



**“My life feels meaningless.”**  
**“No one visits me anymore.”**  
**“Why has God abandoned me?”**

## **When Your Patients Experience Spiritual Distress, Refer them to a Chaplain**

Often triggered by illness or major life changes, spiritual distress is a disruption in one’s belief or values system which may or may not be grounded in religious belief or practice. Such distress manifests itself both emotionally and physically in ways that can range from rejecting medical treatment to experiencing chronic insomnia.

The following symptoms indicate spiritual distress:

- Verbal questioning of the meaning of life or purpose of one’s illness.
- Verbal questioning of one’s own belief system.
- Withdrawal from or loss of relationships.
- Expressions of anxiety, anger, and/or depression.

These events can trigger spiritual distress:

- First admission to the hospital.
- A terminal diagnosis.
- Suicidal thoughts.
- A recent loss of a loved one.

Professional staff chaplains are trained to:

- Help patients and their families in spiritual distress to express pain and work towards healing.
- Help people of any religion or no religion.

- Facilitate communication and cultural sensitivity.
- Be a non-anxious, non-judgmental listening presence.
- Assist people in accessing their internal and external spiritual and emotional resources.

A professional health care chaplain is one of the most cost-effective resources to facilitate communication and increase patient, family, and staff satisfaction.

Research shows that professional chaplains working as members of the interdisciplinary health care team:

- Improve patient and family satisfaction by helping them address emotional, spiritual, religious, and cultural needs.
- Facilitate goals of care discussions for patients that can influence end-of-life care, treatment compliance, hospice enrollment, and quality of life.

**Contact the Spiritual Care Department  
by dialing 0 or contact the Nursing  
Supervisor and ask for a Chaplain.**