



History

The Spiritual Companions Trust had its earliest start in the 1990s in some courses taught at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, in the Alternatives Programme. These courses were led by Dr William Bloom and their purpose was to understand the core practices at the heart of all spiritual approaches, but free of their particular beliefs, myths and symbolism. The focus was on actual practice and not on belief or faith.

A group of two hundred interested people then responded to draft texts around how the essence of spiritual practice might be described. This resulted in the *Spiritual Companions Guidelines*. In brief the guidelines suggest that the practice of spirituality might best be described as containing three universal aspects:

- Connection with the wonder and energy of life.
- Reflective practice in which people self-manage the development of compassion and consciousness, heart and mind.
- Service and care of others.

Central to these was the notion that good spiritual education enabled people to discover, explore and build their own best way of practising spirituality. In other words a person-centred or student-centred approach.

This approach was developed into a 10-session course, 'An Introduction to Contemporary Spirituality,' which was trialled in twelve adult education centres. Learning from this experience a longer course in spiritual development and care for others was then developed. This course, first trialled in 2006, provided entry to the network of Spiritual Companions.

This then developed into the Diploma in Practical Spirituality and Wellness (a Level 3 qualification awarded by the Crossfields Institute and on the Ofqual Register.) The development of this pioneering qualification integrated the substantial scholarly research on the health benefits of spirituality as well as their risks.

Originally Spiritual Companions was a project under the umbrella of the Foundation for Holistic Spirituality ^{cic}. In February 2014 the Spiritual Companions Trust acquired its own legal status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

In 2018 *Your Spiritual Health Programme* was developed for a launch in the Spring of 2019.

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