

**The Northeastern University Center for Spirituality, Dialogue and Service, in collaboration with Harvard Medical Affiliate McLean Hospital and Brandeis University, bring spirituality to mental health**

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The Northeastern University Center for Spirituality, Dialogue and Service, in collaboration with Harvard Medical Affiliate McLean Hospital and Brandeis University, hosted a mental health discussion series that explored the intersections between spirituality and mental wellness.

Open to members of all faiths and backgrounds, the Making Meaning: A Discussion on Spirituality and Mental Health series was engineered to strip the stigma from discussions on mental illness. Our office recognizes that religion can often feel like it adds to the stigma, when in fact the teachings found in many sacred texts are meant to encourage acceptance around mental illness and a prioritization of mental wellbeing.

Each week of February, with one session on Monday and one session on Wednesday, members of the Northeastern University community came together on Zoom to speak in an open and safe setting about their personal experiences with religion and mental health. Participants came from a variety of faiths and traditions, including Buddhists, Muslims, Catholics, Humanists and people of Jewish faith.

This discussion group is based on the latest research from McLean Hospital, indicating that programs that address spiritual and religious issues, beliefs, and practices have been found to be helpful in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress. They have also been shown to increase positive psychological states such as happiness, gratitude and hope.

The goal of this interfaith program was to engage the participants in a powerful conversation about the connections between spirituality, religion and mental health. Hadassah Margolis, LICSW, a clinical social worker at McLean Hospital and the Lead Therapist at the Department of Spirituality and Mental Health at Brandeis University, leads and facilitates each 4-session group.

Participants were encouraged to use their personal faith and traditions as an avenue to speak about important topics like: Spiritual Beliefs and Reframes, Spiritual and Religious Coping, Spiritual and Religious Struggles, and Sacred Verses.

**Rhyia Bibby (she/her/hers)**

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