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For years, Harry Moseley suffered from a brain tumor. He was just [11 years old](#) when he died October 9, 2011. In the years before his death, he devoted himself to raising money for research after an adult friend of his died from the same affliction. Inspiring multitudes and raising over £500,000 (\$779,817) for Cancer Research UK, earning the title of "Britain's Kindest Kid," Harry championed his cause by selling bracelets and reaching out to people over the Web through his [Website](#) and [Twitter account](#).

In August, Harry slipped into a coma after an unsuccessful tumor surgery. The call for prayers spread on the Internet, and many tweeted that they were praying for Harry. But some people tweeted as follows: "Please add #WakeUpHarry to your tweet for @harry_moseley who is fighting for his life in a coma. Thanks." Unfortunately, Harry never did wake up.

The idea of tweeting one's wishes for recovery may be rooted in some of the benefits people see in praying, which are often described in psychological rather than theological terms. For instance, [the University of Minnesota](#) offers a list of explanations for the efficacy of prayer, none of which involve miraculous intervention:

- **The relaxation response** - prayer elicits the relaxation response, which lowers blood pressure and other factors heightened by stress.
- **Secondary control** - prayer releases control to something greater than oneself, which can reduce the stress of needing to be in charge.
- **The placebo response** - prayer can enhance a person's hopes and expectations and that in turn can positively impact health.
- **Healing presence** - prayer can bring a sense of a spiritual or loving presence and alignment with God or an immersion into a universal unconsciousness.
- **Positive feelings** - prayer can elicit feelings of gratitude, compassion, forgiveness, and hope, all of which are associated with healing and wellness.
- **Mind-body-spirit connection** - when prayer uplifts or calms, it inhibits the release of cortisol and other hormones, thus reducing the negative impact of stress on the immune system and promoting healing.

Given that none of these factors are predicated on the response of a deity, it seems possible to attain the same end through other means that establish a feeling of connection. Those means now include social media.

In a blog post entitled "[How Communication Creates Meaning -- has Twitter replaced prayer?](#)," David Windle accounts for what he calls "The Twitter God." He explains how people can tap into feeling a part of some greater connection through social media: "Twitter gives the illusion that you're being listened to. Through social media we create communication bubbles; massive conversational meshes which couch us in a sense of meaning, and the comforting notion that you exist somewhere beyond the realm of your own immediate self." Windle sees social media as filling the void left when people cannot tap into traditional religious expressions of prayer: "We all need to believe in something bigger than ourselves, and communication facilitates this. Even if that bigger thing is only 'yourself as part a chorus of online chatter.'"

The hashtag reaches out to others for affirmation and meaning in place of prayer. It resembles Peter Pan's turning to the audience with, "If you believe in fairies, clap your hands!" to bring Tinkerbell back to life.

Instead of clapping, one expresses one's hope in hashtags. One has to actually have faith in the efficacy of the hashtags themselves as representations of "something greater than oneself" that relieves the burden from the individual.