

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Quality Of life: Think Outside The Box When Devising Ways To Support Residents' Spirituality

These creative tips can give your programming a fresh perspective.

Offering residents opportunities for spiritual experiences and connection can greatly enhance their psych- osocial health and quality of life.

Yet how does a facility accommodate the needs of residents of many faiths or those who view themselves as spiritual but not necessarily religious?

One option is to provide a universal spiritual service or experience. **Steven Littlehale, MS, ARNP, BC**, has found that "symbols and music, in broad strokes, can create a very spiritual and sacred environment once you fully assess" residents' religious and spiritual history.

You can help "create spiritual moments for residents through images, music, foods and smells mimicking the person's previous worship experience," says Littlehale, chief clinical officer, **PointRight Inc.** (formerly LTCQ) in Lexington, MA.

Real-world example: Littlehale and others have created an interfaith experience at an assisted living facility for people with cognitive impairment. The services include religious symbols of different faiths, an altar and candles to create a sacred space. Everyone is invited to the service, including staff and residents.

The spiritual program includes lighting of a candle, poems, and song. "The act of lighting a candle is used in almost every faith tradition as a way of either calling to worship or giving hope," Littlehale notes.

At every service, "we recite universal prayers of love that honor togetherness taken from what Jews refer to as the Hebrew Bible (or Torah)" and from what Christians would call the Old Testament, he adds. "We teach a simple song with lyrics from a well-known Psalm, and repeat it several times. By the second round everyone usually joins in with song."

Tip: Recognize that activities programming can also meet residents' spiritual needs in various ways. One woman liked to spend her time caring for plants in a flower garden, which she described as her "spiritual time when she's close to God," said **Rita Lopienski**, a certified activities director and registered music therapist in an audioconference for **Eli Research**.

Lopienski has also found that regular field trips to various places of worship in the community, including a Hindu temple, can provide an educational as well as emotional and spiritual experience.