Meaning and spirituality are closely related for many people and dying can be viewed as a spiritual process that deepens the meaning of life. While the specifics of religious or spiritual beliefs and practices vary, their importance is underscored by the survey results.

People in Idaho understand the meaning and value of end of life and the importance of completing life well. They rated the following things as very important or somewhat important in thinking about dealing with their own dying:

- 86% consider themselves very or somewhat spiritual
- 62% are affiliated with an organized faith community
- 80% said being at peace spiritually is very important when they think about dying
- 52% report that their spiritual practice or religion affect end-of-life choices to a great extent

### Spirituality plays a significant role at the end of life.

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### Do you consider yourself...

- Very religious/spiritual: 43%
- Somewhat religious/spiritual: 43%
- Not very religious/spiritual: 3%
- Not at all religious/spiritual: 11%

### Are you affiliated with an organized faith community?

- Yes: 63%
- No: 37%
People want spiritual leaders and faith communities to be involved in their end-of-life care.

- Between 24% and 41% indicated their faith community should provide support ranging from encouraging them when they are down to providing transportation.
- 24% want spiritual leaders/clergy to initiate a conversation with them about end of life.

Next Steps

Acknowledging that “dying is a spiritual process with medical implications, not a medical process with spiritual implication” will require changes in attitudes, policies and behaviors. A reform of this magnitude will take time, but some actions are possible now. We can aim for the following:

1. Families, communities and the state of Idaho recognize the value of growing older which is demonstrated in behaviors, services and policies.
2. Dying and death is not viewed as a “failure” but an important part of life.
3. Faith leaders learn about and acquire the necessary skills to respond to the unique spiritual needs of people nearing the end of life.
4. People who do not identify with a specific faith community receive care that promotes spiritual peace.
5. Listening to life stories of dying people is made a priority and they feel valued and recognized for a lifetime of contributions.
6. People seek to understand the needs of dying people in their faith communities and provide various types of support at the end of life.
7. Achieving spiritual peace is recognized to be as important as relief from pain and management of physical symptoms by all professionals providing care at the end of life.
8. Family and relationship issues are settled with people who are dying so that resolution can bring peace and people are able to say good-bye.

Reference