

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN YOUR LIBRARY

The theme of this YA Hotline is religion and spirituality. It includes practical resources to assist teens who are exploring ideas of faith. This issue includes a brief overview of faiths from around the world. While we could not include every religion, we selected and compiled key resources that highlight a broad range of religious groups and spiritual beliefs. We have included programs, activities, multimedia resources, recipes, and recommended fiction and non-fiction titles.

If you think that teens have no interest in religion, you would be wrong. According to a 2000 *Newsweek* poll of teenagers, 78% claimed that religion was important to them. While many of these teens do not attend regular services, they still feel a connection to their faith. Spirituality, rather than organized religion, is also important to teenagers. Spirituality often includes a belief in a higher power or a combination of beliefs from various faiths. Encouraging religious and spiritual exploration can have a number of positive effects for both teens and your community. Researchers believe there is a relation between spirituality and quality of life. Benefits include: physical health, stress reduction, increased self-esteem, feelings of satisfaction, academic achievement, and increased community involvement.

The publishing industry has also embraced teen spirituality; it is one of the hottest emerging markets, made evident in the increased availability and demand for Christian fiction. We recognize that most libraries will not have the budget to include resources that reflect every religious group. To understand the religious demographics of your community, we recommend using the Community Profiles created by Statistics Canada. While the United States Census Bureau does not collect this data, their website does recommend other useful sources of statistical data.

We hope that you find this issue informative and thought-provoking. Our purpose is not to convert teens, but to provide resources that reflect their personal beliefs and create an awareness of other spiritual groups.

