

Chapter 1

Narratives of Spirituality

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ABSTRACT

How does spirituality inform narratives? Some readers may view the experiences survived by the authors as a series of random coincidences, but because religion plays a large role in the lives of both authors, they believe that their experiences happened for a reason. They are not trying to convert you to a certain religion but simply want to show the power religion can have. It is recommended to take out all prejudgments on this issue and read the chapter as is. After that, take out of it what you wish. When the authors conducted a research study, they discovered potentially groundbreaking implications for the fields of patient education and health education. The official narrative of the research follows the research project from the initial idea to the final statistical analysis. The unofficial narrative of the research illustrates all the moments that cannot be captured in a statistical table as the authors answer questions, share stories, and provide information of what they learned.

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STRENGTH FROM SPIRITUALITY

This chapter symbolizes the strength of spirituality and what it can do from the perspective of two people who had near death experiences and life changing events. People might refer to a situation like this as a “Godwink” since they happened to collaborate in this writing. These are each very unique situations and the authors prepare you to ride first class in their experiences.

Godwinks are coincidences that symbolize signposts from God showing people the right path. Rushnell (2012) defines a Godwink as, “your destiny will not arrive in a limo to pick you up. Determining where you want to go in life is your job. And once you do – once you pull yourself from the curb and head in whatever direction your inner compass is telling you to head – the signposts will unfold...godwinks, all along the way. That’s a promise” (p. 73). Godwinks enable people to see patterns in their lives. Godwinks can also provide hope for people unsure where the path of life may lead next or why certain things happen. Hale (2014) believes, “call it synchronicity or fate or, as I call it, divine order; every moment of your life pushes you toward your greater calling” (p. 12). In a moment we may not know why something happens, but the reason why it happened becomes clear later.

Life can feel stressful and chaotic at times, and Godwinks bring order to the chaos. As Heard (1995) writes, “synchronicity draws recognizable patterns on a sometimes chaotic universe. Writers need to pay attention to these synchronistic moments and events” (p. 104). These Godwink moments provide faith that the puzzle pieces of life will eventually fit together, maybe not in the current moment, but someday soon. Zimmermann (2002) reminds us to trust the journey because “the stars have lined up, and we had nothing to do with it. Some call it grace; some call it synchronicity; some call it serendipity; some call it a connection with the divine; some call it coincidence; some call it luck. If we stay open to life, unexpected gifts begin to appear” (p. 160). Sometimes we don’t know why things happen. We don’t get something we want, or a prayer goes unanswered. But looking back and mapping the Godwinks of an experience can show that perhaps not getting the thing we originally wanted led to something better down the road. Or as Hale (2013) powerfully states, “on the journey of life, sometimes it takes losing our way to find ourselves” (p. 177).

And sometimes losing our way can help us find our greater purpose in life. As Warren (2012) believes, “you will be most effective when you use your spiritual gifts and abilities in the area of your heart’s desire, and in a way that

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