

## Triage for Spiritual Caregiving

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Many health care providers are swamped. For many, it is difficult to provide adequate service within one's own discipline must less seek to engage a resident/patient/client in a different area of concern. A health care provider can want to be wholistic, try to be wholistic, but sometimes one only has time to pass the med or complete the intake form or clean the floor. What are some simple ways that a provider can identify, and thus perhaps address spiritual needs. Simply put, is there such a thing as triage for spiritual caregiving?

I can think of two simple questions that can be used to triage a person's spiritual journey. One is to determine the extent that the resident perceives his or her present situation as being *controllable* or *uncontrollable*.

### The Question

"Is your life, as it is right now, something that you can change or do something about or is your life, right now, seemingly out of your control?"

### Commentary

The chart below notes general intervention goals that can be used by a healthcare provider depending on the resident's answer to the question above. For example, if the resident believes that his or her stroke is controllable, that he or she will walk or talk or write again (change), then the intervention strategy would point to methods of managing the effects of the stroke (physical therapy, psychological support, speech therapy, etc.). But if that same person does not believe that his or her stroke can change (is uncontrollable) then the spiritual intervention might be to explore ways the resident can accept and even grow in his or her stroke (what new opportunities are now available? What new perspectives on life have been gained? Etc.) If the situation is controllable, a problem-solving mode is called for. If perception suggests that the situation is uncontrollable, then the resident is challenged, not to change what he or she does, but to change often long-held perspectives/expectations on life.

Read the entire chart and then ask "How might this dynamic between what is controllable and what is uncontrollable assist me in my caregiving encounters."

<u>Controllable</u>	<u>Uncontrollable</u>
Use strategies that lead to change of situation	Use strategies aimed at acceptance and attempt to soften the emotional impact of that which is uncontrollable
Problem-solving	Change personal perspective
Active	Passive, palliative
Problem-focused goals	Emotion focused goals
More demanding of self	More expectant of outside help
Guilt that not good enough	Depression that God (people?) doesn't care
Angry at self	Angry at God
The Actor	The acted upon

Unfaithful if can't control what is controllable	Unfaithful if continually question God rather than surrender to God
Enable, point, clarify towards solutions	Companion, clarify feelings/perspectives
Encourage action	Encourage receiving, openness