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Spiritual Healing

Research shows that there is a positive connection between faith and health. Many behaviors that have been scientifically proven to promote health and reduce disease are related to spiritual beliefs. Some of these behaviors include increased social support, coping skills and positive self-image. Spiritual involvement may also discourage behaviors that increase health risks, such as drinking and smoking.

One of the main aspects of organized religion is the social support that comes with it. People who regularly attend religious services form a bond that is not easily broken. Friends provide emotional support and other forms of assistance that keep faith strong in order to get through life's journey. Friends in faith can also encourage healthy lifestyles and support one another, especially in college, by not drinking, smoking or doing drugs. Another practice associated with religion is service to others, which can provide mental and emotional health.

Along with the healthy behaviors mentioned above, "religious involvement may (also) promote feelings of self-worth and confidence in the ability to control one's own affairs and destiny" ("Faith And Health: Divine Intervention Or Good Behavior?"). In other words, faith can make one strong and promote self-esteem, which can lead to better health. Religious activities may also evoke positive emotions, which have been proven to better an individual's "immune functions and other physiological factors that influence health" ("Faith And Health: Divine Intervention Or Good Behavior?").

During stressful times, faith can provide coping mechanisms, such as meditation and prayer, which can help people deal with life's obstacles. Faith provides a bigger

picture which can put situations into perspective, promote strength through friendships , and allow one to heal through other's guidance. Finally, "faith may promote a positive outlook that offers both emotional and tangible means of promoting individual's health and well-being" ("Faith And Health: Divine Intervention Or Good Behavior?").

"Based on over 30 years of compelling data, medicine can no longer simply dismiss the role that faith plays in both the prevention and recovery from illness" ("Is there a connection between faith and health?"). It seems that stories of faith and healing occur under three different categories. In the first group are those people who may not be totally cured of their illness but learn to cope through religious practices such as prayer and meditation. The second group includes people whose faith stops the progression of an illness. The third group consists of those who experience the reversal of a disease, or absolute healing.

Faith has endless health benefits and can add meaning and significance to a life. For JMU students interested in learning more about faith-based clubs, www.jmu.edu/ucenter/sos has tons of offerings.

Works Cited

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