Recent literature highlights the importance of tending holistically to the body, the mind, and the spirit as a means of cultivating good health and wellbeing (Chan et al., 2014; Ho, Sing, & Wong, 2016; Mate, 2004; Northrup, 2016; Rankin, 2013). Outside of traditional spiritual self-care practices, such as prayer, there can be ambiguity about what spirituality means and how individuals can practice spiritual self-care. Since an increasing number of Canadians are reportedly identifying as spiritual rather than religious, it seems pertinent to explore the ways individuals uniquely understand spirituality and practice spiritual self-care (Carlson, 2012).

This inquiry explores the ways individuals uniquely understand spirituality and practice spiritual self-care as part of a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. The two specific questions guiding this inquiry were as follows: 1) What is the meaning of spirituality for those who practice holistic self-care? 2) How is this understanding of spirituality incorporated into a spiritual self-care practice? This research aims to expand conceptions of spirituality and enhance motivation for engaging in spiritual self-care practices.

Current literature serves to mitigate ambiguity by articulating the ways her spiritual self-care practice enabled her to find 'emergence through emergencies'. After analyzing each participant’s experience with spiritual self-care practices, commonalities were noted, and nine overarching themes emerged from the data analysis. The reported pre-requisites to spiritual self-care included childhood exposure to spirituality, creating space for practice, finding effective mentors, and reducing barriers to practice. The described unique features of spiritual self-care included recognition of this practice being in a perpetual state of fluidity and evolution, as well as having a ‘mycelial’, or deeply integrated, quality. The data suggests the impact of spiritual self-care practice includes generating a sense of groundedness and clarity, an ability to serve the self and others well, the cultivation of a humble posture of offering, as well as generating the ability to develop trust and endure suffering.

Each participant reflected on their unique conceptions of spirituality and described their personalized spiritual self-care practices. One participant conceived of spiritual self-care practices as a means of ‘retreating to transform’, another found ‘pause in the wilderness’, the third described her practices as building ‘mycelial architecture’, and the final participant articulated the ways her spiritual self-care practice enabled her to find ‘emergence through emergencies’.

The findings also support the importance of integrating discussions about spirituality and spiritual self-care practices into the therapeutic setting—"for clients and practitioners" (Johnson, 2003; Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Pargament, 2007; Post & Wade, 2009; Sprey, 2016). The findings suggest that spirituality supports an individual’s response to the stresses in life by serving as a distinct resource for living and by making the implicit explicit.