

Spiritual Beliefs Effect on Death Anxiety and Depression

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The purpose of this study was to determine a relationship between spiritual/religious beliefs and death related anxiety and depression in an elderly population. If a relationship exists, then spiritual ideals and practice could prove useful tools in the therapeutic setting. Pre-existing instruments to measure levels of anxiety, depression and spiritual beliefs were used in this determination. The standard scales used were the Death Depression Scale-Revised (DDS-R) (Harville, Stokes, Templer and Rienzi, 2004) the Templer Death Anxiety Scale (TDAS) (Templer, 2000) and the Belief Inventory (Templer, 2000). One hundred and eight adults ages sixty-five and older made up a sample selected from both assisted living and community based facilities. Each participant filled out a survey containing the three scales and a demographics page. The data was examined using T tests to determine the strength of the relationship between each of the elements of the Belief Inventory and the respective scores on the Death Anxiety and Death Depression Scales.

The research results suggest there is a correlation between the mental health of elderly individuals and their spiritual beliefs. The findings support the thesis that teaching spiritual tools could assist elderly clients with death related anxiety and depression.