Spiritual Awakening.
- The Impact of Spirituality in Mental Health.
- The Ugly Side: Spiritual Bypassing as a defence mechanism.
- Demystifying Spirituality In the Workplace.
- Tools to provide application of Spirituality in the Workplace:
Recommendations for Employers.



INTRODUCTION.

Spirituality in the workplace has become an organizational behaviour issue in South Africa. As many worker programs lend themselves to an increasingly diverse workforce, there is a growing concern for SA employers to meet employees' spirituality needs.

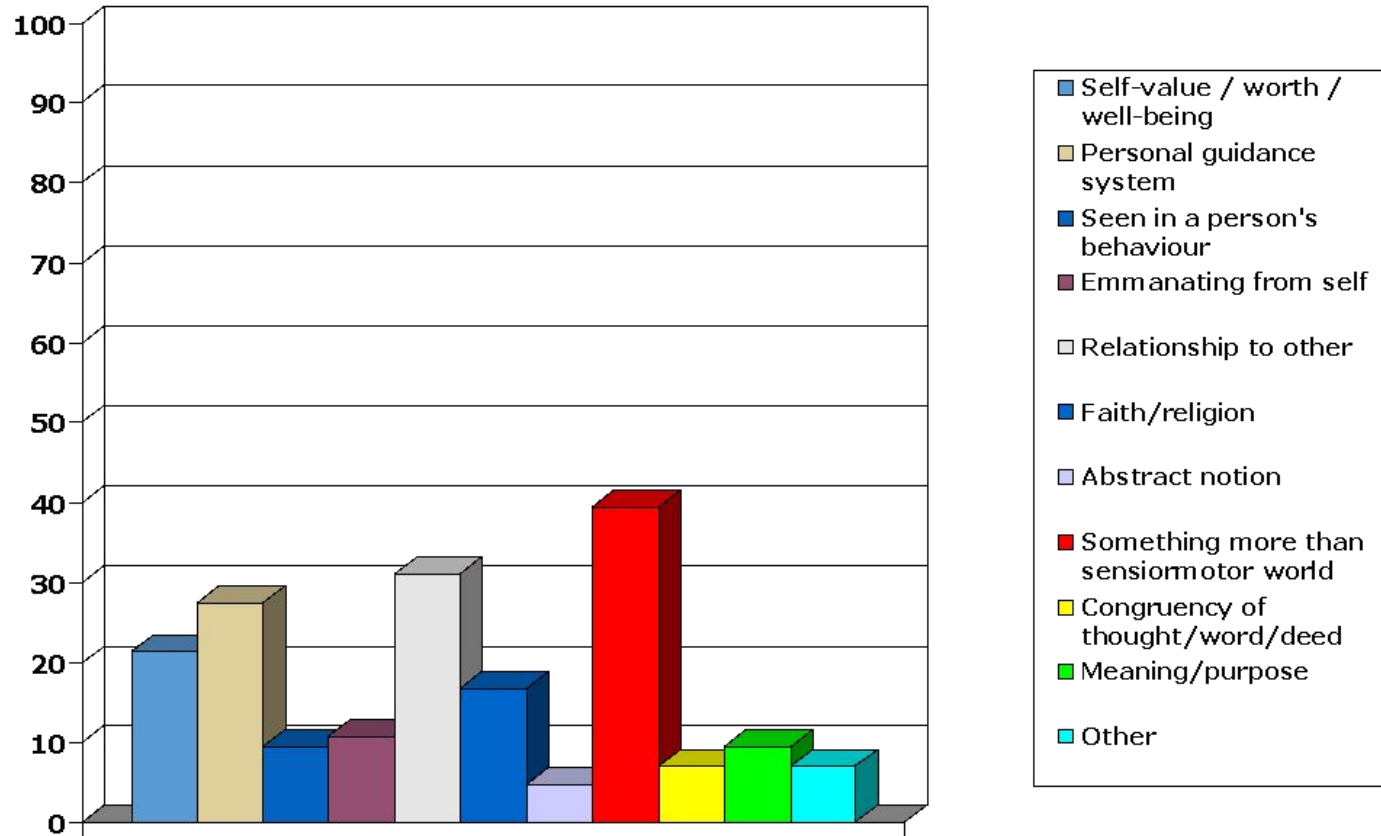
Employer's often find themselves caught between employee absence, which impacts on production, and the employee's right to spirituality-particularly to fulfil religious activities or traditional/cultural rituals.

Organisations are currently thus faced with numerous employee-related problems, with employees becoming increasingly dissatisfied. This indicates that organizations need to create new systems to deal effectively with changes that are taking place, both internally and externally. Since employees expect more from their organizations than merely a fair wage at the end of the month, organizations need to consider introducing spirituality into the workplace.

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUALITY.

- The concept of spirituality has different meanings to different individuals therefore: It is a complex concept that cannot be defined fully in one definition for all people as its complexity reflects itself in different meanings for different individuals at different stages of their lives.
- Part of the confusion arises out of how we distinguish the term 'spirituality' from 'religion' in our language.
- Spirit comes from the word 'spiritus' which means breath of life.
- Spirit is the unseen force that breathes life into us, enlivens us gives energy to us.
- Spirit helps to define the true, real unique self that is us and confirms our individuality.
- Spirituality provides individuals with **DIRECTION, MEANING** and **BALANCE**.
- The existentialist view – the search for meaning and purpose.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES: What does Spirituality mean to you? n=84



CASE STUDY :

“A few weeks ago an intern was not well, and upon investigation, it was discovered that she has a calling and currently going through the initiation/ training and had an episode on that day where she was hearing voices and was carrying a spear. As a result, the employees in the clinic have expressed fear and anxiety about continuing to work in the same office with the intern. They now describe the environment to be intolerable to work in.

I have advised the line manager to caution her of the danger of carrying a spear at work and I believe that she understood. While I would like to think they need a debrief session, I also would request the awareness workshop on diversity and inclusion focusing on awareness on tradition initiation if possible”.





Spiritual awakenings are complicated, profound, and nothing short of life-changing.



Occurrences which often come with an internal call to action to change your life or to course-correct. Those who go through a spiritual awakening will typically pursue a purpose or their "calling."



Spiritual awakenings can be spontaneous, but for most, they are triggered by major life changes or traumas such as life-threatening illnesses, car accidents, divorces, war, pandemics, quarter-life or midlife crises, mental health crises such as clinical depression or anxiety, or even a near-death experience."

SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN THE WORKPLACE

- Employee may feel disconnected or detached.

At first, the spiritual awakening process can feel overwhelming and confusing. It can feel like everything you thought to be true about your life was a lie, and as such, employees may feel "disconnected and detached from the things and people you used to enjoy."

- Beliefs are reevaluated.

A spiritual awakening will likely cause one to revise their spiritual beliefs or adopt significant new ones. Whether that means connecting deeply with a new religion or belief or quitting your job to pursue your real passion, purpose or spiritual calling.

- Relationships begin to shift.

You may feel like your loved ones don't understand you anymore because you are changing.

- Employees may start to feel alone.

Spiritual awakenings are no easy undertaking, and while there's hope for enlightenment on the other side, it can feel very lonely.

- Employees may experience physical symptoms (Body Aches)

A number of physical symptoms can accompany spiritual awakenings too, like fatigue and brain fog

SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN THE WORKPLACE



- Feelings of being stuck in life, which force you to hop from one job to another and never focus in one thing.
- Very emotional and sensitive.
- Lack of Patience and the feeling that the world around you is just too slow, and become irritable with people. You can resign today at work and regret it before you even reach the parking lot.
- In an African perspective of Ukuthwasa: Ancestral Calling
- Panic Attacks/ anxiety: This happens mostly when your ancestors either seek your attention or a signal of something, be it danger of anything that you urgently should be aware of.
- Strange Dreams: Dreams of snakes, dogs, water, beads, animals, cloths, ancient caves, flying, aliens, old people... Most of the things you dream of are real and they do happen.
- Dreams of traditional rituals or of yourself healing people.
- Hearing sounds when alone sometimes of drums beating or strange singing.
- Feeling of someone following you or that you are not alone.

Some of the potential behaviour shifts that may impact on work, may include:

Lack of concentration at work

Irritability and nervousness

Isolation /withdrawal

- These behaviors may impact one's work performance, interpersonal relationships and high levels of absenteeism due to sick leave

THE IMPACT OF SPIRITUALITY IN MENTAL HEALTH

- Spirituality is a deep well upon which many people draw in times of crisis, unrest, or personal challenge.
- It reinforces inner peace and provides a sense of connection to a force greater than ourselves.
- Spirituality provides a sense of connection to a force greater than ourselves.
- Whether someone is coping with cancer or clinical depression, spiritual exercises help them increase acceptance, decrease negative emotions, find meaning, and deepen their relationships with others.
- People use spirituality to: Deepen their relationships with themselves and others.
- Find purpose in life.
- Find comfort in difficult times.
- Gain and cultivate hope.



It gives us clarity on the happenings of life
(Clarity)



It improves our physical and mental health
(Overall well-being)



It drives us to fulfill the purpose of life
(Purpose)



It enriches our life with positivity, happiness, and contentment
(Contentment)



It increases our awareness and helps in decision making
(Decision making)



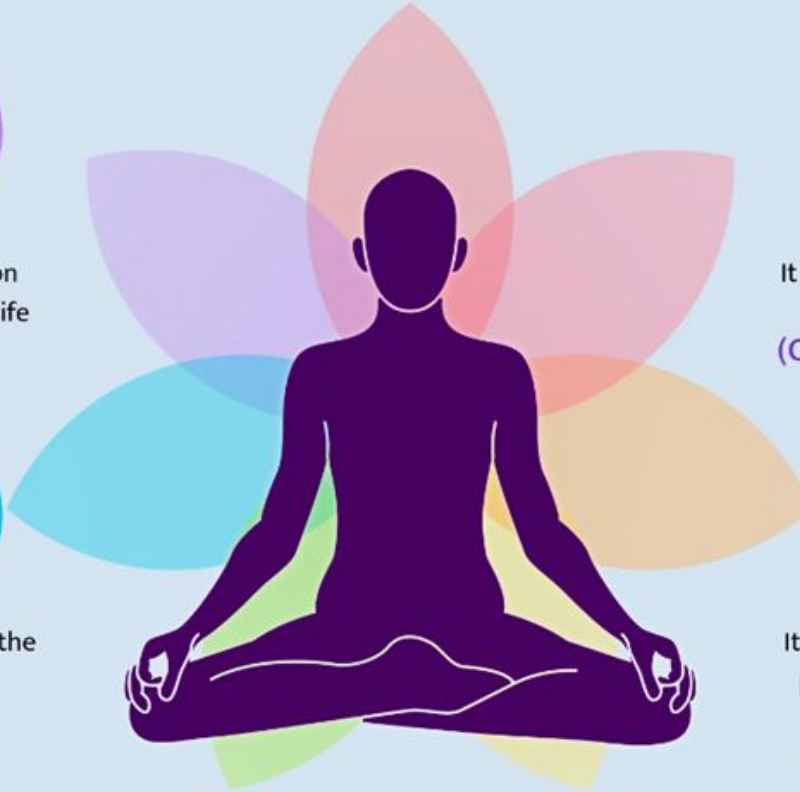
It allows us to accept ourselves and manifest our talents
(Manifest)



It helps us connect with people like us and help each other
(Connect)



It helps us fight our stress and anxiety with logic
(Rational thoughts)



THE UGLY SIDE: SPIRITUAL BYPASSING AS A DEFENCE MECHANISM.

- According to John Welwood, a psychotherapist, spiritual bypassing can be defined as a "tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, and unfinished developmental tasks."
- People/Employees often wielded spirituality as a shield or type of defense mechanism. Rather than working through hard emotions or confronting unresolved issues, people would simply dismiss them with spiritual explanations.
- While spirituality can be a force that helps enhance an individual's well-being, engaging in spiritual bypassing as a way to avoid complicated feelings or issues can ultimately stifle growth.
- Sometimes an employee may be doing this to protect the self from harm or to promote harmony between people, but that doesn't necessarily resolve the issue. Instead, it merely glosses over a psychological problem, leaving it to fester without any true resolution and proper treatment plan from a therapist.

THE UGLY SIDE: SPIRITUAL BYPASSING AS A DEFENCE MECHANISM.

- Spiritual bypassing can sometimes be difficult to spot because it is often very subtle. However, let's look at the following examples, which can help make this phenomenon more apparent:
- *Following the death of a loved one, people tell surviving relatives that the deceased is "in a better place" and that it was "all part of God's plan." – whereas grief or trauma counselling would be available to the family.*
- *Being served with s189 during a restructure/reset/alignment process- an employee would strongly believe that there are people in the organization who have bewitched him/her, meanwhile support during such a process is made available onsite.*
- *What about an individual who has constantly been unhappy in their job role and continues to apply for internal promotions but would be unsuccessful and their thinking drives towards that they need to be away for a week or two to fulfil certain rituals to make their things right?*
- Spiritual bypassing may suggest that people will rely on what they believe to overcome complex social issues.

DEMYSTIFYING SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE.

- Many business leaders are still uncomfortable talking about spirituality, but there's no reason for the discomfort.
- And the Employee Assistance & Wellbeing Structure should start to include the spiritual dimension in their holistic approach.
- Today there's enough evidence to show that not only is it an essential element of a comprehensive and effective wellbeing programme, but spirituality in the workplace also directly impacts business sustainability.
- According to the researcher Jessica Grossmeier, there are three main aspects that are present in organisations that have integrated spirituality into their wellbeing frameworks:
 - (i) People have a sense of meaning and purpose at work;
 - (ii) There is a feeling of connection and belonging with co-workers; and
 - (iii) People have a sense of connection to something bigger than themselves – this can take many forms, depending on an individual's personal beliefs and values.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

For HR, EAP Practitioners, Wellness coordinators & Therapists to normalize the symptoms of a client with a spiritual calling or spiritual awakening.

A Lyra Health company



Have Multi-faith rooms for prayers



Quiet rooms for meditations and yoga exercises- mindfulness exercises time

Employers need to understand expectations from employees without any judgement or feeling like they are unable to assist.



formulating policies that will accommodate employees with spiritual related matters (this may include a special leave: When the employee has to undergo spiritual rituals /trainings and any other traditional processes).



The employer to invite trained traditional healers to raise awareness about African spirituality in the workplace and how to address.



Allow employees to listen to spiritual music in background when they are working

For Employers & Transformational Leaders to familiarize themselves with issues of spirituality in the workplace and understand that a client's spiritual background and belief system can serve as strength to the employee.

IN CONCLUSION.

Spirituality is a relationship with self, which cannot be dictated by any organized religion.

Employing Spirituality within the workplace is an opportunity to recognize our power and to understand the process involved in exchanging our energy with others.

Organizations that encourage spirituality experiences improved organizational performance and profitability.

Employees and managers increasingly need to reflect on the ways of incorporating spirituality in workplace as a factor to promote job performance.

Workplace Spirituality does not compel people to follow religions and stringent methods but is in fact used as an effective tool to make employees feel that they are an integral part of the organization.



If a man is to live, he must be all alive, body, soul, mind, heart, spirit. –Thomas Merton

Remember, we are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience. -Stephen Covey

THANK YOU