

Practical Pastoral Care for Emergencies: Bringing Spiritual Healing into Times of Distress

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Trauma Talk

- The Brain Processes Sensory Data into Memories
 - o Long-Term, Short-Term, Trauma
 - o Processing is Based on Stress Levels
 - o Traumatic Memory is a Survival Mechanism
 - Trauma: Fight, Flight, Freeze, Faint
 - Triggers of Responses Based on Similar Stimuli
 - Little to No Associated Memory
 - o Shock
 - Traumatic Experience Overwhelms Rational Thinking & Sensory Recognition
 - o Unresolved Traumatic Process
 - Information from Traumatic Event Lost
 - Only Trigger & Survival Response Remains
 - o Resolved Traumatic Process
 - Memories Develop
 - Resilience to Emotional Instability Develops
- Ref: Rev. Dr. Skye Kirshner. Director KPCC (Retired)

The Goal: "The goal of Spiritual Care is Praxis: the healthy integration of faith and lived experience into daily life. A person growing, adapting to, and accepting the present reality."

Basic Tools for Offering Spiritual Care

- Reflective (Active) Listening
 - o Repeating Statements (Rephrasing)
 - o Clarifying Questions (Open-Ended)
 - o Moderated Self-Disclosure
 - Seed Stories
- Non-Anxious Presence
 - o Be Aware and Tailor
 - Facial Expressions
 - Body Language (Posture)
 - Seek Eye Level
 - o Don't Display Discomfort at their Emotional State
 - o Don't Display Anxiousness
 - o Don't Preach (NO Apologetics)
- Semi-Permeable Emotional Boundaries
 - o Remain Grounded while Offering Support
 - o Don't Use Them to Satisfy Emotional Needs
 - o Don't Use Them as Your Counselor
 - o Walk in with a Calming Demeanor
 - o Remain Emotionally Objective
 - Don't Feel Their Emotions for Them

- Semi-Permeable Emotional Boundaries (Cont.)
 - o Don't Invalidate Their Feelings or Experiences
 - o Do Not Let Care Visit Move Past 1 Hour's Length
- Guided Reflection (Develop Own Conclusions)
 - o Reflection on Experience
 - o Reflection on Circumstance
 - o Reflection of Scripture
 - (Ex. Rom. 8:38-39)
- Mindfulness Centering (Traumatic Reaction)
 - o "Find My Eyes" Technique
 - Get Eye Level with Care Seeker
 - Say "Find my eyes..." Slowly
 - Wait for Their Attention
 - Remain Calm
 - o Deep Breathing Exercises
 - Call Their Attention to Breath
 - Start with the Current Speed
 - Gradually Slow the Rate
 - Allow the Reaction to Pass
- Prayer Craft
 - o Let Them Voice Their Prayer Requests
 - Ask "Anything Else"
 - o Include Elements from Conversation
 - o Use Their Verbiage
 - o Let Them Hear that You Listened
- Referral
 - o If Unavailable, Check for CPE Educated Chaplains (Non-Proselytizing)
 - o If in Hospital, Communicate any Emotional Needs or Concerns to Care Staff
 - o If Conversation Becomes Repetitive and Emotional State Cycles (Bad – Good – Bad), Consider a Referral
 - o If Pastoral Counseling (Not Premarital), Refer to a Therapist after 3 Sessions
 - o Have a Directory of Trusted Faith-Affirming Care Providers Available

Platitudes to Avoid:

These are statements that can accidentally invalidate what the care seeker is going through or can set you up as an enemy instead of a care giver. If this is the conclusion they reach, it's ok. They are just not ideas that we should force on them in moments of pain or in an emotionally volatile situation.

Spiritual Care Resources:

Capps, Donald. *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Pub., 2003.

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Fowler, James W. *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1989.

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Kirkwood, Neville A. *Pastoral Care in Hospitals*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Pub., 2005.

Nowen, Henri. *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. Kindleed. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1972.

Roberts, Stephen, and Ashley W. C. Willard. *Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy*. Nashville, TN: Skylight Paths, 2017.

Savage, John S. *Listening and Caring Skills: A Guide for Groups and Leaders*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Switzer, David K. *Pastoral Care Emergencies*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, Alternate Formats Library, 2015.

Woodard, Whit. *Ministry of Presence: Biblical Insight on Christian Chaplaincy*. North Fort Myers, FL: Faithful Life, 2011.

Wright, H. Norman. *The Complete Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling: What to Do and Say When It Matters Most!* Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2014.

Pastoral Care Referrals:

Rev. Gregory Creasy. Director: Dpt. of Spiritual Care and Mission, St. Mary's Medical Ctr. (Huntington, WV)

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