



# A Picture of Spirituality in Youth Living with Bipolar Disorder

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## Background

- Promoting mental health in transitional aged youth ages 15-24 is a priority due to the onset of mental illness occurring at this time, and suicide being the second leading cause of death in this population. <sup>1,2</sup> In Canadians 15 years and older, 1% report symptoms of bipolar disorder<sup>3</sup> a mood disorder (characterized by alternating or mixed manic or hypomanic and depressive episodes) where suicide is most prevalent among psychiatric diagnoses<sup>4</sup>
- Psychosocial interventions are essential to investigate in the management of bipolar disorder since pharmacotherapy has not been found to fully restore mood and quality of life. <sup>5,6,7,8</sup> Spirituality is a psychosocial factor associated with lower rates of depression, lower substance use rates, and lower suicide rates.<sup>1</sup>



Photo Credit

- With the gradual decrease in religious attendance by Canadians 15 years and older (43% to 27%) between 1986 and 2012 and the rise of 'New Age' spirituality <sup>9,10</sup>, understanding how youth living with bipolar disorder understand and experience spirituality can help promote their spiritual needs and their mental health. However, there is a paucity of literature on this topic.

## Purpose of the Study

- To raise awareness of how youth living with bipolar disorder describe their understanding of and experiences of spirituality to better support their spiritual needs and promote their mental health.

## Theoretical Framework

### Neuman's Systems Model 'Health as a Continuum'

- Holistic view of the Client System: *physiological, psychological, sociocultural, developmental* and *spiritual* components <sup>11</sup>
- Spirituality balances all client systems (mind, body, spirit) thereby promoting health. Spirituality is an innate energy source. <sup>12, 13, 14</sup>
- The system reacts to stressors and has different layers of protection. Stressors to spirituality can cause loss of energy and illness. <sup>11</sup>
- The nurse helps to prevent stressors, restore energy, and build the client's strengths for a higher state of functioning and wellness. <sup>11, 13, 14, 15</sup>

## Spirituality

It can be thought of as the meaning in life that a person gains in relation to something bigger than themselves or the "transcendent." This meaning may or may not come from formal religious tradition. <sup>16,17</sup> and, *relational consciousness* <sup>16</sup>; the awareness or connection to:

- Transcendent; (for some people God or higher power or universal intelligence; can be religious or secular).
- Self.
- Others.
- Environment. <sup>18,19</sup>



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## Methodology

### Photovoice<sup>20</sup>

- A participatory approach where photography is used to identify and discuss experiences, create awareness and social change <sup>21</sup>
- This study uses a modified photovoice method<sup>22</sup> similar to Wang's (1999)<sup>23</sup> SHOWeD technique, more suitable for individual interviews; designed around the themes: *choice, theme, relationship, issues, and message*<sup>22</sup> is used to co-analyze the photos with youth. Participants answer the following research questions with their photos: 1) *What does spirituality mean to you?* 2) *How do you experience spirituality day-to-day?* and 3) *How does your mood relate to your spirituality?* Themes are discussed with participants at an online Webinar debrief.

### Setting. Participants. Inclusion

- Seven to ten youth ages 18 to 29, in Ontario Canada, living with bipolar disorder, English speaking, with a device to take photos.

### Data Analysis

- Thematic analysis <sup>24</sup> is being used to capture youth's description of spirituality and the meaning it has in their lives as they live with the symptoms of bipolar disorder. Both semantic and latent codes help to unpack this phenomenon. Furthermore, Value-Added Analysis <sup>25</sup> is being used to create generalizable concepts and help theorize the data.

## Knowledge Mobilization

- Youth will share their photos and stories in an online art exhibit.



<http://asa100.com/workshops/?p=619>

## Future Directions/Implications:

### Education:

- Curriculum development on spirituality and mental health across disciplines.
- Expanding the meaning of holistic care in nursing and related disciplines by including spiritual health research, education, and practice.

### Practice:

- Help support the integration of spiritual health assessment and interventions into mental health care.
- Training in multi-faith, multicultural approaches that create safe and respectful environments for young people to explore and cultivate spiritual identities <sup>26</sup>
- Help inform the skills and competencies of health care providers offering for example, spiritual psychotherapy and other spiritual strategies for youth living with bipolar disorder and mood disorders.

### Policy:

- Policies that support interprofessional collaboration, education, and practices for the spiritual development of youth.

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