

Until there's a cure, there's care. Care can mean a lot of different things to different people. Let's consider, for a moment, how we help take care of someone's spiritual life when they have dementia. For many of us our spiritual paths are important aspects of our life. For many of us our beliefs about spirituality are the foundation of our life. So what happens when someone is living with dementia? How do we help them continue a spiritual practice and how can we celebrate their spiritual life? Because, as those of us who travel a spiritual path know, our spirit continues to be whole and beautiful regardless of the limitations of this life and even after this life is over. Therefore, we have a wonderful opportunity to watch this belief in motion.

When someone begins experiencing brain change, one of the first things that families do is stop going to their community of faith and therefore they become marginalized and isolated. Why does this happen? Because services and gatherings of people can become overwhelming for many reasons including having to be able to follow instructions, behaving in ways that are considered to be appropriate, remembering the names of people that you know you should remember, and a general feeling of not being able to navigate a complicated social setting. Families tend to pull back from services because it is difficult to find people who understand the complexities and difficulties that can accompany dementia such as making mistakes in social settings and having trouble remembering words and names. These are some of the realities of dementia and yet this reality also provides us with an opportunity to practice some of our faith traditions fundamental tenants such as compassion and the sacredness of life.

Teepa Snow and Rev Linn Possell understand both these difficulties and opportunities and, along with the Pines Education Institute have a new DVD that addresses spirituality and dementia. In this DVD you will find role plays of some typical scenarios that can happen when someone living with dementia comes to their community of faith. These role plays show what can happen with family members, as well as members and leaders of the faith community, but they also demonstrate ideas and possible solutions to help everyone involved continue to stay engaged and supported. We all have spiritual needs and staying engaged in a supportive and nurturing environment can play an integral part in a healthy and happy life. Our spiritual life is an important aspect of what is vital to keeping us grounded and whole. For information on obtaining this DVD to help someone living with dementia and their family continue to be engaged and supported by their faith community, visit www.pineseducation.org/dvd.