



# Spirituality and Aging

*Robert C. Atchley*

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A spiritual life, one focused on personal growth and deep human experience, is a major focus and motivator for people over the age of forty. Yet there is a marked lack of rigorous academic study of spirituality's importance in the lives of aging people. Noted gerontologist Robert C. Atchley remedies this problem by developing complex concepts and language about spirituality.

*Spirituality and Aging* incorporates material from two decades of interviews, observations, study, and reflection to illustrate ways of thinking about and discussing spirituality?what it is, why it is important, and how it influences the experience of aging. This book provides a nuanced view of spirituality and the richness it brings to the lives of older people.

The book is divided into three sections, with the first providing basic frames of reference for examining spirituality and aging, such as the nature of spirituality, spiritual development, and the spiritual self. Atchley next focuses on two dimensions of spirituality that are likely to manifest later in life: becoming a sage (developing the capacity to bring spiritual light to everyday issues) and serving from spirit (creating opportunities for service that are rooted in spirituality). The last section illustrates how spirituality informs other aspects of late life, such as psychological coping and the experience of dying and death.

Separating spirituality from religion?something few books on this topic do? *Spirituality and Aging* offers a plan for incorporating spirituality into gerontological scholarship, research, education, and practice.

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