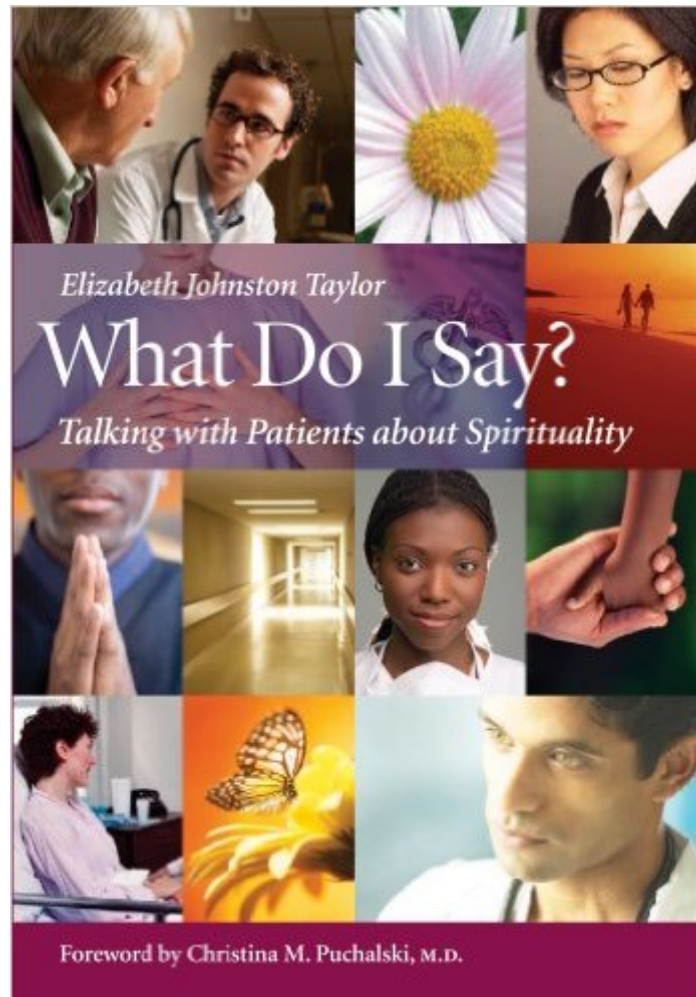


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# What Do I Say?: Talking With Patients About Spirituality



## Synopsis

Health care professionals, clergy, chaplains, social workers and others who counsel people in medical crisis often find themselves faced with deeply painful questions: Why is this happening to me? Am I dying? Why should I live? I'm just a burden to others. The author, an internationally recognized expert in spiritual care giving, points out that wanting to help is one motivation for learning these skills, but there are also evidence-based reasons: helping patients express their innermost feelings promotes spiritual healing; spiritual health is related to physical and emotional health; spiritual coping helps patients accept and deal with their illness; and patients tend to want their health care professionals to know about their spirituality. Lessons, tips, and exercises teach how to listen effectively, with guidelines for detecting and understanding the spiritual needs embedded in patients' conversations. Suggestions are provided for verbal responses to patients who express spiritual distress, including tips for building rapport, using self-disclosure, and praying with patients. A FAQ section deals with frequently asked questions and miscellaneous information, such as: What do I do when a patient talks on and on and I have to leave? How do I answer a why question? What do I say to a patient who believes a miracle will happen to cure them? What if I'm not religious? How can I talk about it? By practicing and using these healing techniques, Taylor explains, health care professionals will be able to provide patients responses to their questions that allow them to become intellectually, emotionally, and physically aware of their spirituality so they can experience life more fully.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is an excellent introduction for health care practitioners in dealing with spiritual issues common in clinical practice. Elizabeth Johnston Taylor presents the subject clearly, enhanced with quotes, cartoons and pointers towards further reading. I particularly like her exercises for readers to explore and examine their own spiritual beliefs and awarenesses, and to practice varieties of ways they can respond to patients' spiritual issues. This book addresses the question of how to form healing verbal responses to patients' expressions of spiritual pain. Although offering healing verbal responses is a fundamental skill for health care professionals, it is not the only approach for nurturing the spirit. Being silently present, reading inspirational materials, offering prayer, and encouraging journal writing or dream analysis are examples of other approaches. (p. 5) Thoughtful quotes help the reader consider these issues. For instance, The compassionate man says, "I love you because I understand you." The empathizing man says, "I know how you feel." The sympathizing man says, "I feel for you." Empathy and sympathy are... devoid of healing power. They have a temporary soothing effect, but they do not heal. - T. Hora (Johnson, p. 14). I don't happen to agree with this quote, but it did give me excellent food for thought. (My own belief is that empathy is a necessary part of compassion, and that it can be very healing for people to experience empathetic listening.) On clearing caregivers' issues, so that they can be present with the people they are helping: Larson described these issues as "interpersonal allergies."

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