Interfaith Calendar Highlights

- December 8. Bodhi Day (Buddhist). Celebration of when Prince Gautama sat under the Bodhi tree and vowed to stay until he attained ultimate enlightenment.
- December 12 or 14. Mawlid al-Nabi (Islam). Birthday of the prophet Muhammad. (Different dates for Sunni and Shia Muslims.)
- December 21. Solstice/Yule (Wiccan/Christian). The beginning of winter and rebirth of the sun. Some Christians also celebrate it as the light of Christ coming into the world.
- December 25-January 1. Hanukkah (Jewish). Festival of Lights commemorating the Maccabean rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 165 BCE.
- January 1. Gantan-Sai (Shinto). New Year’s festival with prayers for prosperity and happiness.
- January 15. World Religion Day (Baha’i). Dedicated to the unity and oneness of all religions.

Source: http://www.interfaithcalendar.org

Spirituality Spotlight: Buddhism

by Chaplain Terry Wilson

Religious traditions are sacred and they carry tremendous meaning and significance to people of those faiths. Specific practices can be elaborate, or in some instances are simple. Faith practices are an important part of a patient’s hospitalization. While it is difficult to predict how an individual patient may practice his/her faith during a hospital stay, care team members are encouraged to work with patients and families to develop processes that allow patients to practice their faith, providing that these practices do not pose a safety or health concern to themselves, other patients, families or care team members. This issue introduces care team members to the core principles of Buddhism.

Mindfulness

Buddhists generally want peace and quiet for meditation and may prefer a room on the unit that is at the end of the hall, where noise would be at a minimum. This is one way a Buddhist patient may cope with stress.

Modesty

Some Buddhists may express strong concerns about modesty and may request treatment by a provider of the same gender.

Diet

Many Buddhists are vegetarians and may request that any prescribed medicines be free of animal products.

Mindful Awareness

Mindful awareness refers to a person’s self-awareness. Clinicians should be very specific while discussing any drug that may affect awareness. Some patients may prefer “clarity of consciousness” and may refuse drugs that reduce mental alertness. Strings of beads, chanting, pictures of Buddha, incense, and candles are often used by Buddhists as a mechanism to maintain focus and meditation. Requests to burn incense or candles can be handled by suggesting alternatives, such as placing flowers in the room or setting up a small electric light.

End of Life

For Buddhists, death is a time of crucial transition, with karmic implications. Near the time of death, a Buddhist patient’s family may appear quite emotionally reserved and may even keep their physical distance from the patient’s bed. This is customary and is done to support the patient’s desire to concentrate without distraction on the experience of dying.

Death

Buddhism teaches that the body is not immediately devoid of the person’s spirit after death, so there may be continued concern about disturbing the body. This belief may be an impediment to any discussion of organ donation. After a patient’s death, families may request that the body be made available to them for a number of hours, for the purpose of religious rites.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Tuesday, January 10, 2016
1:30 pm—2:30 pm
300 - Clinical Science Building (CSB)

Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside of their own conscious awareness. It is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and is often incompatible with one’s conscious values. We will explore this subject in greater detail and provide a framework for self exploration.

Participants must register via MyQuest. One hour (1) of Diversity and Inclusion Education Training will be provided.
Recognizing and Coping with Complicated Grief

by Chaplain Terry Wilson

The loss of a loved one by suicide often leaves family members and friends with feelings of guilt and regret. When we are part of a community experiencing profound sadness, anger or guilt, this is often referred to as “complicated grief.” View some important information on complicated grief below:

Risk Factors
- An unexpected or violent death, such as death from a car accident, murder, or suicide;
- Death of a child;
- Close or dependent relationship to the deceased person;
- Lack of support system or friendships;
- Past history of depression or other mental health issues;
- Traumatic childhood experiences, such as abuse or neglect;
- Lack of resilience or adaptability to life changes; and
- Other major life stressors.

Symptoms
During the first few months following a loss, signs and symptoms of normal grief are the same as those of complicated grief. However, while normal grief symptoms gradually start to fade over time, those of complicated grief linger while normal grief symptoms gradually start to fade over time. Signs and symptoms of complicated grief may include:
- Intense sorrow and pain at the thought of your loved one;
- Focus on little else but your loved one’s death;
- Extreme focus on reminders of the loved one or excessive avoidance of reminders;
- Intense and persistent longing or pining for the deceased;
- Problems accepting the death;
- Numbness or detachment;
- Bitterness about your loss;
- Feeling that life holds no meaning or purpose;
- Irritability or agitation;
- Lack of trust in others; and
- Inability to enjoy life or think back on positive experiences with your loved one.

Coping and Support
While undoubtedly this will be a difficult time for anyone experiencing complicated grief, there are some measures that may be helpful including adhering to the treatment plan, attending therapy appointments as scheduled, if needed, and taking any prescribed medications as directed. It may also be helpful to exercise regularly. Physical exercise helps to relieve depression, stress and anxiety, and can redirect your mind to the activity at hand and may help with concentration. It is also beneficial to get plenty of rest and to refrain from alcohol or illegal drugs. Reaching out to one’s faith community and practicing stress management are also effective strategies.

Plan Ahead
Holidays, anniversaries and other special occasions can trigger painful reminders of your loved one. Find new ways to celebrate and give yourself permission to “dwell in the past” until you are able to move beyond this painful time.

Learn New Skills
If you were highly dependent on your loved one, (i.e. handling cooking, finances, etc.) try to master these tasks yourself. Ask family, friends or professionals for guidance or seek out community classes and resources.

Join a Support Group
You may not be ready to join a support group immediately after your loss, but over time you may find shared experiences comforting and you may form meaningful new relationships.

Thoughts of Suicide?
At times, people with complicated grief may consider suicide. If you’re thinking about suicide, talk to someone you trust. If you think you may act on suicidal feelings, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255) to reach a trained counselor.

The Survivors of Homicide Support Group Services. Call 843-792-8209, to inquire about group times and locations.