



**MINES**

# **SPiRiT:** A Design Framework To Support Technology Interventions for Spiritual Care Within and Beyond the Clinic

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**JOHN  
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## **MOTIVATION & PRIOR WORK**

**CaringBridge:** online health journaling platform

02

## **“SPIRITUAL SUPPORT”**

**Initial definition** published at CSCW 2021

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## **“SPIRITUAL CARE”**

**Revised definition** based on member checking with professional care providers

04

## **SPIRIT DESIGN FRAMEWORK**

**Spiritual Prerequisites & Innovative dimensions for**  
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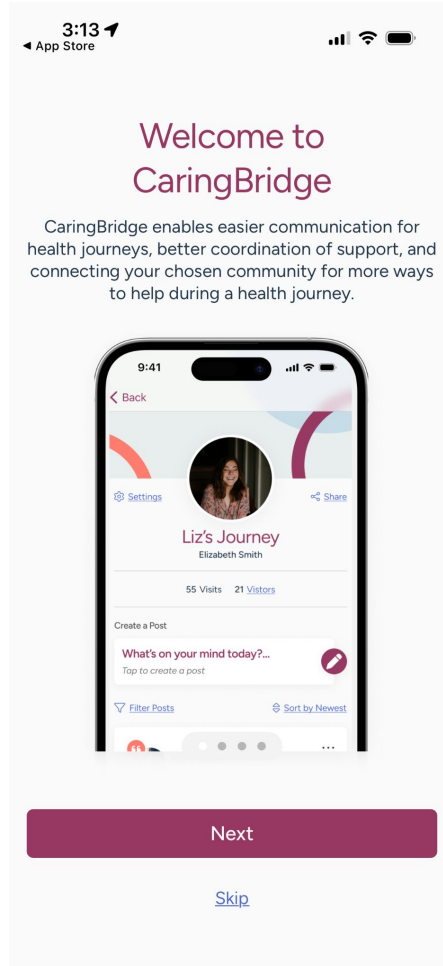
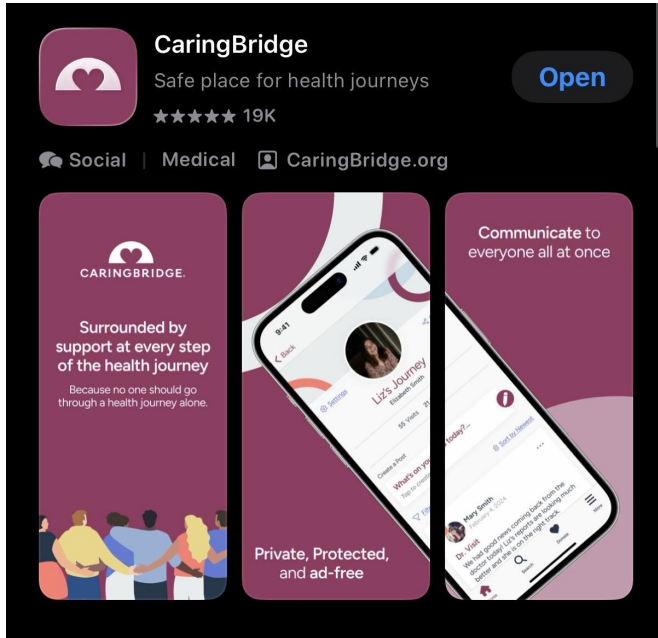
## **FUTURE WORK**

...a big open blue sky!

# Online Health Communities:

A significant research site for HCI





**Nonprofit online health communication platform** for patients and caregivers navigating **serious illness.**

(Similar to a health blog.)



Christine Smith

Christine Smith

1067 visits

# Share Health Updates with Community



  
Apr 22, 2015

April 22, 2015

Welcome to the Caring Bridge site for our friend and sister in Christ, Chris.

I haven't done this before, so if you have any advise for me, let me know!

In March, Chris became sick with abdominal pain and it was discovered that she had a mass on her uterus. She was referred to a specialist in St Paul to remove the tumor at the end of March. The cancer was identified as an Endometrial Stromal Sarcoma. Within a week, she was back in the hospital with complications from the surgery and it was noted that there were some nodules on the base of her lungs. She had further imaging, and biopsy showed that the sarcoma had spread to lungs making this a stage 4 high grade type of cancer. Her doctor was quite concerned because she had 2 separate CT's of the abdomen and pelvis (which includes the base of the lungs) about 3 weeks apart. The second scan showing nodules which were not there previously.

Endometrial Stromal Sarcoma is very (and I mean *VERY*) rare. It is a cancer of the smooth muscle and can occur in different parts of the body. According to her physician, this type of cancer is not curable at this stage/grade. It is a very aggressive cancer and resistant to chemotherapy. She was offered 2 chemotherapy agents to try to slow growth and spreading of the cancer.



██████████ — 6/9/15

Christine please know I am thinking about you and praying that your journey home will be peaceful and painless. You are one of my oldest friends, we met at CCD! We were just 14 and I remember you as a confident, intelligent, and funny girl. and boy could you squeeze a dollar! I still don't know anyone who can stretch a dollar like you! Our lives have gone in different directions but have paralleled in so many ways! I wish your family peace and joy in the knowledge that you will be with God. I will miss you. I love you.

♡ React    💬 Reply

♡ 2



██████████ 6/9/15

Thank you ██████████ for creating this journal for Chris.

♡ React    💬 Reply



██████████ — 6/9/15

Chris...may God bring you a miracle. Thanksgiving and Christmas are not the same with out you. ██████████

♡ React    💬 Reply



██████████ — 6/9/15

Chris, we've had so many adventures together! Riding Segways, camp Lebanon, movies and music in the parks, talking about the Church and many, many more. I believe you are personally responsible for teaching the entire Holy Family parish cards! I Love you so much! You are such a great witness to our Faith. You have taught me and many others so much through your actions and prayers. I am praying for you and your family! Peace be with you my dear sister in Christ!!! <3

♡ React    💬 Reply



██████████ — 6/9/15

Loving prayers for you Chris.

♡ React    💬 Reply



██████████ — 6/9/15

I love you Chris. Praying for you with all my heart!

♡ React    💬 Reply

# Receive Supportive Comments



6/9/15

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React Reply

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React Reply



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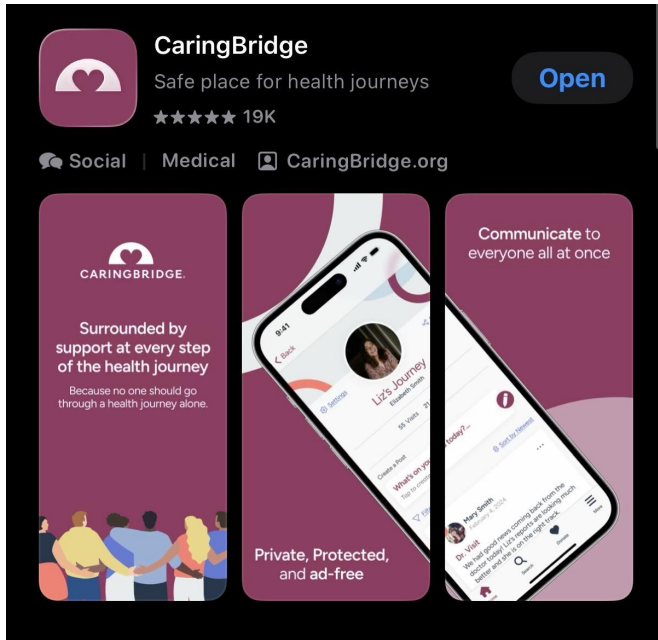


6/9/15

I love you Chris. Praying for you with all my heart!

React Reply

# Frequent Prayer and Religious/Spiritual Language



- **Prayer** is the most frequent observable user behavior
- Users rate prayer as the **most important** form of support exchange on the platform

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...a big open blue sky!

# What is Spiritual Support?

CSCW 2021

## What is Spiritual Support and How Might It Impact the Design of Online Communities?

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AVLEEN KAUR, GroupLens Research, Dept. Computer Science, University of Minnesota, USA  
KATIE Z. GACH, University of Colorado Boulder, USA  
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SUSAN O'CONNOR-VON, Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing, UMN, USA

Spirituality is an understudied topic in social computing; however, for Online Health Community (OHC) users facing life-threatening illness, it is of fundamental importance. Through in-depth focus groups with OHC stakeholders in a US context, we derive a definition of “spiritual support” for use by designers and researchers who study online social support. We show that spiritual support is an integral dimension that underlies other social support types, and that if we ignore spirituality in design, we fail to mitigate problematic issues that arise in online spaces when users’ spiritual values clash. Based on participants’ ideations, we provide design implications for OHCs and other social media to better facilitate spiritual support through: (1) representing spiritual beliefs, (2) assistance with supportive communication, (3) support network visualization and mobilization, and (4) advance care planning and digital legacy.

Began from **National Consensus Project** definition:

## Spirituality

*is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose, and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred.*

# Co-Design Workshops

*n=34, held in late 2019*

**CaringBridge Users  
(*n=11*)**

**Spiritual & Religious  
Leaders (*n=6*)**

**Healthcare Workers (*n=7*)  
(Nurses, Drs, Chaplains)**

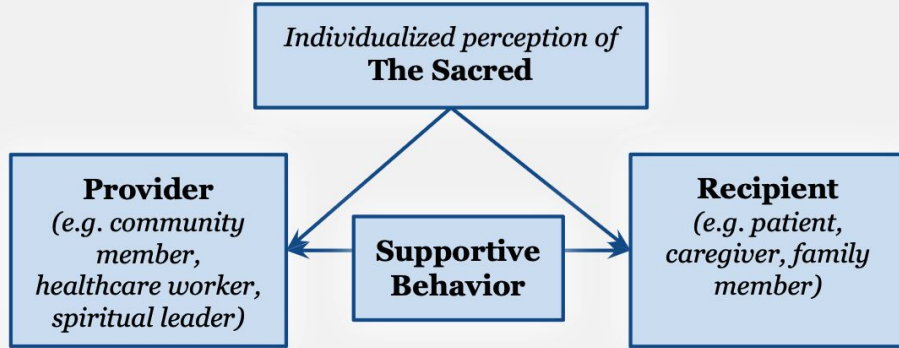
**CaringBridge  
Employees (*n=10*)**

What is your group's definition of spiritual support?

Someone, something or an experience acting as a catalyst to connect a person in need to a higher source - their perception of a loving spiritual source.

Structured **Small Group** Conversations & Technology Prototyping Activities

## Definition of Spiritual Support (Smith, et al., 2021)



**SPIRITUAL SUPPORT** is an integral dimension that underlies and can be expressed through *every* category of social support including:

- **Informational**
- **Instrumental**
- **Esteem**
- **Emotional**
- **Network**
- **Prayer**

This dimension creates a **triadic relationship** between a recipient, a provider, and the sacred or significant, with the purpose of helping recipients and providers experience a **mutually positive presence** with each other and with the sacred or significant.



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## Abstract

Despite its importance for well-being, spiritual care remains under-explored in HCI, while the adoption of technology in clinical spiritual care lags behind other healthcare fields. Prior work derived a definition of "spiritual support" through co-design workshops with stakeholders in online health communities. This paper contributes: (1) a revision of that definition through member checking with professional spiritual care providers (SCPs); (2) a novel design framework—SPIRIT—which can help to expand models of delivery for spiritual care using digital technologies. Through re-analysis of previous data and new interviews with SCPs, we identify three prerequisites for meaningful spiritual care: openness to care, safe space, and the ability to discern and articulate spiritual needs. We also propose six design dimensions: loving presence, meaning-making, appropriate degree of technology use, location, degree of relational closeness, and temporality. We discuss how SPIRIT offers guidance for designing impactful digital spiritual care intervention systems within and beyond clinical settings.

## 1 Introduction

Modern society is faced with epidemics of loneliness [41], mental illness [1, 45, 72, 97], and spiritual crises [30, 101]. The fields of HCI and medicine have focused predominantly on emotional and mental aspects of this issue, however spirituality and spiritual care are typically omitted or underdiscussed in the HCI research literature [19, 77, 85] and within patients' experiences of medical care [11, 29]. Humans experience *distinct* spiritual needs and problems during challenging or traumatic events and life-altering, -threatening, or terminal illness that are not well-addressed through mental and physical health care systems [75]. Moreover, spiritual factors are correlated with human wellbeing [56]. Thus, neglecting spiritual issues already constitutes a painful unmet need, and it may also invisibly impede progress or compliance with other types of interventions for mental or physical health. Receiving professional spiritual care (esp. during palliative care) has been repeatedly demonstrated to improve important health and Quality of Life outcomes [10, 11] and patient satisfaction with care [62] while also reducing overall costs of care [9]. Yet there are not enough profes-

# What is a chaplain / spiritual care provider?

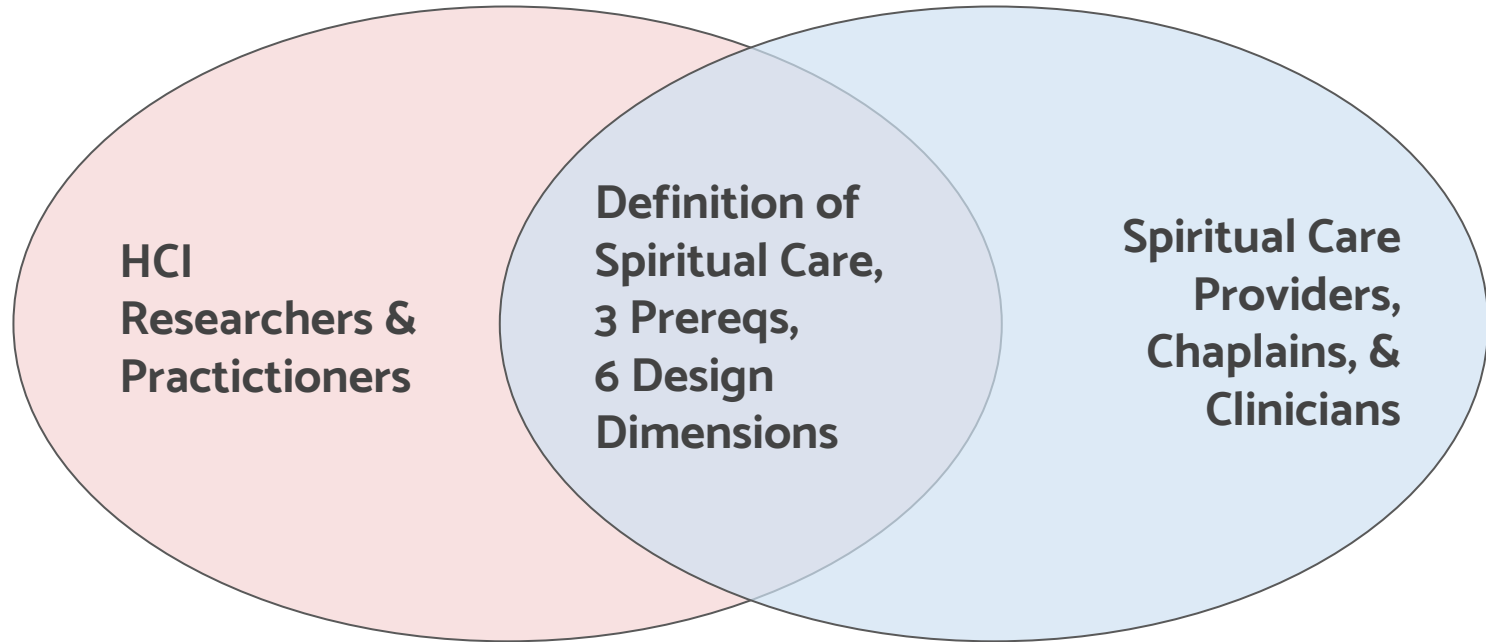


<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-15/a-chaplain-reflects-on-lives-lost-to>

# Grounded Theory Method (Continued...)

- **“Member checking”** to ensure ongoing work is aligned with stakeholders
- **Re-analyze** prior workshop data
- **New interviews** with n=22 experienced, diverse spiritual care providers
- **Validate** (& possibly update) the spiritual support definition

**Aim :** Derive a **design framework** to support collaboration between technology designers & spiritual care providers

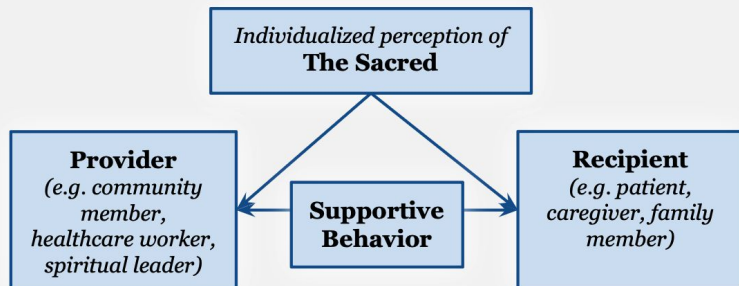


# Participant Table

ID	Professional Title	Credentials/ Certifications	Years	R/S Affiliation	Location
P01	Professor	Ordained Minister, Licensed Psychologist	>10	Christianity	Western USA
P02	Chaplain	M.Div.	1-5	Islam	Southern USA
P03	Chaplain, Spiritual Leader	M.Div.	>10	Christianity	Western USA
P04	Chaplain, Spiritual Care Counselor, Spiritual Director	M.Div.	5-10	Christianity	Western USA
P05	Spiritual Director, Spiritual Leader	M.S. in Pastoral & Spiritual Care	>10	Christianity	Western USA
P06	Director of Case Management	Licensed Social Worker	1-5	Christianity	Western USA
P07	Chaplain	M.Div.	<1	Christianity	Western USA
P08	Chaplain	Pending ACPE	1-5	Humanist	Western USA
P09	Physician		>10	Christianity	East Coast
P10	Chaplain, Director, Spiritual Care & Education	BCC, Advanced Practice BCC	5-10	Not Disclosed	East Coast
P11	Manager, Chaplaincy Department	M.Div., BCC, ACPE	>10	Not Disclosed	East Coast

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P13	Chaplain	BCC	>10	Islam	East Coast
P14	Chaplain, Spiritual Director	M.S. in Buddhist Chaplaincy	>10	Buddhism	East Coast
P15	Seminarian	Certified Death Doula	1-5	Buddhism	East Coast
P16	Chaplain, Physician, Professor, Spiritual Care Specialist	M.Div., BCC	>10	Judaism	West Coast
P17	Chaplain, Professor	M.Div., BCC	>10	Judaism	West Coast
P18	Vice President of Spiritual Care	M.Div., ACPE	>10	Christianity	West Coast
P19	Chaplain, Mindfulness Educator	BCC	>10	Not Disclosed	West Coast
P20	Chaplain	Doctorate in Ministry, BCC	>10	Christianity	Southern USA
P21	Executive Director, Spiritual Care Counselor	M.Div., ACPE	>10	Christianity	Southern USA
P22	Chaplain, ACPE Educator	ACPE	>10	Christianity	Western USA

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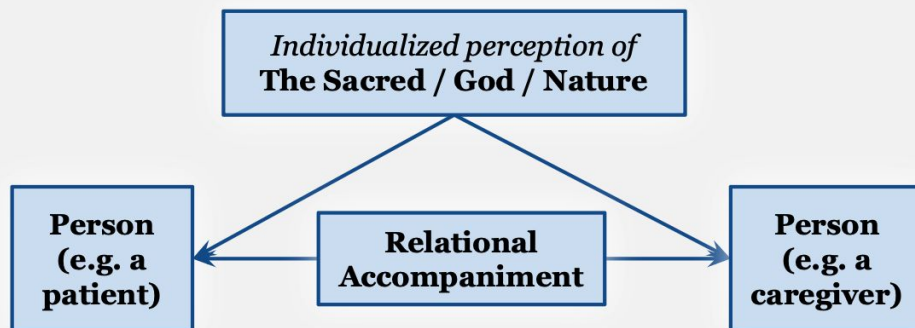


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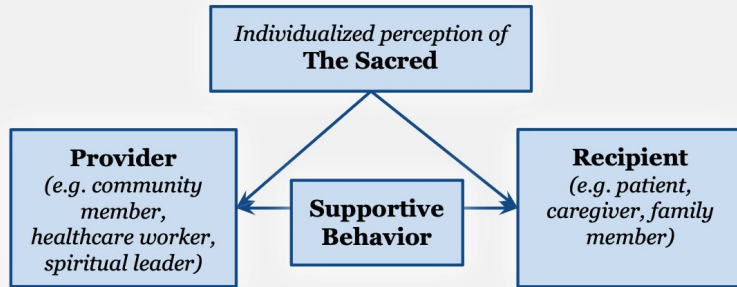
This dimension creates a **triadic relationship** between a recipient, a provider, and the sacred or significant, with the purpose of helping recipients and providers experience a **mutually positive presence** with each other and with the sacred or significant.

### Revised Definition: **Spiritual Care**



**SPIRITUAL CARE** is a nourishing form of **social accompaniment** that supports actualization of a person's individualized sense of spirituality through meaning-making, purpose, and inner strength---without intent to fix or cure. This accompaniment creates a **triadic relationship** between multiple persons and the sacred or significant to create an experience of **mutually positive presence** with each other and with the sacred or significant. It can be expressed as an underlying dimension of conventional categories of social support such as informational, emotional, instrumental, network, esteem, prayer, or other types of ritual support and compassionate presence.

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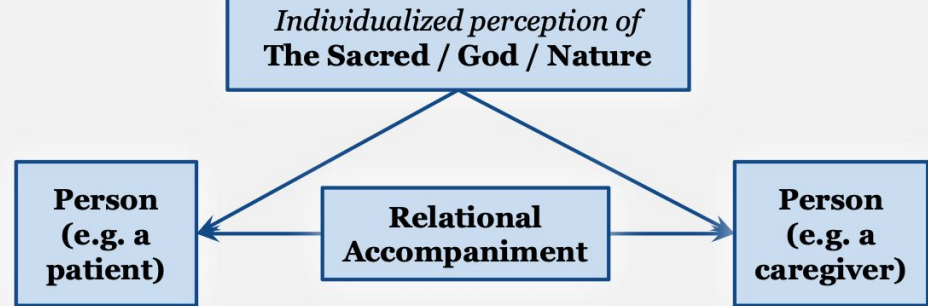


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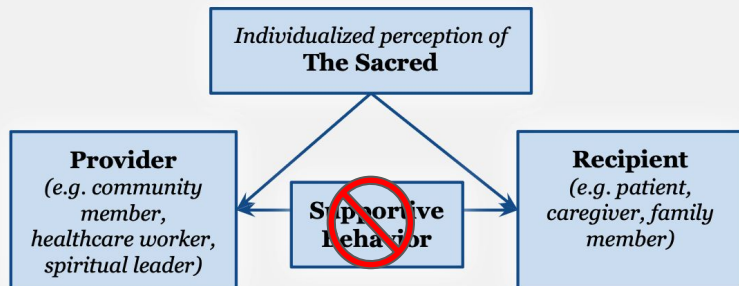
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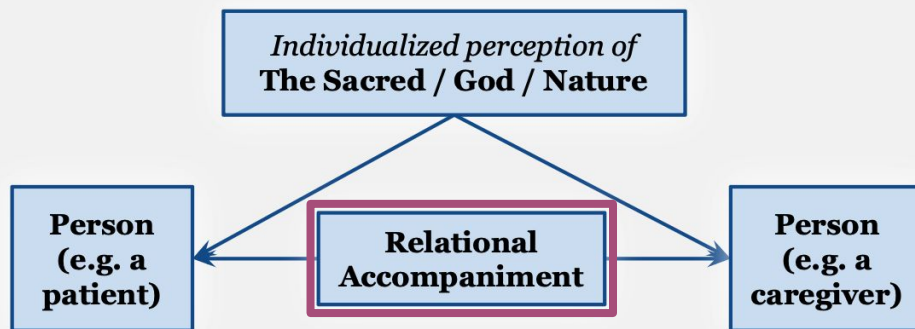


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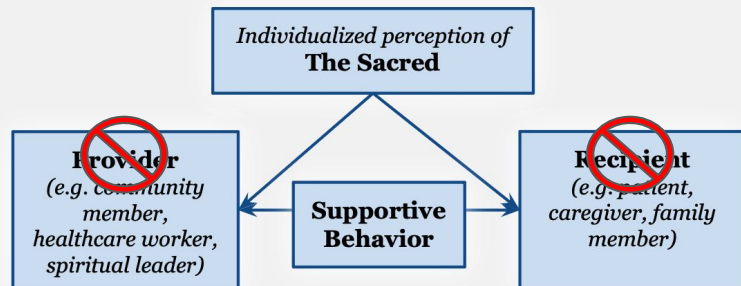
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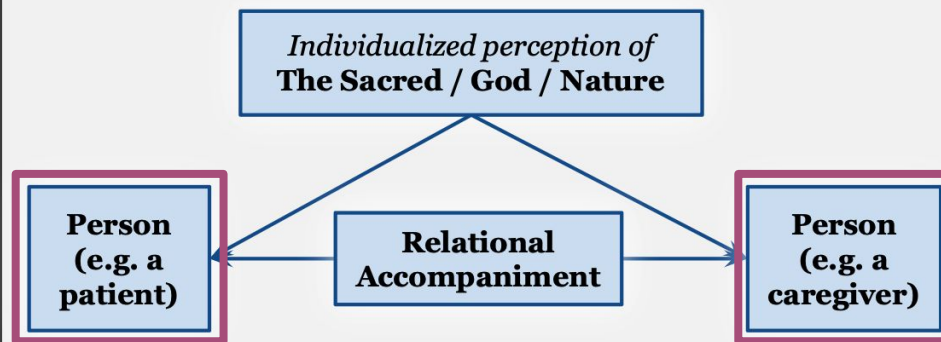


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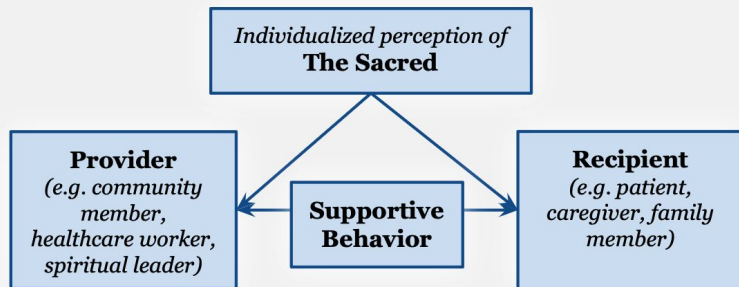
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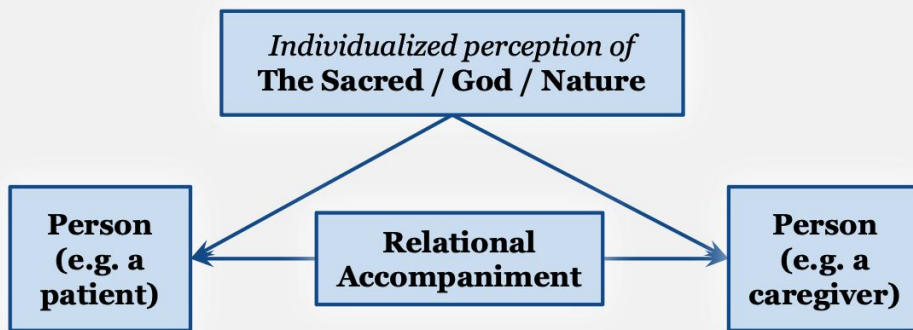


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# **SPiRiT** Design Framework

**S**piritual  
**P**rerequisites &  
**I**nnovative  
**d**imensions fo**R**  
**I**ntegrating  
**T**echnology



# Spiritual Prerequisites

**Openness**  
to Care

**Safe**  
**Space**

Ability to  
**Discern &**  
**Articulate**  
Needs



# 6 Innovative **Design Dimensions** for Spiritual Care Tech

Technology	Presence	Meaning	Location	Relationship	Temporality
<p><i>The degree to which a human invention (e.g., pen &amp; paper, the Internet, smartphones) must be involved for support exchange.</i></p>	<p><i>A quality of positive, intentional, and attuned presence between a person with themselves, others, and/or the significant/sacred.</i></p>	<p><i>The ability and capacity to make meaning out of pain, suffering, and other challenging circumstances of life &amp; death.</i></p>	<p><i>Where support is being exchanged, whether in-person (geographic co-location, or remotely (at a distance).</i></p>	<p><i>The nature of the social relationship between supporter and recipient, and which values or elements of identity are shared (vs. not).</i></p>	<p><i>When the support exchanged is intended to occur (e.g., now, near or distant future).</i></p>
<p>Is technology <b>required</b> in order for the supportive interaction to exist?</p> <p>Is it required that technology be <b>absent</b>?</p>	<p>How can supporters cultivate a sense of <b>genuine, connected presence</b> with support recipient?</p> <p>What might contribute to a sense of <b>emptiness</b> or <b>lack of presence</b>? (e.g., "empty" thoughts &amp; prayers)</p>	<p>What <b>barriers</b> are making it hard for the support recipient to make sense of the situation?</p> <p>What techniques, tools, and innate qualities help supporter/recipient to express <b>spiritually healing narratives</b>?</p>	<p>It is <b>possible or necessary</b> for supporter/recipient to be in the same location?</p> <p>Is there a <b>specific</b> location (geographical or online) where the support needs to take place?</p>	<p><b>How well</b> do these people know each other? (e.g., spouses, acquaintances, strangers)</p> <p>What <b>expectations, history, and responsibilities</b> exist between them, if any?</p>	<p>Is support needed <b>urgently</b>, or very soon?</p> <p>Is support intended to occur at an unpredictable or predetermined <b>future moment</b>?</p>

# Four Levels of “Design Briefs” :

Borrowed from HCI research in digital mental health (Slovak & Munson, 2024)

1. **Technical capabilities:** individual features or affordances of interaction design
2. **Components:** incorporate one or more capabilities to deliver a particular design element;
3. **Intervention systems:** combine multiple components into a complete intervention
4. **Intervention implementations:** can be deployed with trained clinicians in specific institutional settings

# Spiritual Care Technologies:

Envision **components** for phases of care



**Needs  
Assessment**

E.g., Screening (by generalists or other staff), and formal needs assessment (by specialists) using tools like Spiritual AIM, HOPE, FICA, etc.

**Intervention**

**Advocate Health Care  
Taxonomy of Chaplaincy**  
(Massey 2015)

**Outcomes  
Assessment**

**Big Opportunity Here!**

Less established – see emerging tools such as “Feeling Heard and Understood” scale (Ahluwalia 2022)

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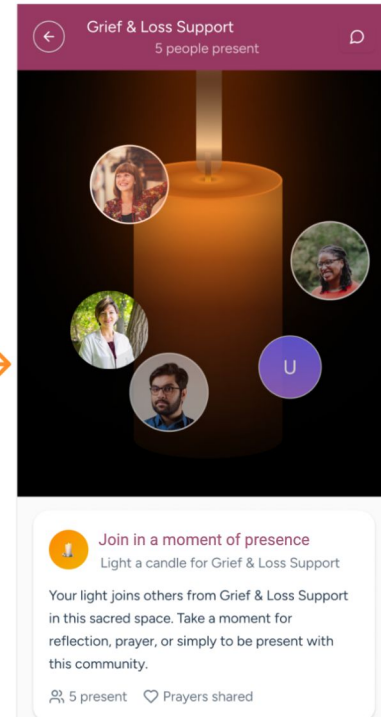
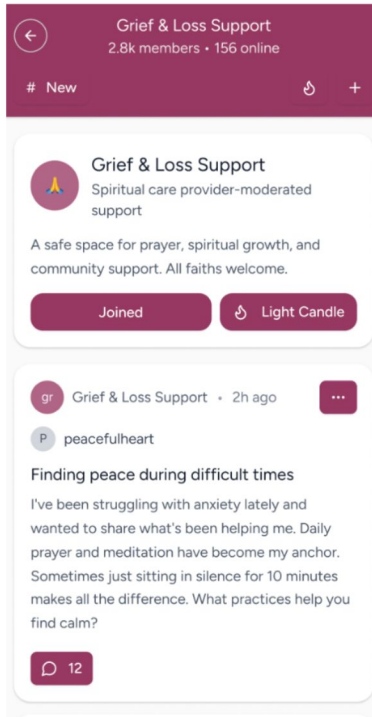
~~FUTURE WORK~~

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# For Example: A Novel Intervention Component



## Online Spiritual Care Communities



# For Example: A Novel Needs Assessment Component

## AI-Based **Screening (only)** Tool

Welcome to [Blinded]  
Because every healthcare journey deserves the best spiritual care.

What is Spiritual Care

[Blinded]

I am an artificially intelligent agent, NOT a human chaplain, but I can help you decide if talking to one might help.

What brought you here?

I would like to learn more about what Spiritual Care is.

I would like to see if Spiritual Care is right for me.

I am struggling with something that is on my mind.

I am skeptical of Spiritual Care and I have some questions.

I already know I want to schedule a call with a Chaplaincy Service:

Schedule now

What brought you here?

I would like to see if Spiritual Care is right for me.

Would you be okay answering a few screening questions right now?

yes

Do you struggle with the loss of meaning and joy in your life?

A great deal

Would you like to expand on that? Feel free to share more details if you are comfortable.

I lost my job

I'm really sorry to hear that; losing a job can bring a lot of uncertainty and sadness. It's understandable to feel a loss of meaning and joy during such a challenging time.

Does your religion/spirituality provide you all the strength and comfort you need from it right now?

Somewhat

Would you like to expand on that? Feel free to share more details if you are comfortable.

no

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and feelings with me. Based on what you've shared, it seems that spiritual care could be beneficial for you at this time. If you're interested, you can request an appointment with a chaplain by clicking the button below to schedule. Take care of yourself.

Click here at any time to end the conversation and set up a conversation with a chaplain

Connect with a Chaplain

Our chaplains are here to support you. They understand that what you're experiencing is real and difficult.

Sarah Martinez  
Strengths: grief support, major life transitions, finding meaning

Everyone deserves a space where they can be heard without judgment. I'm here to walk alongside you.

Request Conversation

David Chen  
Strengths: spiritual exploration, family concerns, supporting loved ones

Your spiritual journey is uniquely yours. I'm honored to support you wherever you are.

Request Conversation

Emily Johnson  
Strengths: end-of-life, major diagnosis, maintaining dignity

You already have so much strength within you. Let's discover it together.

Request Conversation

Not sure who to choose?  
Let us match you with whomever we think is the best fit.

Match Me with a Chaplain

You're Not Alone  
Spiritual care is for everyone, regardless of your background, beliefs, or circumstances. We're here to support you exactly where you are.

Schedule Your Conversation

Select a Date

Thu Jan 22	Fri Jan 23	Sat Jan 24
Sun Jan 25	Mon Jan 26	Tue Jan 27
Wed Jan 28	Thu Jan 29	Fri Jan 30

Select a Time

9:00 AM	10:00 AM	1:00 PM	12:00 PM
1:00 PM	2:00 PM	3:00 PM	4:00 PM
5:00 PM			

Contact Information

Name \*  
Your name

Email \*  
your.email@example.com

Phone Number \*  
(888) 222-4347

Preferred Contact Method  
Email  
Phone

What would you like support with? (Optional, select all that apply)

- Coping with illness or diagnosis
- Family concerns
- Grief and loss
- Finding meaning or purpose
- Anxiety or stress
- End-of-life questions
- Spiritual questions
- Other

Support Network (Optional)

Who is in your support network, if anyone?

For Example:  
Novel Context for Needs  
Assessment / Intervention



**r/cancer**

Hot ▾ ▢ ▾

Community highlights

Welcome to **/R/Cancer**, sorry you're here. Please read **submitting any posts!**  
151 votes · 0 comments

u/jazzed-in · 10 hr. ago

**Radiation therapy is just as bad as chemotherapy for me**

I hate it. I hate it. I hate it. No one has ever told me about the side effects. They told me it's not gonna be as bad as chemotherapy, and they're so wrong. In my experience at least. I literally can't eat for about a week now. My mouth that feel like there's a thousand of them. My throat also hurts. I can't swallow food and drink water. I can't even brush my teeth now because every time I put something inside my mouth, it leaves me in tears because of the pain.

Patient

55 ↓ 38 1 Share

u/Kremlin7613 · 17 hr. ago

**Why does no one tell you about what happens after**

(This is just a rant) I want to express the difficulties I faced during my illness that were not adequately explained to me beforehand. The impact on my physical appearance after chemotherapy, and the countless painkillers I had to take were all unexpected.

**r/lonely**

Best ▾ ▢ ▾

Community highlights

Weekly Find a Friend thread -  
October 03, 2025  
3 votes · 29 comments

Remind me about social media  
1.9K votes

u/Ashamed\_Art5445 · 1 hr. ago

**I'm sick of people who have companionship, then they leave with being totally alone**

Title is all, people who have people, should not give advice to people who are alone.

Venting

15 ↓ 5 1 Share

u/FriendlyThreader · 25 days ago

**Loneliness feels heavier with age**

I'm 36 and recently I've been noticing how much lonelier and more isolated I feel.

**r/SuicideWatch**

Hot ▾ ▢ ▾

Create post Join ...

Peer support for anyone struggling with suicidal thoughts  
Peer support for anyone struggling with suicidal thoughts.

488K Members 44 Online

RESOURCES

The SW Mod team also maintains [/r/SWResources](#).

If you need help for yourself, we've got a [directory of voice and chat/text hotline services](#) and [FAQs about hotlines](#), plus [selected online resources](#).

If you're concerned about someone else, you're welcome to post, also check out our [talking tips](#) and [risk assessment guide](#). If you're new here and want to help, please read these two posts before diving in.

If you've lost someone to suicide, [/r/SuicideBereavement](#) is there for you, or you can check out [our shared list of bereavement resources](#).

Note: the Android Reddit app currently has a bug that causes wikis not to work - if links

u/SQLwitch MOD · 5 yr. ago

**New wiki on how to avoid accidentally encouraging suicide, and how to spot covert incitement**

We've been seeing a worrying increase in pro-suicide content showing up here and, and also going unreported. This undermines our purpose here, so we wanted to highlight and clarify our guidelines about both direct and indirect incitement of suicide. We've created a wiki that covers these issues. We hope this will be helpful to...

1.8K ↓ 248 1 Share

u/SQLwitch MOD · 3 yr. ago

**Please remember that NO ACTIVISM of any kind is ever allowed here. No matter what day it is.**

Activism, i.e. advocating or fundraising for social change or raising awareness of social issues (and suicide is, inescapably, a social issue) is absolutely against the rules here at all times. Please understand that we're all for smart, strategic mental-health and suicide-prevention activism. It's essential to fight against stigma...

716 ↓ 43 1 Share

u/funnyhowlifehappens · 12 hr. ago

**I'm facing jail time and can't cope**

People say own up and deal with your consequences but I can't. I'm not one of those people. I'm being charged with a THC DUI and even fighting it in court is costing me everything. My jobs as a nurse and nurse practitioner. My relationship with an urgent care doctor and that I just started dating off bumble. My apartment that cost \$2 grand a month. Idk how I'll pay for it and become so disrespected by everyone if I can't get it dropped. Which

# **SPIRIT:** A Design Framework To Support Technology Interventions for Spiritual Care Within and Beyond the Clinic

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TEMPLETON**  
FOUNDATION

*Inspiring Awe & Wonder*

Alemitu Bezabih, PhD



Shadi Nourriz



Jesan Ahammed Ovi

