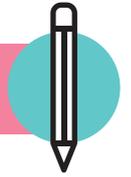


Listening Exercise and Information sheet



You don't have to be religious to get the following, but it helps:

Access community support:

Ways to get this are through involvement in local community organisations, evening classes, campaigning organisations; or political organisations and the democratic process.

Mindfulness/meditation/prayer:

These practices all have their origins in religion, but have a measurable impact on wellbeing by lowering blood pressure and boosting the immune system. Mindfulness meditation is a non-religious meditation practice which involves focussing on breathing to get the same benefits. Self hypnosis and deep relaxation have also been shown to have similar effects.

Gratitude:

A traditional part of many religions is to say prayers of gratitude at the beginning of a meal. A practice that has developed and has been shown in research to have positive impacts is to keep a gratitude diary where you write down things you are grateful for every day.

Finding your own values and beliefs:

All religions propose a set of values and beliefs and generally followers identify with some more strongly than others, for example abstinence from alcohol or non-violence.

Managing physical pain:

There has been some research that demonstrates that people can derive pain relief from contemplating images they consider to be holy or divine. The most effective ways to manage chronic or long term pain is a combination of breathing and relaxation techniques such as those practised in mindfulness.

Giving Life Meaning:

The importance of finding meaning in our lives appears frequently in writing about depression and recovery. Religion provides ready made meaning and purpose through beliefs but also through the development of philosophy.

Forgiveness/Mercy:

Some religions have values of forgiveness and mercy which helps us to let go of bad experiences in the past and move on.

Access to a greater wisdom:

Many religious people pray for guidance and support or trust in God. Being able to trust your intuition; your "gut" or that little voice in the back of your head has been shown to be a useful measure of self-confidence and self-determination.