

It is normal to experience a variety of religious or spiritual responses to sexual assault.

- You might find that your existing beliefs are strengthened or transformed.
- You might find comfort in your existing faith or a new faith, or you may find faith for the first time.
- You might find that you are facing new spiritual questions or struggling to connect with your existing faith.

Looking to connect with compassionate faith-based supporters? Reach out to the McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life!

- For referrals to faith volunteers of diverse religious backgrounds
- For help finding LGBTQ-affirming faith communities

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Spirituality and Sexual Violence

A Resource for Survivors

MCGILL OFFICE
OF RELIGIOUS AND
SPIRITUAL LIFE



“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.”

— Maya Angelou

This resource introduces some of the **interconnections** between spirituality and sexual violence. Whether you are **religious, spiritual, or neither**, your existing beliefs may influence your healing process; at the same time, assault may have profound implications for your established belief system. This guide highlights some of the **many possible spiritual responses** to sexual violence, thereby emphasizing the diversity of survivors' experiences.

Remember, your faith community should never work against your healing process.

Many faith communities are prepared to offer love and compassion to survivors; however, not all are able to do so.

Watch out for patterns such as the following:

- Minimizing, covering up, or condoning sexual violence
- Blaming or shaming survivors
- Misusing or misinterpreting religious texts or teachings to the detriment of the survivor (For example., forcing a survivor to forgive a perpetrator)

Some survivors find faith to be a helpful tool in their healing process.

You may find that:

- Your spiritual or religious community offer a strong network of emotional, spiritual, and material support
- Your faith leaders offer spiritual comfort and wisdom
 - You may already have relationships with these faith leaders, allowing them to serve as trusted supporters.
- Your spiritual teachings help you find meaning, solace, and healing
 - You may feel reassured by the love and guidance of a higher power.
 - You may find comfort, affirmation, and hope in religious teachings and stories.
- Your spiritual practices and faith-based rituals help you find healing, meaning, and strength.