

# Ep 5 Six Ways to Care for Our Spirits in Difficult Times

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

spirit, includes, prayer, people, spirituality, wellness, thoughts, nourishes, black women, power, journaling, gifts, podcast, community, day, spiritual, continue, connect, meditation, feel

## SPEAKERS

TaReon Fernandez

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- T** TaReon Fernandez 00:10  
Welcome to the Wellness for Black Girls podcast, a bi-weekly podcast that aims to empower millennial Black Women on their holistic health journeys by moving through the dimensions of wellness. I'm your host, TaReon Jael, a Certified Health Educator and Clinical Lab Scientist. For more information, please visit [wellnessforblackgirls.com](https://wellnessforblackgirls.com). While I hope you enjoy listening to and learning from the podcast, please remember that it is not intended to be a substitute for a relationship with a licensed healthcare provider. Now let's get into this episode.
- T** TaReon Fernandez 01:00  
Thank you for joining me today for episode number five of the Wellness for Black Girls podcast. So, how are you doing? That's the question we've been hearing a lot of lately. And we've been letting people know that, "We are not okay." There's so much going on in the world right now. Is it me or are things starting to feel like the new normal? It's been months since the pandemic started. It no longer seems strange to see people out and about with face masks on. And you all know that I work in a reference laboratory. So, at work, we're still running several hundreds of COVID tests each day. Trump is still in the White House, throwing tantrums just about every day, which is not new...it's just the norm. And sadly, we've witnessed the wrongful death of another Black Man at the hands of law

enforcement. We're seeing the protests and riots that have taken place afterwards. Tensions are high. And we're all feeling the weight of it in one way or another. For me, as a Black Woman, in the words of Fannie Lou Hamer, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired." And I know that there are many others who feel the same. So what do we do when we feel like this? What can we do to take care of ourselves while also taking action? This is the time to continue practicing self care, which for many of us, includes leaning on our faith. Research has found that Black Women rely on religion and spirituality to cope with many, if not all aspects of their lives, including navigating issues of race, class and gender oppression. And by doing so, we tend to our spiritual wellness.

**T** TaReon Fernandez 03:08

Spiritual wellness is a broad concept that is not easily defined, but we know that it encompasses one's personal beliefs and values, as well as, the search for meaning, purpose, balance and peace. It also includes an appreciation for life. For many Black Women, health and wellness naturally includes faith, spirit and spirituality. Dr. Gloria Wade-Gales writes, "Spirit, or spirituality, defies definition—a fact that speaks to its power as much as it reflects its mystery. Like the wind, it cannot be seen, and yet, like the wind, it is surely there, and we bear witness to its presence, its power. We cannot hold it in our hands and put it on a scale, but we feel the weight, the force, of its influence in our lives. We cannot hear it, but we hear ourselves speaking and singing and testifying because it moves, inspires, and directs us to do so."

**T** TaReon Fernandez 04:24

And authors Eleanor Hinton Hoytt and Hilary Beard, write that, "a deep and abiding spirituality resides at the heart of Black People's existence in America. Our ancestors clung to it as they endured the Middle Passage. Our enslaved forebears rooted in it as they stood on auction blocks, endured back-breaking labor, and had their children taken away from them, yet survived. Our parents and grandparents used it to summon the courage to orchestrate the Civil Rights movement..." And I would add, that we continue to tap into this spirituality to carry on in the pursuit of social justice through Black Lives Matter movement, and others like it.

**T** TaReon Fernandez 05:13

So you already know I have some research data to share on this topic. Dr. Carolyn Aldwin and her team of researchers at Oregon State University found that "religiousness, including formal religious affiliation, and service attendance, is associated with better health habits and spiritual practices, including meditation and private prayer, help

regulate emotions, which brings about positive physiological effects. In various studies these physiological effects include lower blood pressure, decreased depression, better immune function, and lower overall stress levels.

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TaReon Fernandez 05:59

Now, I want to share six ways to care for our spiritual wellness during difficult times. The first way is to do a self assessment. So, doing this, we will periodically assess how we're currently feeling in our spirit. We can start by asking ourselves questions like, what are my values, beliefs and principles? And where did they come from? In what ways am I nourishing my spirit? In what areas is my spirit malnourished? And is my soul hungry to connect with others that share my faith? Once we assess where we're at spiritually, then we can modify our spiritual practices when we need to. The second way is through prayer. For me, this is taking the time to communicate and commune with God. For others it may be communicating with whatever spiritual force they acknowledge. Sometimes we find ourselves rushing through the day without taking the time to connect with God, but many of us know that taking the time to pray, nourishes our spirit. If we're working to get back into our prayer ritual it can be beneficial to devote some time each day, whether in the morning, throughout the day, or in the evening for prayer. And during those times, when we give ourselves over fully to prayer, it can be restorative and grounding.

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TaReon Fernandez 07:37

The third way is through meditation. Meditation is part of many spiritual traditions. This is when we take time to listen to God or higher power. This is when we take a few minutes to be still and allow ourselves to be open to the gentle urgings in our spirit. Dr. Emilie M. Townes, the Dean of Vanderbilt University's Divinity School states that, "During our waking hours we need to take time in our days to stop-to unplug whatever task we're doing and seek even as little as 10 to 15 minutes of centering ourselves with listening deep within and outside of us...it could be listening for God or a higher power, regardless of what we call it, taking time to pray and meditate can provide the peace that often eludes us."

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TaReon Fernandez 08:38

The fourth way is through journaling. So a lot of times we can find ourselves caught up in our thoughts and all of the things on our to do list. And when that happens, we can feel out of balance and feel as if we're lost in a swirl of thoughts and emotions. This makes it difficult to think clearly, be productive and find peace. Journaling gives us a place to get those thoughts out of our heads and onto the journal page. It gives us a place to air out and work through our frustrations, fears, joys, hopes and thoughts. Oftentimes, we, as

Black Women, don't feel safe to express ourselves openly. So journaling can act as that safe place. I know for some journaling can seem like another thing on the to do list, but it doesn't have to be. Simply start by grabbing a regular piece of notebook paper or a clean sheet of paper and a pen or pencil and just start writing out whatever thoughts come up. Don't worry about neat handwriting, or writing in a straight line or proper grammar and punctuation. Just let the thoughts flow.

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TaReon Fernandez 10:00

The fifth way is to connect with spirit in community. In modern western culture, there is more emphasis on self, but people of African descent have roots in a more communal worldview. Author, Sobonfu Some, "defines community as an environment where a group of people are empowered by one another, by spirit, and by the ancestors, to be themselves, carry out their purpose and use their power responsibly." As a people, we're stronger when we have a safe place to share our lives with one another. In community, we find a place to connect intellectually through conversations, socially and emotionally by being a source of social support for one another, and spiritually through collective prayer and in linking arms and lifting our voices for a cause we believe in.

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TaReon Fernandez 11:05

So this brings me to the six way service through activism. The thing I want to say about this tip is that self care, which we know includes caring for our spirits, and activism are connected. We have to take care of ourselves in mind, body, and spirit, in order to have the clarity, energy, strength, power, and resilience needed to continue working towards the change we want to see. Being of service to others, and being activists nourishes our spirit, by awakening our sense of purpose, and reminding us that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. Now, I want to make it clear that this isn't about overextending ourselves or sacrificing ourselves to serve others more. This is service from a spiritual perspective that gives us as Black Women, a place to bring forth our gifts and talents and see the manifestation of our ability to be change agents. There are many opportunities to use our gifts and talents. There are those that boldly speak up for truth and show up to march in peaceful protests. There are those that are skilled strategists and administrators who organize, manage and facilitate events and keep the movement going behind the scenes. There are those who possess an understanding of policy and law, who lobby for policy change, defend the innocent, educate voters, and even step into political roles to represent their community. There are those who make their artistry available to shine light on the movement and share stories of the oppressed. These are the painters, sculptors, photographers, filmmakers, musicians, dancers, writers, and thespians. And there are those parents, teachers and mentors who are nurturing, teaching and reminding the youth

that their lives matter. And there are those who are great communicators and orators who are gifted at inspiring and encouraging people to join in the cause, and to continue pressing forward with their words. And the thing is, we can all be agents for change by simply showing up in everyday places, like work, school, or at home or when we're out and about in other places. This is when we choose to "show up" and speak up for truth whenever we see or hear about bigotry and injustices. And this is also choosing to "show up" and vote, not just in the big elections, but also in the smaller elections.

 TaReon Fernandez 14:07

So as a quick recap, the six ways to care for our spirits during difficult times include periodically assessing how we're feeling spiritually, spending time communicating with God or higher power in prayer, and then taking time to listen in meditation, and through journaling. We can also care for our spirit by connecting with others in community and by using our gifts and talents to be agents for change.

 TaReon Fernandez 14:40

Thank you for tuning into today's episode. I hope I was able to share some useful tips to help you tend to your spiritual wellness during this time. Many of us are taking action like we've never done before. And so we want to be sure to stay in sync with the spirit by practicing self care while being agents for change. Be sure to head to [wellnessforblackgirls.com](https://wellnessforblackgirls.com) and click on episode number five for the show notes. There you'll find the links to references and resources and a transcript of the episode. If you want to keep up with the podcast on social media, you can follow the podcast on Instagram @wellness4blackgirls and you can follow my personal IG page @tareonjael. And together we'll continue moving through the dimensions of wellness.