



GLOBAL WELLNESS
INSTITUTE™
EMPOWERING WELLNESS WORLDWIDE

**Awareness Action Kit
- RELIGIION AND SPIRITUALITY -**

Global Perspectives on Inclusive Well-Being:
The Role of Health and Wellness Coaching in
Fostering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and
Belonging

Empowering Individuals, Leaders, Service
Providers, and Advocates of DEIB Through the
Lens of Health and Wellness Coaching

- 2024 -



WELLNESS COACHING INITIATIVE
GLOBAL WELLNESS INSTITUTE

Welcome!

We are thrilled to introduce you to our **Awareness Action Kit**, designed to kickstart your journey into understanding the invaluable intersection of Health and Wellness with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

This kit offers you a practical, actionable, and easily digestible resource to delve into the profound impact that Health and Wellness can have in fostering a culture of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, And Belonging.

Directly excerpted from our comprehensive 130-page whitepaper, "Global Perspectives on Inclusive Well-Being: The Role of Health and Wellness Coaching in Fostering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging," these resources are a simple gateway to a deeper understanding.

We invite you to download the complete whitepaper along with its accompanying PowerPoint presentation and 11-page infographic, available [HERE](#).

Within the whitepaper, you'll explore 10 distinct areas of diversity, each accompanied by its own Awareness Action Kit:

- 1. Race and Ethnicity**
- 2. Age and Generations**
- 3. Gender**
- 4. Sexual Orientation**
- 5. Religion and Spirituality**
- 6. Disability**
- 7. Socioeconomic Status and Social Determinants of Health**
- 8. Health Status**
- 9. Neurodiversity**
- 10. Weight Bias and Stigma**

Each kit provides insights into the definition of the specific type of diversity, why it's crucial, how Health and Wellness Coaching can play a pivotal role in supporting it, and real-life "Voices from the field" to enrich your understanding.

Additionally, each Awareness Action Kit comes complete with a "**Questions for Discussion Guide**" to prompt thoughtful reflection and dialogue, as well as essential "**Contact Information**" to reach out for further support or inquiries. There is an (**11th**) separate **Glossary of Terms Awareness Action Kit** to enhance your comprehension across all areas covered.

Happy discovering - we're excited you've joined us!
The Global Wellness Institute Wellness Coaching Initiative Team.

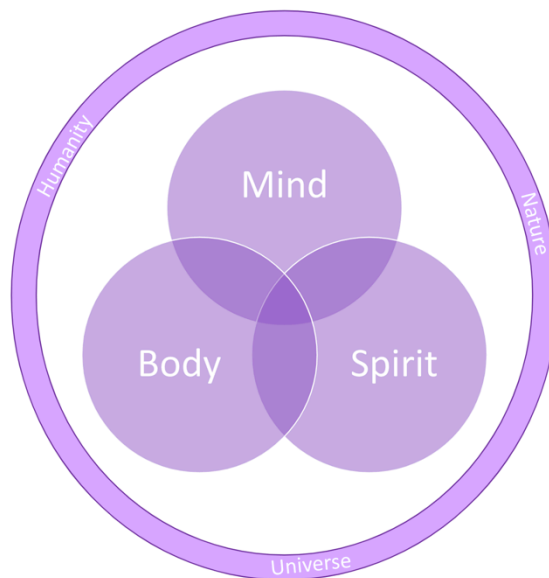
X. Religion and Spirituality

- **What it is**

Religion

A dictionary definition states that religion can be defined as “a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices, the service and worship of God or the supernatural, commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance, a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary “Definition of Religion,” 2023).

There are over 10 000 distinct religions worldwide, and four major religions including Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism account for 70% of all religions (Wikipedia contributors, 2023).



Approximately 85% of the world's population identifies with a religion, although reports suggest some religious affiliations are declining in the developed world (World Population Review, n.d.). A decline in affiliations might reflect a decrease in faith or, simply, a disconnection between faith and religious institutions.

Spirituality

The term spirituality is abstract and subjective and is different from religion and faith. While it has more than 13 conceptual components, Spirituality can be a connection to God, nature, others, and surroundings and it is associated with quality and meaning in life (Victor and Treschuk, 2019).

A recent review evaluating the COVID-19 pandemic concluded that spirituality was considered an effective coping strategy used by healthcare professionals to promote mental health and well-being resulting in greater patient satisfaction with the care given. Additionally, addressing the spiritual needs of individuals leads to a reduction in stress, anxiety, depression, and an increase in resilience and hope among patients (Diego-Cordero et al., 2022).

The Global Wellness Institute Workplace, Well-being Initiative produced a Real Talk on Spirituality in the Workplace which included practices of connecting to a greater purpose, values, heart-centered living and intuitive being. Author, Jessica Grossmeier, provides a working definition of spiritual well-being, "the journey towards being one's most authentic self through practices that promote connection with oneself, with others, and with the world (Grossmeier, 2022; GWI, WWI, Real Talk, 2023).

Understanding our values, beliefs, identity and purpose creates a greater space for authentic connection with self and with others. A sense of belonging derives from living life with purpose - alignment with a clear understanding of ourselves, connection – alignment in our relationships with others, and transcendence - contributing to something greater than ourselves (*Religious and Spiritual Diversity | the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Health Equity*, 2022).

"Living with a sense of purpose aligned to our values comes from a deeper place within. To access it we need to, quiet the mind and allow ourselves to go to this deeper place, our soul. Without the input of this deeper place, the mind can become frenetic and lose control. Decisions become reactive and heavily influenced by circumstance. There are many practices that can be used to still the mind and reawaken our ability to be curious, reflective, introspective, and contemplative. This opens a pathway to mindfulness, compassion, and deeper personal alignment"
(*Spirituality in the Workplace Blog, Jocelyn Pepe, 2023*).

This deeper level of connection can be achieved in quiet reflection, time in nature, private prayer, yoga, or meditation all of which positively benefit overall well-being (Psychology Today, 2019).

- **Why it matters**

As the world becomes increasingly global, developing cultural competence will be paramount for the well-being of humankind.

Cultural Competence is "the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own" (Meade, 2021).

In the United States alone, it is estimated that the majority of the working population between the ages of 18 to 64 years, will identify as members of non-white racial and ethnic groups by 2039 (Meade, 2021).

Conversations with people from diverse religious backgrounds provide an opportunity for people to share authentically who they are, building connection and a sense of belonging. Being open to conversations and understanding another person's beliefs, whether religious or spiritual, takes humans into a deeper, more expansive place of connection (Singh, 2022).

A spiritual practice brings a sense of connection and belonging- to a GOD, the Universe, Mother Nature, family, community, or each other. Religious or spiritual practices may be similar in essence and can also be quite different within and across religions. Listening with compassion and curiosity allows us to seek an understanding of the many benefits and strengths in our differences and to see the similarities that bind humanity together (Singh, 2022). As human beings, we share many commonalities that make us more alike than different.

Beyond diversities in humanity, there is our common existence inhabiting planet Earth and the universe. No matter how spiritually or religiously diverse people may be, this common human bond is a point of connection and belonging that transcends race and religion (Headspace, n.d.). Perhaps because of this shared bond to our surroundings, nature is a place that positively impacts overall health, serving as a spiritual space that all living beings, including humans, have access to share and enjoy.

Indeed nowadays the concepts of systemic health and planetary health do consider that human health is not restricted to our bodies (nor parts of them) but instead, human beings are considered a complex adaptive system, where biological, psychological, social and ecological subsystems are interconnected and interdependent (Capra, 2014).

Religion, Spirituality, and Health and Well-being

According to the WHO, "The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition" (WHO, 1947).

There are many health benefits in having a faith based, spiritual or religious way of living that supports greater well-being and quality of life

for humanity. According to a Gallup study, on Religion and Well-being, there is a four-point scale difference in well-being between religious and non-religious people, meaning that 40 million more people are experiencing greater well-being due to faith (Levey, 2023). It has been found that the human brain reacts in similar ways to spiritual experiences, regardless of tradition, race, creed, or gender, displaying the unique biological nature of the human species (Miller et al., 2019). Health benefits include better physical and mental health, greater social well-being, greater ability to manage stress, better sleep, lower blood pressure, lower mortality as well as increased compassion, deeper relationships, and higher self-esteem than those disconnected from this way of being_ (Psychology Today, 2019). In summary, social support found in religious and spiritual communities provides outlets for connection and deeper purpose and a benefit from stress-reduction techniques inherent in prayer and ritual (Psychology Today, 2019). In addition, social connection has been recognized as a pillar of health, according to Lifestyle Medicine, in counterpart to loneliness being considered a risk factor for many health conditions (Holt-Lunstad, 2018).

"Considering the global rise of negative experiences and the growing mental health crisis, a multifaceted solution is necessary. The role of religion and spirituality can be considered as a way to help combat the mental health crisis. Leaders who are looking for solutions amid this crisis can consider the opportunities that religion and spirituality can offer to a range of institutions, including workplaces." — Religion and spirituality: tools for better well-being? Gallup 2023

As there is a growing movement of people across the globe, it becomes increasingly important to seek understanding of each other and what beliefs guide us. In the workplace, specifically, religion is a topic frequently avoided, and this attitude exacerbates disconnection among people (Singh, 2022). Training leaders in the workplace, with coaching skills, develop open-minded cultures and the ability to hold multiple perspectives.

- **How Health and Wellness Coaching can support this diversity**

"Integrating spirituality into care can help each person have a better chance of reaching complete well-being and their highest attainable standard of health." — Howard K. Koh, Harvard T.H. Chan, School of Public Health

Although hospitals and healthcare settings often have a religious or spiritually designated room, there is still a level of discomfort between patients and healthcare providers when discussing spirituality and religion in traditional healthcare settings, health coaches are trained to explore

with curiosity and compassion the deep beliefs of individuals focusing on the bio-individual nature of people (*Spirituality and Aging*, 2011). Health Coaches take a person-centered approach to health beyond the physical body to encompass all aspects of health, including physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being (Sager, 2020).

Often, religious and spiritual beliefs guide individuals in their decisions regarding health and well-being, and Health Coaches can explore and support these spiritual and religious-based beliefs with the premise that the person being assisted has the answers within and is an expert in her/himself (*Religious and Spiritual Diversity | the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Health Equity*, 2022). The partnership established between coach and client, rooted in equality and curiosity, supports people to understand and connect more deeply with what gives meaning to their life, and this is a foundational aspect of health coaching that helps improve quality of life (*Religious and Spiritual Diversity | the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Health Equity*, 2022).

Health Coaches engage in active listening to hear the heart and soul of a person, bringing clarity about the values he/she lives by. At a spiritual level, health coaches seek to understand what connects individuals to the world and gives their life purpose and meaning. Trained to listen with curiosity and without judgment, they can honor that everyone has their unique spirit (Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness and Prevention (EPP), 2023; Singh, 2022).

Health Coaches can support individuals to cultivate a deeper relationship with self, others, the greater universe, or God, supporting greater social well-being, life satisfaction, and happiness (Psychology Today, 2019). Spiritual ecology is an approach that tries to situate the environment, and more specifically ecology, as intrinsic to human nature. It cannot be something separate from humanness (Williams, 2022). It ignites a strong belief in the environment as something sacred and non-materialistic, and therefore may offer a religious aspect here. However, in the case of spiritual ecology, we can also see this as a secular belief system as well (Williams, 2022).

As Dr Takacs, an expert in environmental law, puts it during his work with conservationists and biologists:

"They had feelings they cannot understand, but that give meaning to their lives, impel their professional activities, and make them ardent conservationists".

Additionally, the social support of religious and spiritual communities provides outlets for connection and deeper purpose and a benefit from stress-reduction techniques inherent in prayer and ritual (Barber, 2012).

Connecting to an optimistic perspective around health and life with the support of a Health Coach has a positive impact on overall quality of life. Leaning into trust that there is a force for good that is greater than humans, is a positive approach for good mental health. Studies have shown that those deeply connected to religion and spirituality have immune systems that are more robust and live longer according to abundant research in the field of positive psychology.

Spiritual experiences are ever present when discussing health or illness. Health Coaches establish a partnership base on trust and compassion that fosters awareness and connection leading to lifestyle changes that, in turn, can support health recovery and positive well-being (Rura, 2022).

"When humanity learns to connect on, religious or spiritual beliefs with curiosity, intention, and kindness, societies, and workplaces will be better off" — Dr. Simran Jeet Singh, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute's Religion & Society Program.

- **Voices from the Field**

"My experience in working with a Health Coach from a spiritual perspective was deeply transformational and brought me to look at the root causes of patterns and behaviors that were causing me suffering. Once connected into calm energy in the partnership, I was able to begin to dive deeper into some of the bigger issues in my way of feeling truly well.

To move forward in coaching and therefore in my life, I had to accept that the journey was a full mind, body, heart, and spirit learning. It became a healing for me to connect to my true inner self to connect more authentically with the people and world around me.

I learned to lean into patterns that were in my way and blocking me from alignment in my life, and gained many new perspectives that helped my mental well-being and brought me out of the micro details of my life into the bigger macro perspective. With this I was able to channel my new energy into the new learnings, focus on my purpose and who I am here to be and what I am here to do, connected and grounded with the nature and the universe that surrounds me." - Chantal

Contact Information

Authors, GWI WCI Members

Ellen Kocher (Chair)	ekocher@whealthness.ch
Jocelyn Pepe (Vice-Chair)	jocelyn@truliving.ca
Dr. M. Carolina Tuma	carolina@carolinatuma.com
Izabella Natrins	izabella@ukihca.com
Beth Romanski	beth@myhealthytransitions.com
Shiri Ben-Arzi	shiri@mci-il.com
Dr. Katrina Gisbert-Tay	drkat@thecoachpartnership.com
Darrell Rogers	darrell@binwellgroup.com
Fiona Cosgrove	fiona@wellnesscoachingaustralia.com.au

Special thanks to our Guest Contributors

Dr. Michelle May	mmay@amihungry.com
Nina Raffaele Aponte	nina@bienstar.coach
Hélène Thériault	Helene@functionfirstcoaching.com
Andrew Parsons	andrewaparsons@gmail.com
Lauren Dixon	ldixon@muih.edu
Sarah Doll-Steinberg	sarah@themindpractice.com

Follow Us on LinkedIn

[Wellness Coaching Initiative \(Part of the Global Wellness Institute\)](#)

Want to contribute?

Health and Wellness Coaching Connection Blog Space.

It is our mission to empower individuals and businesses around the world to confidently partner with wellness coaches, optimizing health and well-being and clarifying wellness coach specialties and global guidelines through education and community resources. The GWI WCI Blog is one of these resources intended to advance the global Health & Wellness Coaching Community by providing accessible, evidence-based articles related to the field of Health & Wellness Coaching. Blogs will be posted on our area of the [GWI website](#) and cross-posted on LinkedIn.

Learn more here :

[Wellness Coaching Connection Contributor Guidelines](#)
[Blog-Newsletter Submission Form](#)

Please email us (gwiwci2023@gmail.com) if anything is unclear or if you have questions. We look forward to receiving your submissions!

Questions for Discussion Guide

Complementing our research, this Questions for Discussion Guide serves as an organized tool to facilitate ongoing discussion and contemplation on the pivotal role of Health and Wellness Coaching within the realms of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Intended for educators, students, and readers, this guide provides a structured framework for further exploration, encouraging thoughtful analysis and collaborative dialogue to advance inclusive practices in the field.

- What does a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace/ world/ community where everyone belongs look like/feel like?
- What are the gaps in your organization around this type of diversity?
- How might you champion greater inclusion in your day to day?
- How can you champion more inclusion and awareness around this diversity?
- What might be a personal obstacle to embracing this type of diversity?
- What unconscious bias might you have in this type of diversity?
 - How might you explore your unconscious bias?
- What is the greatest challenge for you concerning this type of diversity and why?
- Who might support you to better understand this type of diversity?
- In what context might you find this type of diversity most relevant (i.e. Workplace? Schools? Community?)
- Where (country, location, venue) might this type of diversity NOT be a challenge and why?
- What has been your personal experience with this type of diversity - from the outside or inside?