

Pointers for Parents

Youth Around The World See Spirituality As Important, Want To Talk About It

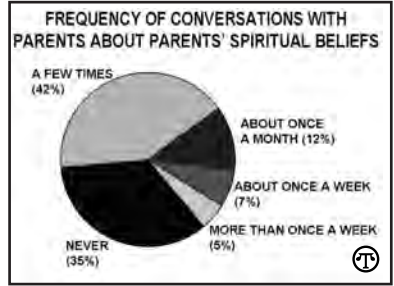
(NAPSA)—The vast majority of today's young people believe in a spiritual dimension to life, though most have few opportunities to talk about it, according to a new global study.

The study, conducted by U.S.-based Search Institute, involved surveys, focus groups and interviews with 7,000 youths between the ages of 12 to 25 in 17 countries. Researchers from the Institute's Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence found that 93 percent of the young people surveyed believe life has a spiritual dimension.

When researchers asked young people to define what it means to be spiritual, they were most likely to say it involves believing in God (36 percent), believing there is a purpose in life (32 percent) or being true to one's inner self (26 percent). In addition, most young people see themselves as being spiritual (57 percent).

"Helping young people develop a positive sense of purpose, a sense of connectedness to something larger than themselves and a commitment to living with integrity is a core part of growing up," said Gene Roehlkepartain, co-director of the Center for Spiritual Development. "These aspects of spiritual development are important for all young people, whether or not they consider themselves to be religious."

Despite young people's interest in spirituality, few have opportunities to explore it. Only one-third of the youth surveyed said they talk regularly with their friends or parents about spiritual issues. And one in five says "no one" helps them develop spiritually.



However, these conversations can be difficult. As a 17-year-old girl from the United States stated in a focus group, "I know lots of people in my life are deeply spiritual, but I feel like that's something that's private—and I don't see that side of them." In addition, open communication requires a level of trust, honesty and respect that can be hard to find.

"Too many youths are being left on their own to sort through these issues," Roehlkepartain said. "We hope this research encourages parents, grandparents, youth workers, educators and others to invite young people to explore their own experiences, questions and priorities. Doing so will not only help deepen young people's own spiritual lives, but will enrich relationships across generations."

Supported by the John Templeton Foundation, the study is part of Search Institute's mission to provide leadership, knowledge and resources to promote healthy children, youths and communities. The 50-year-old nonprofit organization, based in Minneapolis, mobilizes and equips all aspects of society to help young people grow up successfully. For more information on the study, please visit www.spiritualdevelopmentcenter.org.