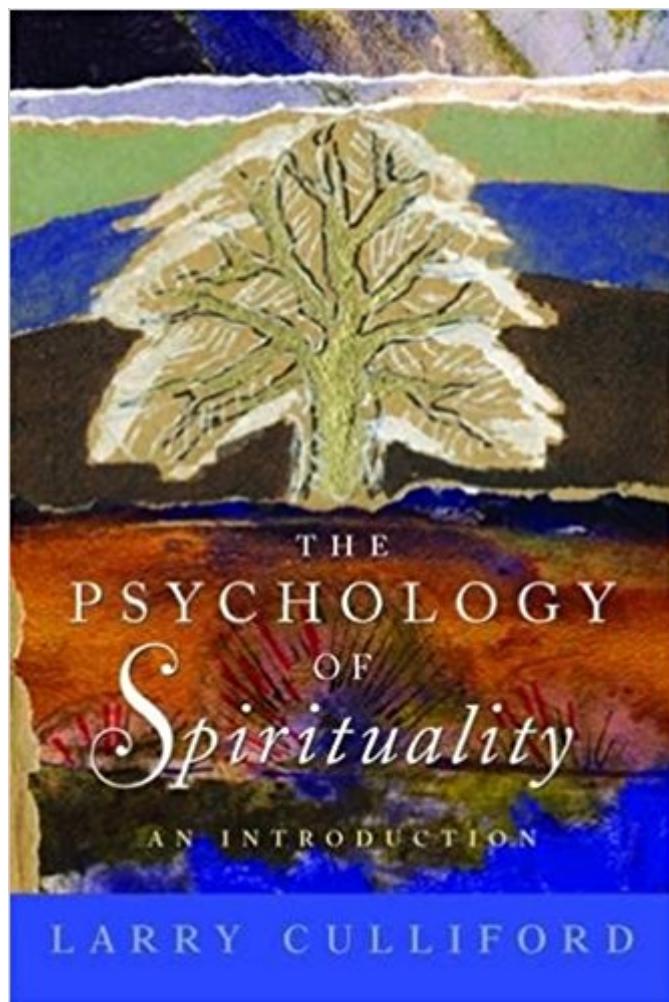


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The Psychology Of Spirituality: An Introduction



Synopsis

Spirituality is increasingly accepted as integral to human psychology, vital for physical and mental health. The Psychology of Spirituality is an accessible book that introduces the relationship between spirituality and psychology. The author sets out what spirituality is, the values it represents and how it can contribute to mental health and wellbeing. He then illustrates how knowledge of spirituality can provide a deeper understanding of people's problems and can help them develop resilience and aid recovery. With reference to a new holistic or psycho-spiritual paradigm, the book then covers stages of spiritual development: from having natural spiritual awareness in early childhood to the waning of interest in later childhood; largely conforming to group mentality in adolescence before discovering individuality; and then the final journey towards full personal and emotional maturity. Finally, the author outlines practical advice on how to explore and make use of spirituality, covering a range of spiritual skills and practices, including meditation and contemplation. Each chapter includes case examples and exercises to explore the ideas covered. This book will be compelling reading for psychologists, psychiatrists, chaplains, healthcare professionals, students, and anyone wanting to understand better the role of spirituality and psychology in the lives of all.

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This book provides a cogent argument for the integration of spirituality into our understanding of psychology. It does this by understanding spirituality in largely psychological terms, although it is not

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Dr Culliford gives us excellent insight into the spiritual stages, and the psychology behind them. If you have read about the stages elsewhere and they have not made a big impression on you, this book may change that. Culliford states on page 54: "Faith, based on spiritual wisdom and awareness, going deeper than belief, is one of the principal goals of the spiritual journey." That is code for saying that rigid, pre-set belief in the tenets of just one religion cannot represent spiritual maturity. To be spiritually mature, a person must move beyond what Culliford calls the "Belonging" stage, where a conformist mentality holds the person under the illusion that his group (his religion especially) is better than all the others. In the belonging stage the comforts of belonging to whatever group lull the person into a false sense of security where he does not think much for himself. Unfortunately, a large part of our society exists at this level and never grows beyond it. As a person matures past the Belonging or conformist stage, he or she moves into what Culiford calls a "Searching" stage where he begins to think for himself, independent of his group. This move

requires courage and is necessary for a person to become fully an adult. In this stage a person may also move beyond the narrow certainties and simple literal beliefs of his religion. Though more mature than the conformist, in the searching stage, the person may suffer some confusion and doubt. Culliford calls his third stage "Homecoming." Here if the person continues on the spiritual path he may move into a type of faith that is not so much about holding to the narrow beliefs of one religion. The person adopts a broader perspective and realizes it is all so much bigger than any given religion, than any specific definition of God. As the person attains the spiritual wisdom of the Homecoming (or Integration) stage, his ego self becomes reunited with his spiritual self and the person softens in many ways, in particular he becomes more accepting of the human suffering that is a natural part of life. In fact he softens in his attitudes toward death as well. Also very interesting in this book are Culliford's human examples of individuals moving through these stages, most particularly, that of (surprise!) our president, Barack Obama. Don't miss this book if you want to know what the word spiritual maturity means.

Most informative material I have exposed myself to in some time. I recommend this book as a must read for people who work in the helping professions.

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