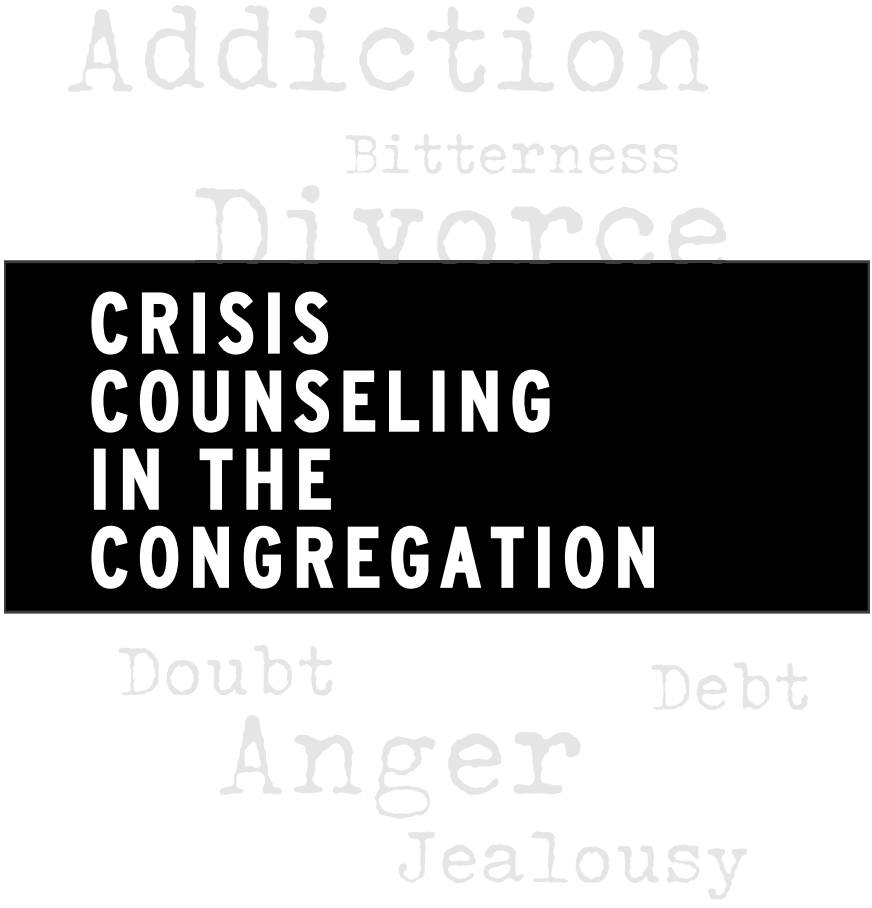
CRISIS COUNSELING IN THE CONGREGATION



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Introduction

Every new truth which has ever been propounded has, for a time, caused mischief; it has produced discomfort and often unhappiness; sometimes disturbing social and religious arrangements, and sometimes merely by the disruption of old and cherished associations of thoughts. . . . And if the truth is very great as well as very new, the harm is serious.
Henry Thomas Buckle, British historian

In a day when new books appear faster than we can keep up, and other media overwhelm us with information, it seems necessary to provide a rationale for yet another book. This volume comes out of a concern for pastors in the many congregations of all sizes and denominations. It also comes from a desire to support those pastors and their congregations in responding to the regular and episodic challenges of living together in community, especially the faith community.

I remember vividly my own first encounters in ministry, more than fifty years ago. Like many pastors, I was asked to be a student pastor while completing my college studies. Though motivated to be in ministry, and pleased to be asked by my District Superintendent, I was scarcely aware of my lack of competency. As is the case with most of us, I did not know in advance the skills I would need until the occasion for their use appeared. A request from a church family to do the funeral for their relative, a distant uncle, made me aware that I had no idea what to do, to say, or not to do. I had never attended a funeral up to that time. My Superintendent became my coach. I made it through. In fact, the family

later said I was one of the few people who ever said nice things about their uncle. At that point I made a note to learn more about families before trying to serve them and, when I had little information, to be nice. A young college couple asked me to conduct (celebrate) their marriage. Being single at the time, I knew nothing about preparation for marriage or the wedding. Some reading and some further coaching pulled me through. After fifty years they are still married, though I won't take credit for that success. On and on the stories could go about the first times for each needed competency. One benefit of these early experiences was the increased motivation to learn, practice, and continuously improve these skills, and others, that are so common to all pastoral ministries.

Even after earning several degrees in higher education, I find my desire to improve my abilities to help others unrequited. It is also clear that the world has changed in significant ways in the last few decades, and those changes have increased the performance expectations for ministers to be a resource for complicated and challenging human issues. A few decades ago a crisis was anything that might surprise us, an event for which we were not prepared. It would be nice if all problems wrapped in a person had clear ethical, psychological, and theological answers. If that were so, a single book would be the handbook for all clergy. For the latter part of this last decade, and probably for much of the next century, the word *crisis* will mean something larger, more frightening, and often deadening. In cities and large metropolitan areas the resources exist to have numerous crisis response organizations. In spite of those resources small-membership churches have played a part in response. After the disaster of 9/11 in New York City, small-membership churches formed an integral link to the community. The churches became respite centers for first responders, and prayer centers for neighborhoods, workers, and passersby. They became listening centers where volunteers listened to the stories of

thousands impacted by the tragedy. They became feeding centers when all food services were closed. They became all-night way stations for people who could not sleep in their homes due to their fears. Perhaps, and hopefully, the 9/11 attacks were an anomaly. We may never need to mobilize caring in such an immense way again. But it is likely something else will take its place. Crisis is defined by the people experiencing it. It may be a threat to life, property, family, jobs, environment, health, or something else. Needs change, people's expectations change, and we change.

This book is an attempt at providing some basics in full recognition of the complexities of life. For those pastors whose preparation for ministry has not included training in pastoral counseling, or those who have found the training only a foundation for what their ministry requires, this volume should add useful, practical tools.

There are numerous books available in the field of pastoral counseling. I would recommend you read many of them, for each has some insight or knowledge from which you will benefit. Many books on psychotherapy contain powerful models from which to understand the issues presented by your parishioners. But pastoral counseling is more than psychotherapy, while using its tools. Pastoral counseling is set in the context of faith, a loving God, and a community. Though this book may cover some of the same subjects as others, it will focus on a set of core competencies needed to provide the pastoral care you want to offer. It will also include explicit examples of needs that arise in the parish and how they may be met.

Pastors often feel alone in their ministry, with demands exceeding their resources. Many books on pastoral counseling assume the reader is engaged in a full-time practice of therapy. The pastor wears many hats, with counseling being but one. This book will help you with new resources and, perhaps, a sense that you are not alone but in a large company of other pastors facing similar issues each day.

Having been a pastor, a marriage and family therapist, a crisis response chaplain, a psychological screener of candidates for ministry, a trainer of clergy, a consultant to churches with pastoral issues, and a coach to pastors desiring to improve their effectiveness, I have yet to find a person who chose the ministry because they just thought it seemed like a good idea at the time. Each pastor, in my experience, has had a meaningful, if not profound, desire to serve others through the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Even when candidates have had little idea of what would be required of them, they have felt strongly that they were led by God to love the people the best they could. Unfortunately not all candidates have, or have developed, the gifts required for effectiveness in crisis ministry. When they don't it can create great pain for the pastor and for a church. This book is for all those who followed the leading of the Spirit, their own personal call, and later found themselves with the need for more knowledge and skills to address the needs of the people of God.

There is no requirement of ministry, or human ability, to be all things to all people, so it is important to know how to build a resource network to supplement the pastor's skills, knowledge, and time. It is not only important, a resource network is critical to prevent your own burnout.

This book covers the core competencies, skills, and knowledge available to and needed by a local pastor for counseling people with the issues most likely to be addressed. Each competency is described, illustrated, and accompanied by practice exercises to build confidence. Each counseling issue is described, clarified, illustrated, and related to the appropriate skills. Both competencies and issues are focused in the context of a single-pastor church with potentially limited resources.

This book relies upon proven experience and knowledge of brief psychotherapies, interpersonal dynamics, in-depth listening competencies, and the relationship between pastoral personalities and pastoral care. Much

of the content is not unique, in that it can be found in the writing and practice of professional therapists. What is unique is breaking the elements of professional practice down into the skills, knowledge, and practice that can be easily learned and used by pastors without formal therapeutic training.

This volume is not written for therapeutic professionals, certified pastoral counselors, or those with extensive counseling experience. It is not written for academic use. It is written as a guide for local pastors for regular reference and guidance in dealing with daily pastoral care requirements. It is not intended as a substitute for clinical pastoral education when that is available.

If, after reading, you feel better equipped to tackle the regular and episodic issues that come to you, the book will have fulfilled its mission.

All stories and illustrations in this book are composites to protect the privacy of individuals and churches while grounding the theoretical points they support. It is somewhat difficult to decide what term best describes a person receiving pastoral counseling. *Counselee*, *member*, *client*, and *patient* are all possibilities. Since not all who receive this ministry are church members, I have dropped that choice. The term *patient* has some merit but invokes a medical environment. The term *client* has a tendency to invoke a paying-for-service image. *Counselee* seems a little stilted for our use but has less baggage than the others and so it is my choice to refer to anyone receiving the ministry of pastoral counseling whether in a formal office setting or an informal encounter.

Chapter One

Pastoral Expectations and Pastoral Performance in Crises

Many a man would rather you heard his story
than granted his request.
Philip Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield

As you move from church to church through your ministry, you begin to discover that expectations of a pastor vary among churches. In addition, you discover that expectations vary among the people in any church. It is a temptation to hold yourself accountable to all the expectations as you encounter them, but trying to be "all things to all people" is a sure way to generate personal burnout and a clear way to diminish your effectiveness in most things.

In an informal survey of several churches my firm asked lay members to list the top ten expectations of their pastor. The results were typical and included preaching, teaching, working with children or youth, visiting the sick, and performing marriages and funerals. In following up when those churches had a problem with a pastor, we found that none of the top ten was identified as the issue. As a consultant to churches, I have found that lack of clarity in expectations often becomes part of the problem. The phrase, "I am not sure what I expect, but I will know it when it is not there," seems to be frequent. What is very clear is that few people will come to their pastor for counsel if they have little trust in the person. I have yet to hear a congregation say, "We want our pastor to be good at handling crises." They don't say it, but they hope it. A crisis occurs as an internal response to an external hazardous event. The internal response may be one of fear, grief, and loss of meaning or hopelessness. The expectation is that a pastor will somehow understand what is happening and provide some assurance that there is light beyond this darkness. When pastors are accessible and responsive during individual and family crises, they earn the trust of their congregation. So, regardless of all the expectations, underlying all pastoral tasks is the challenge of developing trust with people. When there exists a high level of trust, people tend to forgive errors or look beyond omissions in ministry. When trust is low, they begin to make negative assumptions about what is going on. Most members do not expect perfection. They do expect accessibility, confidence, and competence. As for crisis, if a person or family says they have a crisis, they probably do. It is irrelevant if you or I think it is overstated, because they are in the midst of it and we are not.

Howard Clinebell and David Switzer have defined a method of pastoral crisis intervention called the ABC method. (A) *Achieve* contact

with the person; (B) *Boil* down the problem to its essentials; and (C) *Cope* actively with the problem. Later we discuss the attitude and skills to maintain contact, to listen in a way that gets the person to tell his or her story, and then to lead that person through designing his or her own solution. Pastoral crisis intervention is often to individuals and families and includes most of the typical issues of family crises. Sometimes the crisis involves the whole community due to a tornado, a blizzard, a forest fire, a kidnapping, an accident of a school bus killing numerous students, or other tragic event. These are not, to a large extent, predictable and do not occur with regularity, but when they do occur the pastor and the church can mobilize as wounded healers, taking care of others while caring for themselves.

A church located at a rural crossroads in an area with zero population growth and some out-migration of young adults is not likely to expect to become a mega-church. It is likely to expect a pastor to be their chaplain, to be on call for illness, family crises, deaths, hospital stays, and shut-in care. If a pastor ministers in those times of uncertainty by bringing a calm reassurance, people will not rebel when a sermon just doesn't come together.

Much of what we call pastoral counseling is carried on outside the formal setting of office appointments. It can be a short interaction in almost any setting. It can take place over lunch or by a hospital bed or on someone's porch or out in the barn. It is what takes place in the interaction and not the location that is the issue. A pastor with whom I was asked to work was in trouble for a cluster of missed opportunities for ministry. He chose to go to a meeting instead of visiting a grandmother during the last hours of her life. He was late for the wedding of the daughter of a prominent church family. He missed several office appointments and, while lost in thought, failed to say hello to people he met in the halls of the church.

When asked about the reported incidents, he voiced a reason for each, but that was not the issue. The issue was that he thought his reasons were more important than the ministry that was presented. We all have moments of forgetfulness. We all get distracted or neglect to note a commitment. But it is of utmost importance what we do when we realize our error. We have a chance for redemption, if the issue was not overwhelmingly sensitive or if it was not the last of a series of issues that tried the patience of your people.

The Pinch Theory

Effectiveness in ministry begins with gathering information about your congregation and clarifying its expectations. It also involves sharing information about yourself and clarifying your expectation of the congregation. This becomes the basis for establishing what I call an "interpersonal contract." A model for such a contract is called the "Pinch Theory." The model is easy to understand, and people like both the idea and its simplicity.

I will describe the model and how you can use it to get off on the right foot with any congregation or in any relationship. All relationships begin with sharing information and clarifying expectations, whether it is meeting a potential new friend, going to a new physician, or visiting a new church. All of the people are asking questions of each other and sharing their own experiences while beginning to form some clarity about what a future relationship would be like. Ask people what they did on a first date or when they sought a new job or when they met a new neighbor. They will most likely say they "talked." And if you push a little further, you will find they asked basic questions such as, "Where did you grow up?" "How

long have you lived here?" "What are your favorite recreation activities?" Another thing you will note is that the answers remind you of similar experiences that prompt you to share your own story. The purpose of storytelling and listening is to find points of connection and meaning and to determine if this potential relationship has a future.

Let's take the experience of a visitor to your church: "Do you have a nursery for young children? Is there a group of young couples? How many high-school-age youth are in your church?" These and other searching questions are based in the person's inner map of what a church that would meet their needs might be like. The answers they hear may lead to further exploration or to their searching elsewhere. Let's suppose that they liked the answers they heard and that the person listening to their questions also inquired about what their best experience in a previous church was like. This dialogue would form the basis of the "interpersonal contract" referred to earlier. The interaction would also provide clues as to the church's interest in caring for others. When inquiring people hear enough of what they are seeking, they are ready to commit to that relationship. If it is conversation on a first date, it might then provide confidence to say yes to a second date. If it is a visit to a church, it might lead to a second visit or a positive response to the offer to learn more about the church.

The interpersonal contract is most often an implied agreement and is usually not understood by the participants even though it is powerfully influencing their decisions. Why is it that some people will visit a church several times and then not come back? Why is it that some couples will date several times and then call it off? Why do some young adults go off to the college of their choice after much searching only to want to quit and come home after a few days or weeks? The answer to these questions is in the interpersonal contract. When we make a

decision to enter a relationship, it is based on the expectations we have at the moment about what we can expect of others and what they will expect of us. Unfortunately, no matter how many questions we ask, something will always come up that we did not expect or something we did expect does not happen. This moment is called a "pinch." This is where clarifying expectations comes in, and where reality hits us. No matter how many questions we ask, how much time we spend, how clear the contract is, there will always be some experience in which what we expected does not happen or something we did not expect to happen does. So, if this is always the case, how do we increase the likelihood that relationships will succeed and continue for an extended time? The answer is found in a simple process called the Pinch Theory.[1] (See p. 8.)

The Pinch Theory says that when entering a new relationship—such as going to college, going on a date, joining a new church, seeing the pastor for counseling—each relationship should begin with two things. First, the more important the relationship, the more time should be spent in sharing information and clarifying expectations. Second, a contract should be entered that says:

> I know that we have talked and clarified expectations a lot, but I also know that sometime in the next few months I am likely to do something, or not do something, that surprises or disappoints you. Likewise, I expect that you might do something or not do something that disrupts my understanding of you and my expectations. From experience I know this will happen. I just do not know in advance when. Therefore, I want an agreement with you, a contract, that *when* such a disrupted expectation (Pinch) occurs, whoever feels it first will call a meeting, no matter how

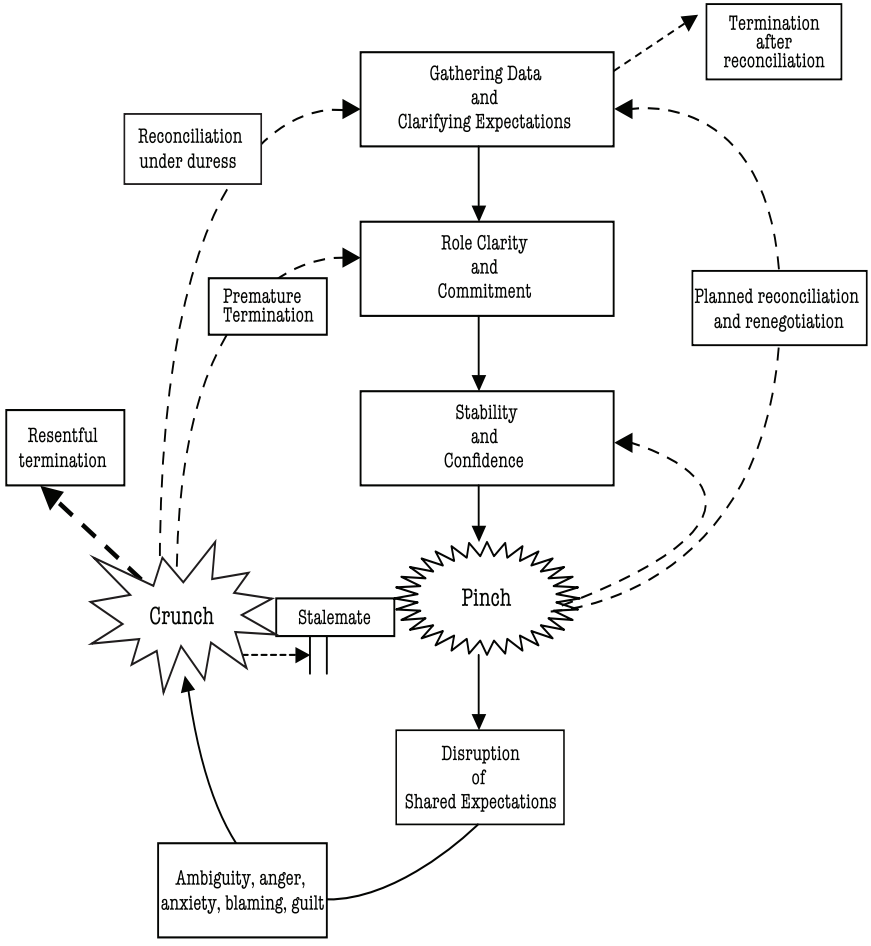
small the issue might seem. Then we will sit down and clarify and update our expectations with each other. That way we can keep our relationship open and healthy.

The interpersonal contract is a powerful process for pastors to establish with their church. It sets the stage for clarifying expectations, for establishing a norm of openness, and for setting aside the unquestioned assumptions of perfection, should they exist. Most of all, it provides an up-front arrangement to sort out little things before they become large.

Let's look at relationships over a longer period of time through the model of the Pinch Theory.

1. If your relationships begin with an honest effort to know the other person or persons, and you are also clear about sharing your self-knowledge and expectations, it is likely the relationship will be productive for both parties. When we have role clarity, commitment develops in the context of the relationship as we know it or understand it. The more clarity, the happier the relationship. The more unchecked assumptions, the faster an issue may arise.
2. If role clarity and commitment are achieved, a period of stability and confidence follows. We experience just what we thought we would. So the new church member experiences just what he or she expected due to gaining clarity about expectations up front.
3. However, we know that, even with an extended conversation, not all expectations will be clarified, or some may change. When disrupted expectations occur, they are experienced by one or the other in the relationship as a "pinch" (a brief moment of pain caused by the pressure of a disrupted expectation).

The Pinch Theory



Adapted from "A Model for Couples: How Two Can Grow Together" by J. J. Sherwood and J. J. Scherer, Journal for Small Group Behavior *(February 1976). Originally "Planned Renegotiation," by J. Glidewell and J. Sherwood in* The 1973 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators *(University Associates Publishers, La Jolla, CA, 1973), page 195.*

4. If a meeting is called, as the contract indicated, the pinch is often resolved and a further period of stability ensues. If a meeting is not called, several things may occur. The pinched party may assume he or she just misunderstood and the disruption will not likely occur again. That may be correct, but often it is only a matter of time before the unclarified expectation is violated again. If a meeting is called, the difference of expectation and experience may be renegotiated or not. If renegotiated, the relationship can move on to further effectiveness. If not, the relationship may be withdrawn or terminated.
5. In relationships in which this phenomenon is not understood, and relationships are not open to talk about expectations, a series of pinches can be expected to occur until the pain of continuing brings the parties to try to deal with it or separate. Pinches that accumulate without resolution are called "crunch."
6. When people feel a crunch, they usually experience the following:
    a. Ambiguity
    b. Anxiety
    c. Blaming
    d. Guilt
    e. Feeling stuck
7. If the crunch is unnegotiated, several behaviors may result:
    a. Resentful termination (people go away feeling mad and dumb; mad because of the pain, and dumb because they do not know what they could have done differently)
    b. Premature reconciliation (which may lead to unnegotiated expectations and new pain)
    c. Reconciliation under duress (when one party "gives in" to the other without any basic change, the peace will likely not last long)

d. Stalemate (people may get stuck for lack of skills to sort things out, or for external factors such as not enough financial resources to separate).

The previous diagram visualizes the pinch process. Without clarity and renegotiation processes, people tend to get stuck, drop out, or become resentful. They leave a relationship, job, or a church angry without knowing what they could have done to make it different. It is important to note that even when relationships are renegotiated with openness and caring, they may still result in termination. When that occurs, however, the ending is quite different. Because of the renegotiation process, new clarity is achieved and what is nonnegotiable becomes visible. Then people can choose to end the relationship, quit the church, leave college, end a marriage, and so on, with knowledge of why the ending is appropriate. They then can go away feeling sad and smart, instead of mad and dumb, sad because the ending is occurring, but smart because they understand what was not negotiable in the relationship.

> Margaret sought a new church following a pastoral change at her previous church. She was fond of the comforting style of the previous pastor and also liked the style of music that prevailed in the worship services. When the pastoral change occurred, the new pastor was quite different—"more businesslike," as she described. Soon after the new pastor's arrival, the music changed to a style Margaret found difficult to worship in. Margaret at first described her discomfort to the new pastor and was informed that the church needed to change and it was doubtful they would go back to the "old" ways. So, hurt, sad, and angry, Margaret sought a new church. The one she found was somewhat like her old church—

same age congregation, similar activities, similar beliefs—and so she joined. What Margaret didn't do was clarify her expectations with the new church's pastor. As a result, after attending this new church for only five months, Margaret again felt out of place, hurt, and resentful, and became increasingly inactive. However, this story has a different ending. The pastor of Margaret's new church noted her slide into inactivity and called on her. She found him quite easy to talk with, and soon they talked about her expectations when she first attended and what had happened since. The pastor helped Margaret clarify the things that she had expected and which of those had happened and which had not. She admitted that the people were quite friendly and that she had found friends in an adult group. She also noted that the church used quite a variety of styles of music, some of which, though not all, included her favorites. Through this process of in-depth listening and clarifying, a new set of expectations was developed, which was more accurate with respect to what she could really expect. This allowed Margaret to return to active participation with a more hopeful, less painful experience. The pastor was also clear with Margaret that *when* she felt a "pinch" in the future, she was to call a "meeting" with the pastor to renegotiate or clarify expectations.

So creating clear expectations as a pastor, and then living them with transparency, creates an environment of trust and reduces unnecessary issues to resolve or conflicts to manage. Having an operative model, like the Pinch Theory, can help the pastor establish a base for all other aspects of ministry. By sharing this model with others, a climate for sorting out conflict can be created. This is both a counseling process and an organizational leadership process. Please note that renegotiating expectations

does not mean agreeing to everything another person expects. Some things may not be negotiable, but making clear what is and what is not negotiable enables a person to make an informed decision to stay or leave the relationship. When something that is stated to be important is clearly not negotiable, counseling can help the person holding that expectation sort out whether it is likely not realistic anywhere and, therefore, needs to be reconsidered. When people have a "pinch" and have no way to clarify the basis for their feelings or explore renegotiation, they usually end the relationship and go away feeling mad and dumb, mad because they are hurt and disappointed, and dumb because they have no idea what they could have done differently. When the Pinch Theory is an active process, parties may still decide to part company, but they then leave feeling sad but smart; sad because they wish the relationship had been able to meet their needs, but smart because they know why it doesn't work and can address those issues in a future relationship. It is helpful for pastors to realize that many new members come in with a history of unresolved pinches. Unless these are surfaced and renegotiated, they will not likely remain members. In addition, they may become a major source of conflict in the congregation.

With expectations clear, the next issue is performance. Performance, for pastors, is grounded in a cluster of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, or KSAs. Knowledge provides the context, skills demonstrate the behaviors, and attitudes influence the desired culture in which ministry takes place.

If we refer to the ministry of Jesus as a model, we note his knowledge of scripture, people, politics, and most of all the inner hopes of his disciples and his followers. His behaviors indicate skill in soothing fear and anxiety, an ability to heal those who had become desperate for relief, and a deft touch in relationships across ethnic and economic groups. We see his attitudes, including attention and awareness of his impact on others,

compassion for young and old, and acceptance of those rejected by others and those alienated by professions or power.

In pastoral care the trusting relationship begins with acceptance of the other, withholding our tendency to judge. One church I served had a member by the name of Tom. Tom and I lived on the other side of the universe from each other. Few issues arose in the church that found us agreeing on the same course to take. Tom disagreed with me on most things. He politely disagreed with my sermons, my social concerns, and my comments about the world in general. One day I said to Tom that I was concerned we always were in disagreement. I wanted to have a better relationship with him. Tom replied, "Pastor, I care about the church, and I know you will move on to some other church someday, but I will still be here caring for the church." That comment caused me to think about Tom differently. I noticed he always shared his disagreements in a clear but considerate way. He never criticized me as a person. When there was something to be done around the church, anything repaired, built, or moved, Tom was there. Tom was also present when we had mission projects, carrying more than his share of the work. The time did come for me to move on. When I was leaving, I said to Tom, "I've come to appreciate you as my loyal opposition, but I appreciate more your love for the church and your willingness to work on its behalf. I hope where I'm going I have opposition as gracious as you." Tom shook my hand in a way that said what words could not. I had made a friend.

An attitude of openness and caring needs support from the skills of in-depth listening, hearing the stories behind the stories. On numerous occasions a parishioner has said to me, "I have told you more in this hour than I have ever shared with anyone." That extended confidence is a sacred trust, one that is broken with the severest consequences. Though honored by these compliments, I usually responded that I am glad they could share what they needed to share.

Now let's place this in the context of pastoral counseling. The first visit of a counseling session should include clarification of expectations. Be clear about the role of counselor as listener, not as parent or judge. Do the counselees expect you to side with them against a spouse or other family member or church member? Are they looking for a political ally, or do they want to sort out their feelings about their situation with someone they trust to remain neutral? Pastors hear a lot. You can expect to hear more about what goes on in the lives of your people than you might want to know, but that is what a trust relationship is about. What you do with what you hear is the crux of pastoral counseling. One difficulty you might experience is the feeling you need to talk about what you have been hearing. An unbreakable rule—one whose breach is unforgivable—is that the pastor must never share what has been told in confidence. If you feel the burden is more than you can keep, you will need your own counselor as the safe place to share. In that context you have a sworn confidant to help you think through your ministry to those who have entrusted themselves to you.

Having just used the word *never* in my statement about revealing information, I need to add this caveat. The law in most states requires disclosure, even in the confidentiality of the pastoral relationship, if what you hear indicates the presence of child abuse, potential suicide, or murder. The greater need to protect others and the person from him or herself has precedence. Check your state's laws to be sure of your obligation. In addition, when a counselee starts to tell me of these matters, I may interrupt to establish that even though I will be with him or her in this issue, I am bound by law to report. This issue always puts the pastor in a bind. Loyalty to the counselee, the need to protect the person and others, and perhaps the fear that informing authorities will break off the counselee relationship all work to create stress and diminish your

effectiveness. I have experienced that gut-wrenching tension. A parishioner called to see if I would visit her at home since she was not feeling well. Within a few minutes one of her daughters called to say she thought her mother was attempting suicide. Before heading for the house, I called 911. The ambulance arrived before I did and transported her to the hospital. I visited her after she had her stomach pumped to remove the overdose she had taken. She was very angry with me for intervening. (She wasn't able to talk about her call to me, which was a cry for me to intervene, until some weeks later.) She did not want to live, she told me. My awareness of the meanings in desperate messages, and having it confirmed by one of her daughters, gave me assurance of the need to intervene. In the weeks ahead, as her health and emotional state improved, she reclaimed her desire to live. She thanked me several times over the years for preventing her from losing the years with her daughters and the other good things her life now contained. Hearing deep pain, understanding its meaning, and acting on it is the heart of pastoral counseling and pastoral care.

When I was ordained, my bishop told the group of new ordinands, "Just go and love the people and it will all be OK." That sounded simple enough, but love requires our full attention and all our gifts to be expressed in its many settings. Skill and knowledge driven by love in a person whose caring is transparent can be transformative in almost all churches.

The pinch model is an excellent tool for premarital counseling. When couples come to ask your participation in their marriage, you have their positive attention. They are in love and sometimes in love with being in love. They believe they will always feel this gushy feeling and that this person, whom they see through misty eyes, could never do anything that would ever hurt or disappoint them. The counselor can ease them into

some reality without breaking the spell of romance by sharing the pinch model. Be sure that in sharing it the emphasis is put on "when" a pinch occurs, not "if." Remind them not to be caught off guard or feel the whole marriage is gone if some expectation is disrupted. It happens to us all. The wonderful gift is that we can renegotiate, update our expectations, and move on. That is called growth in a marriage relationship. The surest way to mess up a marriage is never to negotiate a pinch, let them accumulate, and store up the hurt and anger until the day comes when you can no longer contain the pain and it blows up in a rage or in passive-aggressive behavior such as an affair. Young couples want to succeed. They have seen parents not make it. They want to be different. This tool can make a difference. It is also a chance to say that when a pinch happens you will be glad to be of support should they feel the need of it. This is a great pastoral invitation to a long and meaningful relationship in the church.

Chapter Two

Pastoral Care and Counseling: What It Is and Is Not

He leads me beside still waters; / he restores my soul.
Psalm 23:2b-3

I fear no evil; / for thou art with me.
Psalm 23:4b RSV

Pastoral care is often mentioned as an outgrowth of the parable of the Good Shepherd. Though few ministers and congregations may be intimately familiar with tending sheep these days, there is something to be learned from this analogy. There are also important differences to be noted. Sheep have been domesticated for thousands of years. They are used to being in herds for their own safety. Sheep, unlike many animals, have minimal resources to ensure their own safety except

to scatter if attacked by wolves or coyotes. So a shepherd has a key responsibility to protect the flock from outward dangers. Since sheep are grazing animals, they do not always note where they are going and thus get lost unless the lead sheep call or a shepherd rounds them up. In the biblical parable a point is made that the herd can look after itself for a time while the shepherd seeks the lost ones and returns them to the fold.

In congregations people are not sheep, but they do get lost. They get lost when crises occur, when illness strikes, and when many of life's events throw them from their usual path and force them to rely on resources they may not have developed. But most people are far stronger than they may feel in moments of stress. Pastoral care helps lift up those strengths, undergird their wavering confidence, and guide them back to a functional path. That form of pastoral care comes through a ministry of presence. It may not require extensive skills, but it does take self-confidence and patience. Some of the most powerful moments of pastoral care take place with few words spoken, the touch of a hand, or simply being present.

In the stories of Jesus' ministry he appears to have an uncanny ability to get to the heart of the matter, whether it is the woman at the well, the man by the pool at Bethsaida, or the woman touching the hem of his robe. Each of these persons has a story, actually many stories that would include some joy and much pain. The biblical record doesn't give us the whole dialogue that may have gone on between Jesus and these folks. We only get the headline: "Your faith has made you whole"; "You come seeking water"; "Take up your bed and walk." All these pithy comments beg for us to know the rest of the conversation. What did he see, what did he hear, and what were the expressions on the people's faces that revealed the heart of their story? We have no way of knowing the "rest of the story," but we are led to believe that Jesus was an astute observer and an

in-depth listener and had the healing skill of naming the very thing the person hoped someone would understand, but no one had.

A physician friend once said that when people come to him they only want three things. First, they want him to touch their pain. When he does, they know he understands where they hurt. Second, they want him to name it. If it has a name, then all their fears of other things can be released, and if it has a name it is likely something can be done about it. And third, he needs to apply some healing balm to the situation, a bandage, a prescription, some directions, and a potential solution. Our spiritual pains are not unlike the physical pains that this physician treats. People come to us, as ministers and as counselors, and need some way to hear back from us that we have heard their pain, touched it. They also find comfort if they discover that they are not alone with it, that it has a name and a potential resolution. The difference between our ministry and the physician's practice is that we possess no prescription pad and no extensive pharmacy. The therapeutic process of pastoral counseling moves from hearing the pain to supporting the people's exploration of the pain and its alternatives and then walking with them as they design their solution, affirming our belief that God can provide the resources within them to reclaim a life-affirming option.

In-Depth Listening Skills

Two years after Don's wife died, Don found himself in the hospital for major surgery. Their children all lived far away, and due to conflicting responsibilities could not be at the hospital. Pastor Ruth had been pastor of Don's small-membership church for four years. She had been present during his wife's short illness and death and had talked with Don numerous times over the years.

Don was comfortable with her caring nature and grateful for her ministry to his wife. Don's surgery had come as a surprise to him and others, but Ruth responded. She contacted his children and, finding they could not come, decided he should not be alone through this experience.

When Don awoke in his hospital room he found Ruth sitting and waiting for him. He knew that if his wife were alive she would have been there, and he had expected he would see an empty room. Ruth's presence meant for him that the church was present, and he deeply appreciated not being alone.

In the days ahead others in the church also took their place, keeping him company and letting him know he was loved and cared for. There were no magic words spoken, no profound biblical insights, just a ministry of people who cared enough to be present.

Pastor Ruth did more than just be present, taking the place of what a wife would have done. Ruth also was there for Don when he expressed his fear of being alone, his deep loneliness during this health crisis, how he felt being far away from family, and even his concern about dying during the surgery. Pastor Ruth was able to listen in depth to all Don's thoughts and help him sort out his thoughts and feelings now that the surgery had been a success.

Much of pastoring a small-membership church falls into the category of pastoral care; staying in touch with the families and their kin, and expressing interest and concern as all go through the passages of life. Sermons also provide a vehicle to bind the flock, affirm the values of the faith community, and encourage the congregation's care for one another.

For me pastoral care and counseling have been two points on the same continuum. Pastoral counseling moves a step beyond pastoral care or, it can

be said, is a specific kind of caring. Building on the tenets of caring, counseling requires some specific ways of understanding human behavior, some knowledge of psychological issues, and some specific skills to use in the counseling process. Pastoral counseling usually refers to interaction that occurs in scheduled sessions, regardless of the location, work, office, or home. My experience is that anytime a conversation indicates a need and shares a confidence, you are engaged in a therapeutic interaction, a moment of ministry.

Helping Questions

The line between pastoral care and pastoral counseling is a bit blurred in the local church setting. Most pastors will be called on to fill both roles. For me the distinction, perhaps false, is that pastoral care is expressed in every aspect of ministry, administration, preaching, and teaching. Pastoral counseling involves helping individuals and families explore pain and conflict at a level deep enough to design a new future through the pain. It is a process that supports individuals' return to being in control, acting on their own behalf, when life seems to have thrown them off the road. Whether in pastoral care or pastoral counseling, as a pastor, you are likely to be faced with questions such as "What would you do, Pastor?" "What should I do, Pastor?" "What is the right thing here, Pastor?" These and many other questions can tempt us to step up to the role of expert in many areas for which we are not equipped. In caring or counseling the issue is not *What would the pastor do?* or even *What would Jesus do?* but *What does the person asking want to do, feel called to do, need to do with God's help?* The pastor's task is to help the parishioner/counselee design his or her own solution. That is what the counseling process does. It helps a person sort out and design his or her own solution.

Larry had been pastor of the Riverside Church for two years when a teenage girl asked for an appointment to talk about "something very urgent." Carol came to the appointment by herself, although her mother waited in the car for her. Carol had barely seated herself when the tears began, and she confided that she was pregnant and needed to get married soon. She wanted her boyfriend to come and talk also. Larry proceeded to ask a few questions to help Carol tell her story and gain some control of her emotions. Carol described that she knew she was pregnant because she and her boyfriend had had sex and she had missed her period. She had told her boyfriend and her mother, and her mother suggested she talk with Larry. Larry asked Carol how she planned to confirm whether she was pregnant or not. Carol replied she could see her doctor to confirm that she was pregnant and then set up another appointment for her and her boyfriend to talk about what might come next. Larry affirmed that sounded like a good idea. Larry did not follow up on the idea of having a quick wedding since he wanted Carol to be sure about the problem before designing a solution.

Ten days later Carol and her boyfriend came for a session. Both were obviously relieved that the doctor had discovered Carol was not pregnant. Larry suggested they each talk about what this experience had been like for them and in what way it had changed their relationship, if at all. They both said they felt caught in a problem they did not know how to solve. They wanted to be responsible for the baby, but both knew they did not have the education or jobs to be parents. For a few weeks their relationship had been highly stressful as they tried to sort out what to do and how to be responsible. They said they still loved

each another and had a more realistic understanding of what sex could do to change their lives. They left the session saying they would like to meet again.

The following week Carol and her mother came to see Larry. Carol said she and her boyfriend had decided to break up. Her mother said she was proud of her daughter for sharing her situation and facing the consequences of her choices. She felt that they both had learned a lot through this stressful time and were now closer. Both thanked Larry for being available and not being judgmental.

Larry's pastoral counseling sessions with Carol and her boyfriend required Larry to use good listening skills, avoid judgment, and believe in their ability to take responsibility for their decisions. He also used insightful questions to help them plan what next steps should be taken. Take note that he let Carol determine the next steps to continue her effort to be responsible. There was no need to preach about the moral issues, because the real presenting problem had not been determined and because it was clear that Carol was trying to work out a responsible choice for herself.

A pastoral counselor is like a worker removing the rocks and logs from a stream so the water can freely flow. Every person has a story that needs a listener. The counselor helps the flow of the story through creative questions, in-depth listening responses, and an empathic personality.

Below are examples of questions that are useful in counseling sessions, whether formal or informal:

- Can you tell me a story about how this is affecting you?
- How do you see your role in this issue?
- Have you experienced anything like this before?
- How did you resolve things then?
- Are there strengths you used before that would help you now?
- If this were not a problem for you, what would be different?
- If you could wave a wand and resolve this, how would you want it to be?
- What resources do you think you might need to solve this issue?
- Are there others you need to share this with, and what might you say to them?
- What is the most important thing we should talk about today?
- What are you hoping I won't bring up?
- When you are in this relationship, what is present that would be missing without you? How might you make that more obvious to others?
- In this crisis what are you feeling that no one knows except you? What are those feelings doing for you and to you?

You can see from this brief list that the number of useful questions is unlimited. The goal of each question is to give permission to the counselee to share what needs to be shared and to keep ownership of what he or she wants to do to resolve the issue.

It is clear that congregations expect "presence" from their pastor. But many also expect "performance." By that I mean competence in key areas of ministry. In this book we focus primarily on competence in counseling, brief counseling, and referral.

So if we define pastoral care as the general context for all ministry, including preaching, administering sacraments, and teaching, we can

then add that pastoral counseling is a specific way in which to do pastoral care. This special way requires a core set of competencies that we will address next.

Performance is the end result of a composite of knowledge, behavioral skills, attitude, and context. When all the pieces flow together in a transparent manner, those experiencing such competence are pleased and helped. So what are the pieces for the pastor?

Chapter Three

The Basic Toolbox

For nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest,
nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light.
Take heed then how you hear . . .
Luke 8:17-18a RSV

The pastoral counselor's toolbox needs a few essentials. It may, over time, contain much more, but it needs the essentials. These tools can be listed in three categories:

1. Knowledge
   a. Mental models to support understanding individuals, families, and groups.
   b. Knowledge of brief therapeutic processes usable within the short time frames available to a pastor.
   c. Information on more common mental and physical illnesses that assist the pastor in making effective referrals.

   d. Knowledge of crisis-oriented processes such as Critical Incident Debriefing.

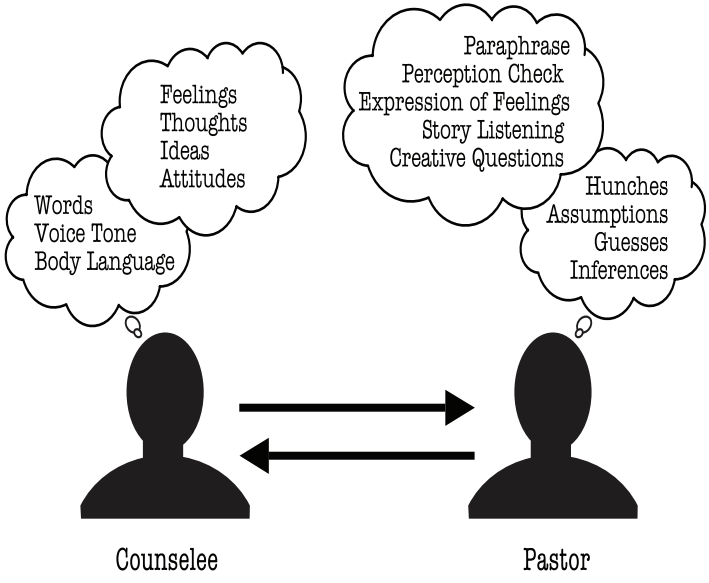
2. Skills
   a. In-depth listening skills such as paraphrase, perception check, direct expression of feelings, fogging, behavior description, and negative inquiry.[1]
   b. Story listening skills to perceive the meaning in stories and to hear the spoken and unspoken messages.
   c. Special responses for handling strong emotions, criticism, and conflict.
3. Attitudes
   a. Peaceful in the midst of conflict.
   b. Centered in the midst of crises.
   c. Affirming of others when criticized.
   d. Appreciative, by finding what is working, good, and valuable in almost all situations.
   e. Solution oriented rather than blame oriented.

Therapeutic Listening

I have experienced that a person cannot avoid telling his or her story. Words, voice tone, a look in the eye, a muscle twitch, a facial expression, or a void of silence—each heralds a story trying to be told. A person carrying great pain can hide only so much of it behind a smile, a laugh, or a distracting comment. An observant person might note the sadness in the eyes, the quiver of the lips, the tension in the face, and the overall sense of discomfort. The counselor will share with the person what he or she observes and ask, "Is there anything you would like to talk about?"

The most basic of all counseling skills is the ability to listen, in depth, to another person. By "in depth" I mean the ability to hear the meaning in the stories of another person; the ability to listen to pain without running away; and the ability to communicate to the other in a way that confirms you have heard the person as they want to be heard. We all have had the experience of feeling someone was listening but did not really hear us as we had hoped. And likewise, we have all listened, assumed we heard, and only later discovered that we had not at all understood what we had heard.

Listening, such a common behavior, is uncommonly difficult to do well. Christian psychotherapist Reuel Howe wrote that dialogue is the exchange of meaning. His book *The Miracle of Dialogue* describes how miraculous it is when two people authentically connect and the deeper meanings of their lives are exchanged. Counseling is a setting, an implied contract, in which such miracles should occur more frequently. Martin Buber wrote that authentic meeting is an "I-Thou" experience. If it is an "I-It" experience, one party is being viewed and related to as an object, not a person. I have found it helpful to think of the passage in the third chapter of Exodus that describes Moses' encounter with the burning bush. Moses is instructed to take off his shoes as he approaches God, for he is on holy ground. So, too, I believe, when we approach the God within people. It is imperative that each helping encounter be experienced by the pastor and counselee as a time of sacred presence, an "I-Thou" meeting. That is not to imply that all counseling need be sober and somber. There is a place for the relief of humor and the exchanging of our humanness. We all fall short of our own, and often others', expectations. Pastoral counseling helps people rediscover their path and regain courage to take it. So what are the tools that are available to us to increase the potential for miracles, the dialogue that can be healing?



Let's begin with the simplest understanding of communication between two persons, for example, a pastor and someone who has come for counseling. The graphic above may help us see the challenges and opportunities.

When the counselee comes to a session with the pastor, he or she is filled with feelings, thoughts, ideas, and often a mixture of attitudes. The counselee (C) may not know how to start, what to share, or really what to expect. (C) has three channels through which to communicate all the message within: words, voice tone, and body language. These are the public expression of all that is private within. If the pastor (P) listens to the words and voice tone and observes the body language (skin tension, posture, gestures, tears, smiles, and so on), it is natural for (P) to begin making some hunches or assumptions about what is going on with (C). The biggest challenge that (P) has is to leave the hunches and assumptions where they are and help (C) tell his or her own story. (P) does that by

using a few basic tools: paraphrase, perception check, direct expression of feelings, story listening, and creative questions. These tools are designed to achieve two objectives: first, to avoid making incorrect hunches, guesses, or assumptions, and second, to affirm (C's) ability to tell his or her own story as he or she wishes to tell it.

Let's explore each of these tools further. Research by Albert Mehrabian, replicated by others, has found that the various parts of interpersonal communication are not equally weighted in carrying the desired message. The words only carry 7 percent of the weight, while the voice tone carries 35 percent. That means the nonverbal body language carries 58 percent of the weight for the interpersonal message. For the (P) in our example this means listening to all parts of the message and putting them together accurately to understand the message as (C) intends it. The first tool helps begin the task. Hearing the words accurately is the foundation. The tool of paraphrase is basic to that job. (P), using paraphrase, restates what has been heard, summing up the words, as understood, and checking to see if (C) has been heard correctly. If the words have been heard, (C) will generally say yes and continue the story. If the words have not been heard correctly, (C) has an opportunity to restate them to gain clarity.

Paraphrase

Counselee Bob has asked to speak with Pastor John:

> So, Bob, what brings you in today?
>
> Pastor, this past week has been almost more than I can handle. With Carrie sick and the baby still young, and Alex isn't old

enough yet to be of much help, I need to be in the fields getting things done while I can, but I can't be in both places, and I feel really guilty about it.

So, Bob, I'm hearing that things have stacked up with Carrie's illness and your need to get the crops in on time, is that right? (Paraphrase)

That's right, Pastor. I don't see a solution, but I know it all has to be done, and I'm concerned about Carrie.

Bob, you're saying there is so much to do, but most of all your concern is about Carrie? (Paraphrase)

That is my main concern all right, Pastor, and I am stuck about what to do to handle it all.

What potential solutions have you considered, Bob?

Well, Carrie's sister would be great help, but she has small children also, and it would put a big load on her. And you know both our parents are quite elderly and can't lift the baby or do much around the house. I don't know where else to turn.

At this point the pastor could ask Bob if there are other things he has thought of trying but has not tried, but he decided not to ask. That kind of question is called a *supportive question* or *creative question*. It is a question that sticks with Bob's story, but it allows him to revisit things that may have been discarded as potential solutions but still might have pieces of possibilities within them. The danger of questions occurs when they are rooted only in the pastor's curiosity and not in the story Bob is sharing. It takes some practice to learn to avoid probing questions that lead rather than listening to the story. If a pastor probes out of his or her own curiosity, it is emotional voyeurism. In such case the counselee receives a message that his or her own story is not important and only what the

pastor is interested in is important. The pastor has quit listening and therefore quit caring for the heart of the person's pain and concern.

Supportive or Creative Questions

Another kind of question is one that explores potential solutions while leaving the control in the hands of the counselee. For example:

> Bob, I'm wondering how you would feel if I shared your concern with some members of the church who might be able to pitch in? I'm thinking there are a few women who might help Carrie with some of the housework, and some men who might help get the crops in so you would have a little more time. (If Bob says he would rather the pastor not share with others, that must be respected and other avenues pursued to support Bob.)
>
> Well, Pastor, I have no problem with you sharing our predicament, but I imagine all the folks are pretty busy this time of year. (Bob may be making limiting assumptions that can be checked out.)
>
> Bob, I am not sure of your finances, and I don't need to know them, but would you be able to cover the cost of a helper for Carrie for a short time if we could find someone?
>
> Things are pretty tight, but I could manage a little for a few weeks, but I don't have any idea who might be available.
>
> Bob, if it's all right with you, let me talk with a few church folk and see what we can come up with. I offer this because it seems your time is all filled and we would like to support you in this situation. (There is a fine line between taking over the problem and being part of the solution.)

Pastor, I hate to ask for help, but it seems we really need it, so I would be grateful for whatever you could do.

Bob, I will see what I can come up with and give you a call. You can decide then what will work best for you and Carrie. (The pastor is reassuring Bob that the choices are still his and Carrie's.)

Notice how the pastor uses questions to better understand what Bob has already considered. When making an offer to help, the pastor makes sure that Bob remains in control of the final decisions. In this example the pastor relied primarily on the skill of paraphrase and the foundation skill of good listening. The pastor made a choice not to explore with Bob his feelings about being a parent or a farmer or a husband because these would be leading questions that moved beyond the problem Bob was sharing. The pastor could also have responded to Bob's feelings by using the skill of perception check.

Perception Check

Bob, I'm hearing that with your farmwork, Carrie's illness, the baby, elderly parents, and a busy sister-in-law it seems there is nowhere to turn. Is that right? (paraphrase)

You got it, Pastor, that's the list.

Bob, from your voice and expression I hear a deep-down tiredness and perhaps some depression. Is that what you are feeling? (perception check)

Well, Pastor, I am really tired. Not getting much sleep. But I think it is just being worn out and not knowing what else to do rather than depression.

Thanks, Bob, that helps me clarify your feelings. So getting a break and catching up on some sleep might help. Is that it? (paraphrase)

I think so, Pastor.

But I also am picking up a feeling of worry for Carrie and some helplessness on your part to do much for her? (perception check)

I think that is the deep-down feeling, Pastor. I am really concerned about her trying to get well and take care of the baby too.

For the pastor to hear Bob's deeper message he has to hear more than just the job list. He needs to let Bob know he hears some of the deeper feelings under that list. The pastor pays attention to what he is feeling inside as he hears Bob's story. That information, combined with Bob's voice tone and facial expressions, can pretty reliably point to a feeling. Naming the potential feeling lets Bob know he has been heard at a deeper level. It is like the physician touching the pain. The pastor checks out his own perception to see if he is listening accurately to the feeling message in the story. Counselees will not tell the pastor the deeper levels they wish to have heard unless they feel they are heard at a less-deep level first. Some counselees are not conscious of their whole message until the pastor, using these skills, reflects back what has been heard.

In this case example, the pastor has chosen to offer to search out some options for Bob as a support for his feeling overwhelmed. He is careful, however, to leave Bob in control of the choices that might be most helpful. Sometimes in our desire to be helpful it is easy to take over for the person and indirectly communicate that we believe the counselee to be incapable of solving his or her own problems. As Bob's situation progresses, the pastor will have opportunity to affirm that Bob has done a good job of balancing all these diverse pressures and carrying the responsibility.

Story Listening

Interaction between people flows through the telling and sharing of stories. Listen to people talking in the church narthex before service. One says, "It's been quite a week." Another says, "That's for sure. I need a vacation." A third says, "How is your daughter doing?" All these simple statements and question have a story behind them. They are stories looking for a listener. It's as if we put out a story title to see if someone is interested in hearing the rest of the story. Our work in story listening reveals that most often there are four levels of stories. The first level includes stories about a previous time and is usually about others. The second moves the time frame forward and implies a recent past time and people near at hand. The third is usually a time frame of "in the last few days" and may be about the speaker and the listener. The fourth and deepest level is about you and me, here and now. The bottom-line story, the fourth-level story, is also about either pain or joy.[2]

The stories you may hear before worship will usually be first- or second-level stories. There is often a hint, however, that there is a deeper level if someone took the time to hear it. We are all familiar with the personality terms *introvert* and *extrovert*. An extroverted church member will usually speak a story title and, if no one hears, will tend to repeat it until a listener responds. An introverted member may give much subtler hints of a need to share and would not do so in a group of people.

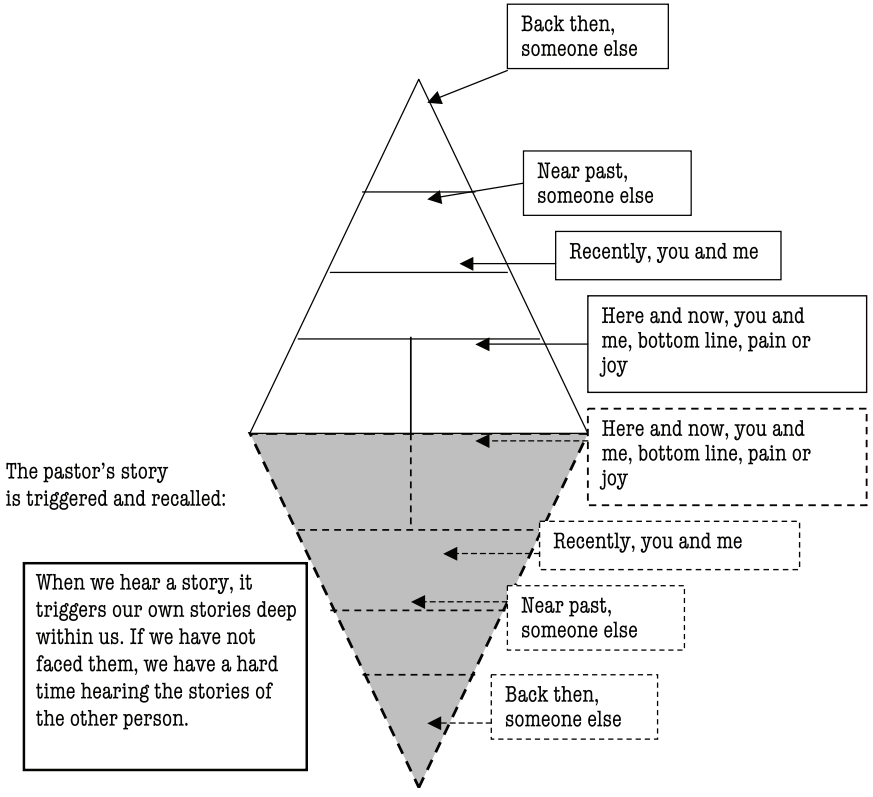
> Margaret was an older member of my congregation who attended faithfully with only the exceptions of an occasional illness or visit to family. She, like most others, had a habit of shaking hands with the pastor after service and speaking a few words, usually of encouragement or gratitude. On one Sunday

> Margaret followed her usual pattern with the exception that when she thanked me for the sermon, she held my hand a little longer and squeezed it a little harder. It would have been a nonverbal message easily missed in the line of handshakes. But since I was familiar with Margaret and her pattern, I interpreted her message as needing a follow-up. That afternoon I called Margaret, indicating I had some time and was heading her way and would she be OK with my stopping in. She said it would be very nice, and I did so. When we were seated in Margaret's living room, I shared that her voice and handshake seemed a little different this morning, and I wondered if there was anything she would like to talk about. When I mentioned the nonverbal message, I could see Margaret's eyes respond affirmingly that she was pleased I was paying that much attention. The conversation went on, during which Margaret revealed that a recent appointment with her physician had revealed the presence of cancer, a return of one she had conquered many years before. She needed to talk about many things related to her present and future since she had not shared with her friends nor had she family for support. Margaret would not likely have called me at the office. She would have thought it was bothering me and that I had more important things to look after. But her need did allow her to send a small message, easily missed but terribly important to her. Fortunately, I caught it and responded.

So story listening can begin with a spoken story title or a nonverbal indication. Either way, it is up to the pastoral counselor to choose to respond, either at the time or later in a more appropriate place.

The bottom line about story listening is that people will only share the deepest level of their stories if they find the listener will stay present to them and hear what the story is about and why it needs to be shared. The challenge for the pastoral counselor is that some stories are really hard to hear. The minute a piece of them is revealed, a part of us wants to say, "Thank you very much, but I need to go now." To understand why we have a tendency to move away from deeper stories, we need to understand the concept of "shadow stories." The following diagram will help me explain this powerful reality.[3]

The counselee tells his or her story:



Story listening and shadow stories are connected. We cannot listen to the stories of another without revisiting our own stories. If the story we hear is one of joy, we will find our own joy stories emerging. We may recall stories we have not thought about for a long time. When they emerge, our tendency is to want to share them. Some sharing may be appropriate, but when we do, we quit listening to the person who needs our attention. From a therapeutic perspective it is better to remember our stories and tell them to someone else later, a spouse, colleague, or therapist. When the stories we hear have pain as the bottom line, we are most likely to experience difficulty in hearing them. In addition, becoming aware of your inner story helps you understand the feelings present in the storyteller. This is the reason that good therapists have a therapist. This is a major reason to establish your team (which is discussed in Chapter 7), your resource network, including a therapeutic resource in it for yourself. That is where you can take your own stories that have been triggered. The challenge for a pastor may be the lack of trusted resources to be that therapeutic backup. It is often politically touchy to use one's supervisor as a therapeutic resource. The supervisor, first, may not have the skill to understand and, second, may perceive your sharing as a sign of weakness affecting your ministry. So choose your own resource wisely.

Lest you be too hard on yourself, there are very few pastors, or pastoral counselors, who have not run away from deep pain, although at the time they may not have realized what they were doing.

> Pastor Laura was new to the ministry and somewhat unsure of her ability to counsel her flock, who were mostly older than she. She was unaware that often when someone shared something deeply personal, she would respond by quoting a scripture or by changing the subject. One evening she was talking with Mrs.

> Garibaldi, a widow who faithfully attended, but who had been absent the last two Sundays. Mrs. Garibaldi was beginning to tell Pastor Laura of some deep pain over recent news that a favorite niece had taken her own life. After trying to broach the subject three times with Pastor Laura, and finding the pastor uncomfortable with it, Mrs. Garibaldi said, "Pastor Laura, does it bother you to hear about my niece?" The question hit Pastor Laura so hard it almost took her breath, then after a pause she said, "Mrs. Garibaldi, I wasn't aware that I was running from your story until this moment, when I realized I have never told anyone about my sister taking her life when she was in college. I am sorry to hear about your very painful loss, but I guess I have never let myself hear my own, and that caused me to run away from yours."

Mrs. Garibaldi has, unknowingly, just ministered to the pastor, and fortunately the pastor had reached a point at which she could allow her own pain to be felt. Laura and Mrs. Garibaldi had several important conversations after that as they shared each other's story and worked through their losses.

When someone starts telling a story that triggers your own unresolved issues and you become conscious of it, it is time to work it through with your own counselor. Failing to do that limits your ability to deal with the pain in others. Pastoral counseling preparation helps us all be better at keeping our own life stuff from interfering in our ministry to others. People want to be heard, and therefore they can be forgiving if the first time they speak to us we do not hear them or we avoid responding to their deep pain. As pastors, our challenge is to "catch" ourselves when we have moved away, and, having done so, to move toward the pain with

intention and grace. I have found no rejection when, having caught myself, I have returned to the person and shared openly. My usual reentrance is to say, "When we were speaking, you were sharing something very important and I now realize that it must have touched something in me that lead me to quit listening out of my own discomfort. I apologize and would like to be fully present so you can share whatever you need to." Like rerecording a CD or videotape, people let us start over when we are truthful and accessible. Paying attention to our own counterstories is part of growing our emotional intelligence.

> *People are always longing for someone to help them realize their best selves, to understand their hidden self, to believe them and to demand their best. When we can do this for people, we ought not withhold it. We ought not to be just an ear to them.*
>
> Mary Haskell

Emotional Intelligence

Before we get too far into more of the counseling skills and knowledge, it is important to visit the basis for all good pastoral care and counseling. Since 1996 this has been called Emotional Intelligence (EI), one of the many types of intelligence. Daniel Goleman, psychologist, popularized this term as a way to sum up personal qualities such as self-awareness and empathy. Hendrie Weisinger,[4] psychologist, suggests there are four building blocks to EI.

1. The ability to accurately perceive, appraise, and express emotion.
2. The ability to access or generate feelings on demand when they can facilitate understanding of yourself or another person.
3. The ability to understand emotions and the knowledge that derives from them.
4. The ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Inside the four building blocks are fifteen competencies.[5] You will recognize these skills as critical for being a pastor or pastoral counselor.

1. **Self-regard** is the skill of liking ourselves just the way we are. It includes self-confidence and self-actualization and is related to optimism and happiness.
2. **Emotional Self-awareness** comes from how familiar we are with what we are feeling and why.
3. **Assertiveness** is the emotional strength that allows us to tell others what we stand for, what we like, and what we dislike.
4. **Self-actualization** involves being able to set goals for ourselves and meeting those goals. It helps us measure how successful we feel.
5. **Empathy** is the skill of listening and paying attention so we can understand how others feel and why.
6. **Social Responsibility** drives the ability to maintain a disciplined effort of caring and serving the interests of others.
7. **Interpersonal Relationships** is the skill set that demonstrates our ability to develop and sustain relationships.

8. **Stress Tolerance** is the coping skill we use to stay physically and mentally healthy in the midst of pain, threats, and intrusions from others.
9. **Impulse Control** is the ability to regulate energy that accompanies stress without turning it into anger or suppressing it through medications or distractions.
10. **Reality Testing** is the ability to use objective criteria to assess a current situation to avoid denial or self-aggrandizement.
11. **Flexibility** allows us to change direction or make decisions as needed when our reality changes.
12. **Problem Solving** is a behavioral set that enables us to tackle challenges and change them to better fit our values, needs, or goals.
13. **Optimism** is an attitude of positive expectancy built on a vision of improvement in the future.
14. **Happiness** is the ability to find contentment and satisfaction in each moment.
15. **Independence** is the ability to make decisions based on our own assessment without being overcome by the need to meet everyone else's needs.

Since it could be possible to spend a lifetime working on and improving the competencies in this list, perhaps reviewing a self-check list can help you focus on areas of greatest benefit for your growth.

On the items below, rate yourself on the level of ability you believe you demonstrate. As a check on your perceptions, you might ask someone who knows you well to rate you to find corroboration of your perceptions:

Low Ability High Ability

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1. Associate different physical cues with different emotions ___
2. Know when you are thinking negatively ___
3. Know when you communicate incongruently ___
4. Reflect on negative thoughts without being distressed ___
5. Calm yourself quickly when angry ___
6. Act productively in situations that arouse anxiety ___
7. Stop or change ineffective habits ___
8. Regroup quickly after a setback ___
9. Produce high energy even when work is uninteresting ___
10. Work out conflicts ___
11. Build trust with others ___
12. Make others feel good ___
13. Recognize when others are distressed ___
14. Show empathy to others ___
15. Help a group manage emotions ___

Adding up your self-scores and dividing by 15 will give you an average result. However, this checklist is more useful to simply reflect on your areas for potential development. Pastoral counselors deal with a full range of human emotions, and we do it best when we are aware of how we handle our own emotions and those evoked by others. We can only change or improve those things of which we are aware. So self-awareness becomes the prerequisite for good pastoring and pastoral care.

Here are some tips on improving self-awareness:

- Examine how you assess yourself and others.

- Tune in to what is going on within yourself, your senses.
- Get in touch with your feelings, and learn to name them.
- Pay attention to your intentions and what actions you use to achieve them.

Here are some exercises to help you with the list above:

1. Become aware of your inner assessment of others, yourself, and situations. Use "I – Think" statements to verbalize those assessments. Naming them gives you a chance to affirm or change them.
2. Pay attention and use inner dialogue to think about past and future events. Notice if there is a pattern of pessimism or optimism in that dialogue.
3. Ask others about the experience, feelings, or thoughts about a shared experience. Example: "Tom, I would be interested in your feelings about the discussion at our meeting last evening."
4. Remember that it is how we assess an experience that causes our reactions, not the behavior of others. You are in control of how you assess and how you respond, internally and externally.
5. Pay attention to your senses. What you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch is different from how you interpret those sensations. Become aware of tendencies to avoid senses assuming they will always be uncomfortable.
6. Create a "Feelings Journal." Several times each day take a few moments to jot down what you are feeling about the past few hours. At the end of each month, give yourself time to review the journal. Look for patterns of feelings. Do you always feel the same way in the same situations? What feelings do you have when you meet certain people? Does it ever change? Is that comfortable for you? Are there changes you would like to make?

This book could focus entirely on EI because it is so important, but those books have been written and are available to you. So suffice it to say that the higher your Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ), the better pastor and pastoral counselor you will be, and the easier it will be to be appreciative in your approach to others.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry was developed—perhaps more accurately, discovered—by David Cooperrider and colleagues at Case Western University as a way of joining people in the process of positive change. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the cooperative search for the best in people, their relationships, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves discovering what gives "life" to a person, relationship, or group when it is at its most effective and alive. AI relies on the crafting of the "unconditional positive question." For example, consider the following counseling session interaction using an AI process.

> Pastor: Joyce, thank you for sharing your concerns about your marriage and coming to work on resolving them. What would you describe as being the high-point experience of your marriage, a time when you felt most alive and engaged?
>
> Joyce: I guess it may have been about three years into our marriage when we took a trip and lots of time to just talk and share dreams and hopes.
>
> Pastor: Joyce, without being modest, what did you most value about yourself in that experience, and what did you value most about Ben?

Joyce: Pastor, I think I was a really good listener since I was so interested in Ben and how he thought. Ben looked at me, and it seemed he just knew me at some deep level.

Pastor: Joyce, as you think about your marriage, what has given it life, without which you would have no marriage?

Joyce: I think our ability to honor each other's thoughts and feelings, to listen and indicate our interest in each other. Also we have always seen problems as something to be addressed together, not as something we are to each other.

Pastor: Joyce, assume you go into a deep sleep tonight, one that lasts five years. While you are asleep, powerful and positive change takes place in your marriage, real miracles happen, and your marriage becomes what you want it to be. You awaken, it is five years past, and you are very proud of what you see. As you take it all in, what do you see happening that is new, changed, better, or more satisfying?

Joyce: I see Ben and me sitting together, sharing like we did, carefully attending to each other's feelings. We are building a stronger relationship and feeling so loved in it.

Pastor: Now, Joyce, what do you know how to do, since you have done it, that might create that wonderful future?

Joyce: I think Ben and I need to have this conversation and revisit the strengths we had and have somehow quit using.

Pastor: Sounds like a good idea, Joyce. Let me know how it goes, and I will be thinking about you and Ben on this journey.

Notice the role of the pastoral counselor in this case, functioning as a process guide by asking positive, unconditional questions that allow Joyce to explore what she already knows how to do and regain focus on the future she wants to create.

AI is a mutual search for knowledge and wisdom that already exists that can be brought to bear on forming a desired future. People's lives and relationships are books that are constantly being coauthored. The past, present, and future are endless sources of learning, inspiration, and interpretation. The key is to help the people writing their book do their own interpretation, not those of us outside their journey.

The field of AI is continually growing and deepening. I recommend you read about this subject and take advantage of any workshops offered in your area. For further information see any work by David Cooperrider, Diana Whitney, or Jacqueline Stavros.[6] In a previous book, *Healthy Church DNA*, my coauthor and I present an AI process for transforming a church for more effective ministry. You may find it a helpful adjunct to this subject.

Frameworks and Context

If someone looks to the night sky and says, "Look at that star up there," you will likely look up to the vast universe and say, "Which one?" If the person can form a frame, like a picture frame, around the specific star, you will likely say, "Oh, that one." A framework or context helps narrow down a larger universe of information to enable us to see what is going on in a specific area. In pastoral counseling it is useful to have a few such frameworks to use to better understand individuals, relationships, and families.

You cannot teach a man anything,
You can only help him discover it within himself.
Galileo

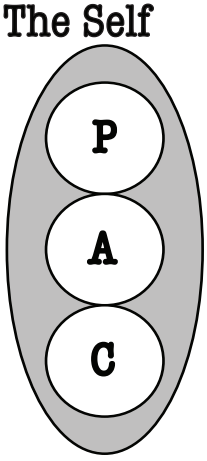
Individual Frames

The best way to learn about people is to observe, listen, and notice the way in which they present themselves and the effect they have on others. But to do this well one must have developed the sensory antennae to process all the information about the person. It is often useful to have a model or framework that can give a deeper understanding when the length of time to know someone may not be available. One model for understanding individuals is called *Structural Analysis*.

Structural Analysis

Structural Analysis is based on the work of Eric Berne, MD and Fritz Perls, MD. It suggests that each of us is a product of the "voices" we hear growing up. There is the parent voice that sounds comforting at times and judgmental at other times. Then there is the adult that sounds very rational, calm, and even; and finally the child voice that is sometimes rebellious and sometimes a wonderful, free, spontaneous voice. Structural Analysis suggests that as we develop we internalize each of these voices, and as we grow up we may use those internalized voices even though we are of a mature age. As our sense of self—the ego—develops, these internal voices become ego states, times when we speak or act as if we were the age of the voice. By listening to a person's speech (Structural Analysis), we can hear the ego stage that is in charge at that moment. We use the diagram below to illustrate this model[7]:

When doing pastoral counseling, you will often hear these ego states expressing themselves. Your listening skills will come in handy here. One therapeutic issue you will face is that the Adult ego state is the only one



The Parent Ego State contains attitudes and behaviors internalized from external sources, primarily parents. Outwardly, it is expressed toward others in prejudicial, critical, and also nurturing behavior.

The Adult Ego State is not related to a person's age. It is oriented to current reality and objective gathering of information. It is organized, adaptable, and intelligent, and functions by testing reality, estimating probabilities and computing dispassionately.

The Child Ego State contains all the impulses that come naturally to the infant. It also contains the recordings of early childhood experience. When you are acting, thinking, feeling as you observed your parents doing, you are in the Parent Ego State.

When you are dealing with reality, and facts, and being objective, you are in the Adult Ego State. When you are feeling and acting as you did as a child, you are in the Child Ego State.

that can take responsibility for rational behavior and follow through. Using the skill of paraphrase to a Parent ego state comment can sometimes move the person to their Adult ego state.

Pastor: Well, Sally, what brings you in today?

Sally: Pastor, I just wanted you to know that I thought the way the choir laughed after their last song was totally inappropriate in church, and I know you would think so too.

Pastor: So, Sally, you found their humor troubling during the service?

Sally: Of course, Pastor, we should maintain a reverent decorum at all times. God would expect that.

Pastor: Sally, can you think of times when I have used humor in a sermon and the congregation has laughed?

Sally: Of course, but that's different. You're the pastor.

Pastor: Do you think you could consider that one of God's gifts to us might be laughter and that he expects us to use it to help us through life and therefore in worship at times also?

Sally: Well, it's not the way I was brought up, but it makes sense that God would give us a gift that would make times easier.

Pastor: I am glad you can consider that, Sally. I hope you might reflect on that this week and see how you notice humor helping us along. Let me know what you discover, and thanks for sharing your concern with me.

Sally: OK, Pastor, I'll give it a try and let you know.

In this case the pastor has recognized that Sally has a strong critical Parent ego state. It is likely she came from a family with very clear "do's and don'ts." She is keeping faith with those teachings as a way to be the adult she internalized growing up. Along the way her mental and spiritual health will confront her with the need to drop some of the parental influences and become her own adult. If the pastor responds to her critical Parent statement about the choir by saying, "That's nonsense, Sally, we need to laugh a lot to loosen up a little," Sally will become defensive because she needs to defend her internal parents until she is ready to "leave" them and make her own decisions. She can be encouraged in her growth, not by confrontation, but by an invitation to explore (an Adult function) and evaluate later. If she can open

her considerations, she can enjoy humor more and feel less guilty about "not obeying" her internalized parents.

Solving problems and considering new alternatives requires using the Adult ego state. It can be supported through the playful, exploring the Child ego state. So when listening to counselees, or just the conversations in the congregation, you may hear all the states being expressed. Your responses can help people be productive and grow by supporting the Adult ego state's development, the nurturing side of the Parent ego state, and the spontaneous, fun side of the Child ego state, each in its appropriate settings.

Following are typical ego state responses to a couple of situations:

To a request for a church report
Parent: Pastor Brown is not cut out to be Pastor.
Adult: I know the pastor needs these by five o'clock.
Child: No matter what I do, I can never please the pastor.

To the sound of Christian rock music
Parent: That horrible stuff is certainly not Christian music!
Adult: I find it hard for me to think or talk when music is so loud.
Child: That music makes me want to dance!

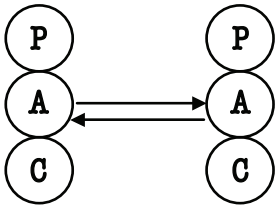
Relationship Analysis

The models we have used to help understand individuals can also be useful for understanding relationships. Let's look first at the PAC model. With individuals we called it "structural analysis," to determine which ego state was speaking. In the context of understanding relationships, the PAC ego state model is called Transactional Analysis (TA). Transaction refers to the verbal and nonverbal exchange that occurs between people. The communication transaction is an interaction of the ego states of one person with

those of another. These transactions can either be congruent or incongruent. When transactions are congruent, both parties generally feel understood. When they are incongruent one or both parties may feel bad, controlled, or dissatisfied.

Below are some diagrams of congruent transactions:

1.

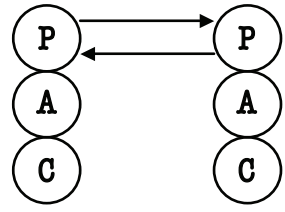


1. "What is the salary for this job?"

"It's $10,000."

(Adult Ego State to Adult Ego State)

2.



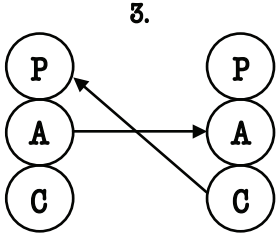
2. "Those children really miss their father."

"Yes, let's take them to the park for a little fun."

(Nurturing Parent Ego State to Nurturing Parent Ego State)

Below are some diagrams of incongruent or crossed transactions:

3.

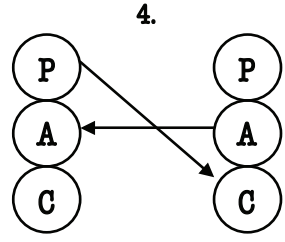


3. "Let's sit down and think this through."

"I don't want to. I'm tired."

(Adult Ego State and Child Ego State response)

4.



4. "If they would do it my way, they would get it right."

"Could you consider what part of their idea might work?"

(Critical Parent Ego State and Adult Parent Ego State response)

When counseling, it is useful to stay in your own Adult ego state. Some use of the nurturing parent and occasional use of the playful Child ego state may work to build rapport. When your responses create a crossed transaction, it will stimulate a thought change in the counselee. For example, if you are hearing a critical Parent comment, such as in example 4 above, a response from your Adult ego state can help move the counselee to rethink his or her criticism. If you respond with a critical remark such as "Don't be so critical," it will create a defensive response in the counselee.

Transactional Analysis is an easy model to understand, and an insightful model when family issues confront your counselee. For further reading in this model, Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward's book, *Born to Win*,[8] is a solid help. Some families develop patterns of interactions that are destructive and difficult for them to change. Those patterns are called *scripts*, just as in a play or film. Dysfunctional families replay those scripts regularly over the years until a family member finds a way to "break out," thereby changing the script. Recognizing repetitive patterns is important to the pastoral counselor. Helping families change them is often a process that will take longer than the time you will be able to devote. When you recognize a long-standing pattern that is harmful to a family, it is a good time to use your referral network for a family therapist.

Personality Theory

There are many models for understanding people within the concept of personality theory. Many of them arise from the same basic sources, such as the work of Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist who first proposed that man was intrinsically religious. Jung found that there were certain clusters of behavior that could be observed in people that he considered

archetypes. From that notion numerous followers have developed his theories and created profile instruments and therapeutic processes.

One helpful version is called the LIFO® Method.[8] LIFO® stands for life orientation and suggests that there are primarily four ways that people look at the world, process their reality, communicate, and solve problems. This method, developed by Dr. Allan Katcher and Dr. Stuart Atkins, has been broadly received around the world. That's probably because it is nontechnical, makes sense, and is easily learned as a way of understanding oneself and others. The LIFO® Method suggests that the four ways of seeing and experiencing the world are:

- Supporting-Giving
- Controlling-Taking
- Conserving-Holding
- Adapting-Dealing

The people with Supporting-Giving (SG) preferences believe that they will be successful and good things will happen through hard work and the pursuit of excellence. They are thoughtful, trusting, idealistic, and loyal. They try to do their best in everything. They set high standards for themselves and others.

Controlling-Taking (CT) preferences believe they will be successful and good things will happen if they seize opportunity and are competent. They are bottom-line, result-oriented people. We would call them go-getters. They tend to act quickly and make things happen; they are self-confident, persuasive, and competitive. They seldom meet a challenge they do not take on.

Conserving-Holding (CH) preferences believe you should make the most of what you have and use your head. They are methodical, logical,

precise, and tenacious. Before they act, they try to analyze every angle looking for the fail-safe way to do things. They are practical and often reserved people.

Adapting-Dealing (AD) preferences believe that they will succeed and good things will happen if they please others and fill their needs. They enjoy getting to know people. They are frequently characterized as flexible, enthusiastic, tactful, inspiring, and charming. They have a lot of empathy and try to get along with others.

In your church you will have people who have a preference for each of these personal styles or strength clusters. Some will approach most everything from one of those orientations. Some will use a combination of two of the four styles. Having this window into why they approach things as they do can enable you to appreciate their gifts. Remember, as pastor and pastoral counselor you have your orientation also that may or may not be like that of your counselee.

If your preferred orientation is SG, you will strive to excel. You will be thoughtful, caring, and likely work more hours than is good for your health and family because there is always more to do and you can do it better.

If your preferred orientation is CT, you will drive a lot of action. Yours is a ministry of "mission impossible." Your motto is, *The difficult we do right away, the impossible takes a little longer*. You may become impatient with church leaders who take a long time to make decisions, and you may get into some difficulty making decisions and taking action without gaining a base of support for it. You may find it hard to listen to someone you believe should just "get over it" and "get on with it."

If your preferred orientation is CH, you will appreciate history, tradition, and probably, ritual. You will tend to keep good records, have a planning calendar, think through issues in great depth before acting, and

probably get stressed when others do not do it your way. You will likely approach counseling from a clear, systematic approach and have patience to hear all the details. Your guidance will mostly be very practical. You may be perceived as very rational and misinterpreted as not caring.

If your preferred orientation is AD, you will enjoy the human interaction in the parish. You will be seen as a very caring person who responds well to others. You will bring joy and humor to your ministry as well. You will enjoy getting to know the people in order to meet their needs. It will be easy for you to inspire others, and they will feel comfortable in your presence. Your flexibility is a gift, but it can be overused. It is important for you to maintain your boundaries of time and access.

Remember, we naturally understand those who are wired the same as we are. Having other, different ways of functioning and viewing the world is not better or worse;, it is just different. As pastor and counselor it is useful to lift up these differing gifts and affirm them with counselees. They will usually design the solutions to their issue in a way that is congruent with their preferred orientation.

Counseling people is hard work. It is often exciting and rewarding. It also demands that we be the future we want. So consider the following principles for your counseling:

- Interrogate reality: ask questions, find out what's real, avoid getting caught in the misperceptions of others.
- Come out from behind yourself, into your conversations, model the behavior you want others to develop.
- Be here, prepared to be nowhere else. Don't let yourself be in the last meeting or session or in the next thing on your agenda. The minute, the second, you mentally leave, the counselee will see you go.

- Tackle your toughest challenge today. Keep relationships caught up with staff, church members, others. Address that difficult person first; reset that relationship.
- Obey your instinct (usually your inner voices have wisdom). Take time to listen. It will guide when to speak and when to be quiet. The inner voice may channel God's voice if we are open. That includes taking time for your own spiritual development to hone your sensitivity to the inner voice. This is called Spiritual Intelligence.
- Take responsibility for your emotional wake. We all have an effect on others. Some of the effect we desire, and some we do not. You are responsible for it all. When it gets messed up, clean it up, the sooner the better.
- Let silence do the heavy listening. Watch the tendency to fill each quiet moment with your wisdom. If you wait, amazing things can emerge.

Context

One of the mental models that will serve you well is a model for understanding change as transitions. William Bridges[9] provides a superb definition and explanation of what happens to persons when experiencing change. Bridges suggests that change is a matter of moving some thing or person from one place to another. We change jobs, churches, spouses, and so forth. Transition is the emotional experience that accompanies all change. Most of us are not good at handling transitions. We want to get through change as fast as possible because it is often painful, even when we have chosen the change. By understanding that transitions always begin with an ending and endings require grieving what is being left behind, we can become less fearful of our feelings, disorientation, confu-

sion and other experiences during change. Bridges goes on to describe a neutral time when we are not where we were but not where we will be. This can be a stressful time or a creative discovery time, or both, if we don't rush through it. It is the neutral time, often feeling like chaos, when we learn much about ourselves. The last stage of transition is new beginnings with its hope and possibilities. It would be nice if all transitions were as simple as their description. Unfortunately they are not so tidy. They do provide an important opportunity for pastoral care, walking with a person through the passage to a new beginning.

Chapter Four

Crisis Issues in the Human Family

I've learned that about 90% of the things that happen to me are good and only about 10% are bad. To be happy I just have to focus on the 90%.
H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.
Oliver Wendell Holmes

Crisis always presents us with complexity in search of simplicity. We yearn for a simple answer that will lead us out of chaos into meaning and relieve us of the pain and confusion. And we want it now. We want our pastor to open up divine secrets and assure us that this time is OK, that not only will we survive, but also that it will be better. Inside us we know that wish is one of a very scared child and that in almost every case it will not be better, it will be survivable, and we will

discover we are loved and supported as we cut through the brush of chaos to find the path. We can't be creative if we refuse to be confused. It is out of the confusion that new directions are born. Crisis is natural. Though we experience it as a one-time event, crises are happening all the time, at any time, somewhere in our world. Change occurs, planned or unplanned. Crisis is change that occurs quickly, suddenly, affecting our emotions and pushing us to react when we are less able to respond. It is a crisis because it is happening to us.

Illness, Surgery, and Persistent Disease

One of the most common ministries of a pastor is that of visiting the sick, whether in their homes, hospitals, or senior facilities. Sometimes a pastoral visit is a brief time to reassure the person that the church cares and to check if there are specific needs that can be handled. Often a pastor will drop in, find the patient asleep, and quietly leave a card and slip out of the room. Whether the visit is "doing the business" of the church, checking off another task for the day, or a moment of relief that the visit is over, those brief moments are a possible lost opportunity. When a patient is alone in her room, home, or hospital, she does a lot of thinking. She also often does a lot of worrying, her mind covering an array of "what if" scenarios. "What if" I should die? "What if" it was worse; how would my children be taken care of? "What if" I can't work anymore; how will I support my family and myself? "What if" I can't pay for all this medical care? Times of personal illness, whether perceived as major or not, can be special moments of ministry for a pastoral counselor. They are times to be a profound listener. Don't worry about telling the patient that the church cares. Your presence already provides that message. Time

alone with you is a gift she would not request but will value immensely if you will listen to her story. So how do you begin? Let me relate the experience of a colleague of mine. As a pastor he was making what he thought was a routine hospital visit.

> He stuck his head in the hospital room doorway and found his parishioner propped up and so began to move toward the bed. The parishioner turned to him with what the pastor thought was great anger and said, "Pastor, get the hell out of here." Surprised by the loud remark, my colleague dropped his calling card on the table, and said, "I will drop in later," and promptly left. The next day he returned, hoping to find the parishioner in a better mood, only to be greeted similarly, "I thought I told you to get the hell out of here." Again the pastor turned around and left. As he was walking down the hospital corridor, he began to hear the person's voice again and again in his head. Realizing it was a cry for help but not knowing what it was about, he turned around and went back to the room. Entering the room, he said to his parishioner, "Ken, I have visited you twice and each time you have said 'get the hell out.' That doesn't sound like what I know of you. Can you tell me what is going on for you?" With that Ken began to cry and with trembling voice began to share. The bottom line for Ken's story was that he believed he was likely to be dying, and knowing his life, he was afraid he would go to Hell. So Ken was pleading for the pastor to get the hell out, not asking him to leave. Having finally heard Ken's pain, the pastor was able to hear the rest of the story. Over several visits Ken became reassured of God's love for him. Fortunately Ken recovered, but the pastor's life was never the same.

He saw and understood the pain in others like he never had noticed before.

The pastor could have left after the first visit attempt and never returned, thinking he had been told to stay away. People often show us strong feelings because they need someone who is strong enough and caring enough to help them talk about them and work their way through them.

In perhaps the majority of hospital calls I have made over the years, I have been greeted by a "thank you for coming" and "I know you're busy, Pastor, but thank you for coming." I have learned that is a good time to pull up a chair, drop my busy-ness, and start listening.

Some comments or questions that help open the door to the patient's story include:

- What is important for us to talk about today?
- What do you hope we won't talk about today?
- Would you tell me about your experience with your illness?
- What thoughts and feelings do you find yourself having when you are here alone?
- Do you have a worry list that you would like to talk about today?
- Have you had an illness that has put you in the hospital before? What was that like? Has that experience helped you with this time in the hospital? What is different for you this time?
- Is your faith helpful to you at this time? (Be careful that the person does not feel like a spiritual failure if he or she has a lot of doubt.) I often precede this question with a comment that during times of crisis, our faith often goes into spasms because we are confronted with something new and we have to work through it.

The parishioners with persistent or chronic and acute disease, such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease, or others, experience a different spiritual path. Coming to grips with the idea that it will not get better takes digging deep within a person. Pastoral counseling can be a companion on that journey. A useful resource to suggest for these long-term issues is the practice of journaling. A journal is like a personal diary in which a person's daily thoughts and feelings are recorded. I suggest to counselees that they write in their private journal each day for fifteen to twenty minutes. They may write longer if desired, but a brief time is essential each day. I also ask them to not read what they wrote for at least two weeks. That helps them notice the changes that are occurring in their thoughts with the passage of time. It is also important that they understand their journal is their private work. They need not share any of it with the pastoral counselor, but they are free to choose to share whatever they wish with the counselor or any others. In counseling it can be useful to ask, "Are there things you are learning about yourself through journaling that you would like to share?" Often people who are facing a terminal illness will journal as a way of leaving stories of their life or other important thoughts to their family and loved ones. The memorable work of C. S. Lewis in *A Grief Observed* is basically a shared journal and offers powerful insight into loss.

You may notice that the process and responses suggested for caring for people with persistent disease have few references to scriptures. I have found that bedside visits that involve theological discussions are often an escape from hearing and responding to the pain of the counselee. Remember the impact of the shadow story. Our own unresolved issues about illness and dying can cause us to run away from what the counselee hopes we will hear, as happened during my colleague's hospital call, when his anxiety about dealing with what he thought was an angry member made it too easy to excuse himself and leave. His redemption came when he overcame his fear and decided to hear

his member's pain. I can't emphasize enough the power of shadow stories. We have all found ourselves changing the subject when the discomfort rose beyond our ability to tolerate it and to stick with the story at hand. It does no good to feel bad about our moments of inadequacy. It promotes our growth and competency when we recognize those moments and use them to increase our focus on listening to the other person.

You mustn't be frightened . . . if a sadness rises in front of you, larger than any you have ever seen; if an anxiety, like light and cloud-shadows, moves over your hands and over everything you do. You must realize that something is happening to you, that life has not forgotten you, that it holds you in its hand and will not let you fall.
Rainer Maria Rilke

Cancer

One of the most studied diseases around the globe—and still one of the most frightening words—is *cancer*.[1] Though many types of cancer are now curable, or are able to be controlled through medication, there are other types that have continued to frustrate medical research and, as a result, continue to scare us when we hear the diagnosis. Whether breast cancer, prostate cancer, melanoma, or other less common types, such as mesothelioma, our heart stops for a moment if our doctor says the word. Such a diagnosis starts a whirl of questions in the person receiving it. How bad is it? How much time do I have? Is there treatment? What about my kids? What should I tell them? These and a hundred other questions flash, as it seems the future we assumed crashed before our eyes. A pastor or

pastoral counselor who has experienced this, or who is sensitive to this trauma, is of immense help to the parishioner.

How the cancer patient handles the diagnosis, treatment, and lengthy follow-through may depend on their personality, their support system, the other anxiety-provoking issues in their life, and their faith. The pastoral counselor has numerous ways to be of help. Some of them are listed here:

- A ministry of presence is important. So many issues are raised by the diagnosis, illness, and treatment of cancer, that only making a rare visit to see how the patient is doing is not sufficient pastoral care. Regular visits or office sessions can provide an outlet for the person to talk about what has emerged this week or in the last two weeks. The conversations will vary from practical consideration of transportation to medical appointments, to finding the best treatment, to what will it be like to die, should it come to that. This is another situation in which the suggestion that the person journal is very effective.
- A ministry of support groups has been proven very important. These groups can include a group of friends that meets regularly and a cancer patient group in which those on the same path can share care and resources. Support can also come, depending on the ability of the patient, from exercise groups, prayer groups, meditation and relaxation groups, and even art and literature groups. It is healing for the patient to have activities that are not defined by the cancer.
- A counseling ministry can be created to explore and consider modifying beliefs that contribute to fatalistic thinking and depression. Some people have self-destructive messages they received in childhood, or interpreted in childhood, that lead them to believe that disease is a way of God punishing bad people. Healing can be

frustrated if the body is reacting to an inner belief it *should* die. Helping change that belief to a life-giving belief can make the medical treatment more effective.

- A pulpit ministry can open the subject of being a community for those who struggle with health issues and particularly those who can become terminal.
- A ministry of teaching, by sharing some of the stress management techniques in the following section, can provide tools to patients to use by themselves or with others.

During an oncology residency, I had the valuable experience of visiting patients and talking with and observing nurses, doctors, and technicians who were all confronting cancer from their own perspective. It was clear that many physicians, surgeons, and radiologists were quite sensitive to the patients who were about to be examined for a possible diagnosis of cancer. It was also clear that all members of the medical team were sensitive to the patients after diagnosis and during treatment. What surprised me was the subtle, and sometimes overt, change in relationship to the patient when the prognosis changed to "nothing more we can do." The medical community is devoted to saving lives and healing people. When they cannot, they enter an emotional state not unlike that of the patient. The stages of grief become evident: denial, anger, withdrawal, and acceptance. The pastoral counselor needs to be the constant through this process, sustaining the patient, but also being in ministry to the medical team. The medical team often has no support system to talk to about their feelings of losing a patient. An oncologist friend, who was an excellent doctor, retired when several of his colleagues did not. I inquired about his reason for retiring. I expected the usual: to spend time with my wife, travel, garden, and so on. What he said as his eyes teared was, "I have watched too many of my friends

here at church die, and the pain is too much." His voice and his actions were a cry for help to work through the grief.

> *Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out.*
>
> Vaclav Havel

Stress, Distress, and Disease

According to Hans Selye, MD, the father of stress studies, stress is anything that triggers our system's need to adjust to our environment. Medically he called it the General Adaptation Syndrome. Whether it is our skin sending messages through its sensors that the room is too hot or too cold, or our eyes and ears hearing and seeing signs of imminent danger, the result is a series of neurochemical responses that change our respiration, heart rate, blood chemistry, and blood pressure, for example. Some stressors stimulate only a minor response and others a major physiological and psychological response. Stress is, therefore, on a continuum of difficulty and differs for each person. What stresses me a lot may not stress you and vice versa. Our automatic and quick response to stressors, from the autonomic nervous system, is designed to be lifesaving. After the stressor has passed, our system restores the hormones that drive the adaptation syndrome and is ready for the next stressor. When people live with chronic stressors over a long period of time, the system has no time to restore itself, and the depletion of physiological resources can lead to major illness through the breakdown of the immune system or other weak links in the person's body. When people have few coping skills and many stressors, they are in increased danger of major illness and accidents.

Pastoral counseling can provide a proven asset for stress-related issues. Herbert Benson, MD, cardiologist at Harvard Medical School, and his colleagues have proven that practicing meditation and reflective prayer and using directed relaxation techniques could reverse the action of the General Adaptation Syndrome and stimulate restoration of the human system's resources.

Stress is most often exhibited through two major human emotions: anxiety and anger. We each know what those emotions feel like. It is helpful to remember that counselees express those emotions in diverse ways. First, both anger and anxiety can be expressed inwardly or outwardly. When emotions are expressed externally, it is easier for a pastor to pick up on the symptoms. Anxiety will present as nervousness, difficulty sitting still for long periods, difficulty focusing on a subject for more than a few minutes, and behaviors that may seem like avoidance and wanting to run away from a situation. Anger expressed overtly can run the range from mild irritation and impatience to full rage. With stronger expressions anger may seem stronger than the immediate situation might call for. With either emotion the presence of symptoms not common for the person can give the observant pastor a cue to follow up in private for the rest of the story and the chance to be of help.

It is far more difficult when people express their emotions covertly, or inwardly. Outwardly a person may appear even calmer than usual, or present with little affect. Inwardly the General Adaptation Syndrome is fully turned on. That means the counselee may be experiencing an elevated heart rate and blood pressure, reduced immune response, or some other stress reaction. If it is known that the person has experienced a cluster of anger- or anxiety-provoking events, it can be assumed they have an active physiological response, even if their behavior is subdued. As a pastor it is important to notice if a person's response seems out of the

ordinary for an event in his life. A disconnect between experience and reaction can be a cue to engage the person in counseling. If a person is calm, collected, and even happily engaged in conversation in the aftermath of the death of a loved one, it is useful to make note that a private conversation in which to listen to the grief is likely in order. On the one hand, those who choose to suffer in silence may be in danger of a self-harming depression. On the other hand, they may have strong internal resources to draw on to work through and adjust to major losses. Either way a ministry of listening can be of support.

All people experience life-challenging events. Most will work their way through the events with their inner resources, faith, and friends. For major losses it often takes a period of two to four years to fully make peace with an ending and move on. When people get stuck in the process of grief, their changed behavior provides a clue and, in effect, a cry for help. Intervening as a counselor can be a powerful ministry. Those who are wired more as extroverts will often ask to talk with the pastor. Those who are wired as introverts may not. Therefore, a key to effective ministry is to become sensitive to the subtle indicators of need. That was the case of the pastor who picked up on the parishioner's change of handshake and followed up on the hunch.

Each person has one or more memories within that include a place that was beautiful, peaceful, safe, warm, and refreshing. It may be a place that person visited in childhood on a vacation, the place where she was born, a honeymoon location, or other place of solitude. Tapping into the inner resource can be a powerful stress-reduction experience. The pastoral counselor can help the counselee use her inner resources to restore a time of centered peacefulness. In addition to listening supportively, the pastoral counselor may use some of the following techniques to help counselees reduce their stress:

- Ask the counselee to listen to her breathing. Listen to the air coming in and the air going out. As you give these instructions, pace your own voice so it is slow, relaxed, and calm. The counselee will unconsciously follow your pacing and begin to slow down. Suggest that at first, when we are stressed, it is hard to hear our breathing, but to be patient, perhaps close her eyes and just listen. Also suggest that she not try to change her breathing, just listen to it. Using this breathing exercise over a few minutes will bring an inner calmness and reduce the heart rate.
- Tell the counselee you would like to lead him in a relaxation exercise he can use when anxious, to help return his body to a calmer state. Say the following in a calm, slow voice, pausing after each phrase so the counselee can experience the instruction:
  - "With your eyes closed and your body sitting upright but comfortably, begin to listen to the sound of your breathing . . . don't try to change it, just observe your breathing . . . notice as you breath in your chest expands to take in the air . . . notice as you exhale your muscles relax and let go of the tension . . . they are following the natural way your body reduces stress. As you quietly observe, it may seem as though your breathing gets louder . . . that is an indication you are beginning to listen inside yourself. Take some time to enjoy your body relaxing with each exhale . . . and restoring itself with each inhale. As you feel the calming rhythm of your breathing . . . let your mind search for a picture of the most relaxing place you have ever been . . . it may be inside or outside . . . a beach or mountain . . . a place that is special to you . . . when you have found that picture, just nod your head. Good. Look at the details in your picture . . . see it to your left . . . and to your right . . . when it seems very close and real to you, let yourself step right into that picture.

Be there again. See the beauty . . . feel the temperature of the air . . . smell the air and take in the scents unique to that special place . . . reach out and touch something there . . . feel its texture . . . be aware of how good it feels to take in a breath and be in that special place . . . now take one more look from left . . . to right . . . and take in another breath of the air there . . . remember what it is like to be there . . . and now slowly step out of the picture . . . feel yourself sitting in your chair . . . become aware of the floor under your feet . . . and the sounds of this room. When you are ready, bring the relaxation with you and open your eyes."

- Using the same beginning point of listening to the breathing, the counselor can also use the following script to guide the counselee in muscle relaxation. When people carry stress, they usually exhibit tightened muscles somewhere in their body. Some may have tight shoulder and neck muscles that contribute to headaches, while others may have tightened muscles in the back, contributing to lower back pain and spasms. This exercise helps reduce those areas of tension. When the muscles go to their longest and most relaxed position, the energy needed to keep them stressed can stop. This in turn slows the heart rate and calms the mind.
  - "With your eyes closed, your body sitting erect but comfortable, feet on the floor and hands in your lap, listen to the sound of your breathing. If you have trouble staying focused on listening to your breathing, just say to yourself, 'This is your time to relax . . . there is nowhere else you need to be and nothing more important to do at this moment . . . this is your time to heal your stress.' As you feel the rhythm of your breathing slowly taking in air . . . your diaphragm lowering to make space for the air . . . your chest expanding . . . and as the air goes out . . . your muscles relaxing and letting go . . . you are experiencing how

your body takes care of itself to renew and restore its resources. Now, with your focus inside your body, pay attention to the muscles of your feet, toes, and ankles. Become aware of any tension in those muscles . . . and as you exhale and the air goes out, say to those muscles, 'Let go and relax' . . . now slowly move your attention to the calves of your legs . . . become aware of any tension in those muscles . . . any tightness or soreness . . . and again, as you exhale say to those muscles, 'Let go and relax,' and let them go to their longest position. Now slowly move your attention to the muscles of the upper leg and thigh. Again, become aware of any tightness or soreness in those muscles, and as you exhale say to them, 'Let go and relax, sink into the chair, and flatten out.' Now move your attention to the torso, your abdomen and lower back. Become aware of any tension you are holding in your abdomen or lower back, and as you exhale, say to the muscles in those areas, 'Let go and relax,' and let them settle into the chair. Now gently move your attention to the shoulders, arms, and hands. Become aware of any tightness you are holding in your shoulders or arms. As you focus on these areas again, say to the muscles, as you exhale, 'Let go and relax.' Let your arms extend, your shoulders go to their lowest position, your hands become limp, and the stress drain down your arms and off your hands. And now, last, slowly move your focus to the muscles of your neck, face, and jaw. As you become aware of those muscles . . . slowly move your head back and forward, side to side until you sense the position where it takes the least amount of muscle strength to hold your head upright . . . now as you exhale, let go of every muscle you do not need to hold up your head . . . let the stress drain from your face so the muscles of your forehead smooth out . . . lower and unlock your jaw so the face relaxes . . . and let the stress drain down your arms and off your hands. Enjoy that

moment of relaxation . . . scan down your body to see if some muscles have tightened and if so, say to them, 'Let go and relax' as you exhale slowly. (Allow a short quiet time here.) Now, take one more breath, inhaling fully, exhaling slowly, and bringing the relaxation with you, while gently opening your eyes."

- The point of relaxation exercises is to help people learn they have more control than they think over how and where they hold stress, and there are simple ways they can become healthier in the midst of stressful times.
- Suggest the counselee go over the following checklist to see what might be helpful:
  - I practice relaxing my body at least once a day.
  - I use prayer or meditation to relax my mind at least once a day.
  - I face the issues before me with realism and practicality, solving what I have control over, and letting go of those things over which I have no, or little, control.
  - I look at my fears and try to understand them, and then I talk them over with others and try to provide solutions for those I can resolve and let go of those I can't.
  - I get regular exercise most days each week to support my body's need to be strong.
  - I eat healthily to be calm by reducing sugar and caffeine and to feed my body that which gives it the energy it needs to heal.
  - I do things to nourish me in all ways by engaging in art, service, reading, traveling, or whatever refreshes me.
  - I simplify my life, eliminating those things that have no real value but consume time and other resources.
  - I change worry to problem solving. If I have a worry, I determine what I can do about it and do it. If I have no solution, I drop the worry.

- I celebrate the gifts I have in life, such as my friends, family, beauty, and the gracious gift of others caring for me.

The Chronic Dependent

Most churches work hard to be accepting of everyone, though they often subtly screen out people who are too different from them. In spite of that, most consider it the ministry of the church to help those who do not fit in to general society in other organizations. Many churches find one, or a few, people who are there anytime the church door opens and who, because of mental or behavioral issues, present a challenge. These are people who become dependent on the church and its people because it is the only place where they feel some level of acceptance. Generally the congregation understands their circumstances and accepts them as they are. For the pastor the issue may be different. If the dependent person becomes attached to the pastor and forms a dependent relationship that consumes major portions of time, a difficult situation is presented. No one expects you, as a pastor or pastoral counselor, to spend all, or most, of your time with just one or two parishioners. It is unlikely that you will succeed in resolving the dependency that is a way of life for the person. The solution for you is found in how you maintain your boundaries. When you have time to listen, do so. When you need to move on, say so. With a generous spirit, recognize the dependent person has a deep need to belong, and there are few places that will happen except within family and the church. If the family is gone, the church is all that remains. Some churches have been successful in finding a small but useful task to which the person can be assigned. The dependent person will quite often be grateful and will do the task faithfully for years.

If the dependent person exhibits behaviors that are problematic for the church because of excessiveness or other disruptive characteristics, it is time to address a referral. Though mental health resources can be scarce in some parts of the country, there may be a community health service that can evaluate, provide counseling, and provide medication as needed. Chronic cases of dependent personality are beyond the time and resources of most pastoral counselors, even though they will be present in many churches. We will address the referral process in a later chapter.

Crisis in the Pew: Personality Conflicts between Parishioners

It is common for a pastor or pastoral counselor to be faced with the need to resolve differences between members of the church. Left unresolved, differences can grow to become a polarizing factor in the congregation. Many church committees have meetings in which differences of ideas, goals, or processes are aired, and most get resolved through the meeting conversation. For those occasions in which a resolution does not occur and the level of upset, anger, and accusations rises, the pastor must intervene as a counselor. I have found these moments of conflict to be teaching moments as well as therapeutic moments. Most interpersonal conflicts fall into differences over

- Goals
- Values
- Attitudes
- Norms
- Ideas

A conflict over goals occurs when one person thinks one goal is the most important and another person believes a different goal should have priority. One person may feel conserving money is the highest value, and another helping the poor is the highest value. One person may exhibit an attitude of openness to a variety of people in the community, while someone else may feel all the people in the church should be about the same. Norms are expected behaviors, how we should do things here. As new people become members, they often bring a different set of normative expectations than those already in the church. That's true for new pastors coming to a church also. Differing ideas is self-explanatory and common. Keeping differences from leading to major conflict can be done through an effort to teach people about the gifts that each of our differences brings to the church community. God has not created us all the same. We each have different gifts. A useful model to teach, and for referral in resolving conflict, was mentioned in chapter 3. This is LIFO®, a strength-development model. LIFO® suggests to us that there are four major ways of looking at the world, gathering information about the world, processing that information, making decisions, and communicating. Each way has its own priority values, beliefs, and aspirations.

There is a building in Italy built on a high hill. Each side of the building is exactly the same except each faces a different direction. Each has a window to the world. But looking out one window, you cannot see what is seen out the other windows. It takes all four windows to see the whole world. Our personal orientation and strengths are like those windows. Below is a chart that shows how each of the four personality strength groups handles common tasks. Each can be successful. They just do it differently. The more people recognize the strengths each possesses, the more the collaborative use of those strengths is possible. When appreciation of others is missing, people resort to behavior as if their way is the only acceptable way.

Four Ways to Help			
Supportive Giving	**Controlling Taking**	**Conserving Holding**	**Adapting Dealing**
• Like to be asked for help • Tries to meet others' needs • Supports efforts to learn and grow • "I'm here if you need me."	• Offers unsolicited advice • Does what's needed without being asked • Assumes control of difficult situations • "Here's what to do."	• Offers informative and practical advice • Promotes orderly thinking • Contributes reason and objectivity • "Here are the pros and cons."	• Listens with empathy • Lightens mood with humor • Lets others speak their mind • "What do you want?"

Four Ways to Control			
• Sets high standards for others • Makes others dependent on help • Does what is right • Provides best solution for all	• Takes charge and initiates • Persists to overcome resistance • Uses authority • Tells what should be done	• Follows structured agenda • Sets systems and procedures • Sticks to facts • Documents position	• Uses finesse and humor • Reveals own position last • Promotes openness • Pleases and placates others

Four Ways to Control			
• Compares against an ideal model • Examines for quality • Evaluates consequences for all • Tests for relevancy	• Examines "bottom line" impact • Selects data to support position • Goes with first acceptable option • Prefers quick study	• Prefers step-by-step method • Organizes data to examine options • Looks for practical payoff • Wants detailed facts and figures	• Examines data for social implications • Solicits analysis of others • Accepts new and conflicting data • Seeks open-ended exploration

Four Ways to Analyze			
• Negotiates based on principles • Responds to needs of others • Seeks integrated solution • Wants to do the right thing for everyone	• Responds to urgency • Barters competitively • Provides separate areas of autonomy • Likes hard bargaining	• Responds to logic and data • Goes along little by little • Takes time to explore options • Uses rules of order and follows agenda	• Gives in order to get • Seeks win-win outcome • Gets others to initiate, then adapts • Keeps action going

Four Ways to Participate as a Team/Committee Member			
Supportive Giving	**Controlling Taking**	**Conserving Holding**	**Adapting Dealing**
• Cooperates with requests for participation • Raises questions about consistency with values and goals • Shares credit for accomplishments • Is attentive to others who are talking	• Takes the initiative to start and keep discussion going • Keeps discussions focused on bottom-line issues • Presses for timely decisions • Makes sure that meetings are productive	• Assures that sufficient attention is paid to facts • Questions the accuracy of information • Helps discussion proceed in an orderly manner • Verifies that responsibilities are understood	• Creates pleasant and positive atmosphere • Helps the group examine possibilities • Provides positive reinforcement for contributions • Demonstrates empathy with varying viewpoints

When the Four Styles Use Their Strengths in Excess			
• Reluctant to work on projects with less relevance or purpose • Can get too involved in other people's problems and can't say "no" • Overly protective and sympathetic with others • May be too trusting and easily taken advantage of	• Dominate others and cuts off the flow of ideas • May sacrifice thought for action • Can overwhelm others by making everything an emergency • May not pay attention to maintain old ministries • May force action when none is needed	• Fails to appreciate other people's lack of interest in the information • May confuse people with too many options • May take too much time researching • Reluctant to embrace new ideas and change	• May entertain too much and distract from serious situations • Accommodates too much and may be seen as switching sides too easily • Gets overly social and takes time from tasks • May lose sight of direction of conversation and lose sight of goals

Adapted from BCon LIFO® International, Inc.

As has been mentioned, each of us has a preferred set of strengths that we use and that is key to our success. In addition, we often use strengths from a secondary style because not everything in life can be handled in one way. As the chart above indicates, there are many strengths that are important to the maintaining and execution of ministries in the church. The

chart also indicates some of the characteristics seen when we use our strengths in excess in a given situation. Our excesses are often erringly considered character flaws. It is useful to remember that they are our strengths used beyond their level of effectiveness in a given situation. When counseling persons whose excessive behaviors have become disruptive, it is useful to affirm the value of their strengths when used to an effective degree. They can be encouraged to consider those situations when they are likely to overuse their strengths. They can be encouraged to develop strategies to avoid the excess, including increased use of their other strengths. There is a saying that if all you have is a hammer, then everything begins to look like a nail. Using our other strengths provides more tools than just the hammer. There are several strategies to support people in being more effective:

1. Dial back on your strengths when the reaction of others indicates you may be using them in excess.
2. Since not all problems can be solved the same way, practice using your other strengths to develop options.
3. We cannot be all things to all people; therefore, find others whose strengths are complementary, that is, they are skilled where we may not be. Teaming with others helps us all be more effective.
4. Consider personal development by learning new approaches through reading, workshops, or counseling.

Self Check

Read each of the following statements. Choose the statement that is most like you and put a (1) in the box, Put a (2) in the box next to the statement that is the next most like you. Then select the one that is the *least* like you and put a (4) in the box. Put a (3) in the remaining box.

- ☐ "If I prove my worth by working hard and pursuing excellence, the good things in life will come to me. I value excellence, being helpful, and being principled and dedicated."
- ☐ "If I can get results by being competent and seizing opportunity, the good things in life will be there for the taking. I value action and results and being persistent, urgent, and directing."
- ☐ "If I think before I act and make the most of what I have, I can build up my supply of the good things in life. I value reason and being careful, systematic, analytical, and getting it right."
- ☐ "If I please other people and fill their needs first, then I can get the good things in life I have wanted all along. I value harmony, knowing people, being empathetic, tactful, flexible, and getting along with others."

Results

The description you numbered (1) is your preferred window into life—your preferred style. The description you numbered (2) is your *back-up* style that you use to support and assist your preferred orientation. The description you numbered (4) is your least preferred orientation and probably the area you least understand, feel least comfortable with, and it might be the orientation you would be most in conflict with. The description you left blank, or entered (3), represents some additional tools you might occasionally use but which would not greatly influence how you address other people and approach life. To help you look at the implications of your own orientation, the four descriptions, in order, are: Supporting-Giving, Controlling-Taking, Conserving-Holding, and Adapting-Dealing. Take some time to go over the charts previously shown, with your choices, and consider the strengths and potential areas of excess use of those strengths.

Putting Strength Orientation Knowledge to Work

Sometimes conflict in the church, or among some of its members, is a conflict of style or approach. Sometimes the conflict is based in one or more persons "overusing" their strengths so that their behavior has become counterproductive. There can be a tendency for those affected by the excessive use of strengths to shut down the person entirely, as if that person has lost his ability to contribute usefully. In these cases a pastor can bring people back into productive work by recognizing the people's strengths and asking them to use their considerable capabilities while still listening to and valuing the different approaches of their colleagues. In cases of more severe disruptive behavior, it is best to hold that conversation one-on-one during a break or after a meeting. Reassure the person of her valued contribution and indicate the need for her to find ways to collaborate with those who approach things differently. God has given differing gifts so that together we might see better the whole picture. No one perspective holds the whole truth. When differing windows on the world create conflict among committee or board members, an intervention can be used to ask those who differ to list the qualities of one another that each admires and finds helpful.

The valuing of our different gifts is a powerful subject for a sermon. Paul mentions the gifts of administration, preaching, healing, and so on, but our gifts also include differing perspectives, experience, and talent. An effective ministry community requires use of all the possible gifts in a way that supports their best use.

In a recent church meeting the following conversation took place:

George: The issue of the church roof has become urgent. I believe we should replace the whole roof immediately. If we don't have the money, I think we should go to the bank and borrow it and get it done.

Alfred: Well, I don't know, George, I think we should get some opinions from several roofers. It may be that we only need repairs in some areas and that the whole roof could wait until we can save the money. In addition, roofing has changed since this roof was put on, and I think we should research the best kind of roof to use.

Mary: "I think you both have good points. I like the idea of fixing the roof before more damage is done, but it would be wise to make the best decision on what kind of roofing to use."

Jane: "The most important thing to me is that we do it with the best materials available. It may cost more but last longer. I was always taught if you buy the best it would last longer. But I will do what I can to help the group sort this out."

As you may recognize, George, Alfred, Mary, and Jane, although they are all responsible church members, have different styles for approaching the problem of the roof. Their challenge is to find an approach they can all support. If we place a pastor in this scenario, we insert a strength orientation that will match that of one of the members but potentially be different than that of the other three. The pastor may have a "back-up" preference that will match another member's preference, which potentially leaves two members whose preferences differ from those of the pastor and two other members. If this committee is good at recognizing differing gifts, they can come to a solution that uses the best of each of them. If they do not value differences, they are likely to argue, perhaps

get stuck, and hurt someone's feelings in the process. The pastor, with awareness of their differences, can become a useful facilitator, avoiding a crisis, and moving the group to a solution.

Some useful questions:

- How might we speak about this issue in a way that respects our differences?
- Since we each have a unique way to solve problems that works for us, how might we use the best of each way to benefit the church's decision?
- When we listen to one another, would you be willing to share what you heard before sharing your comment? That way we can know if each idea got across as intended or if we need to clarify.
- Can we agree that we would have no conflict if we didn't care, so conflict means we do care and are working to do the best thing? Now, how can we speak so we disagree without being disagreeable?

Crisis in the Pew: Sexual Behavior

Pastors are sometimes seen as something other than what they are. Sometimes they are seen through the eyes of personal desire. Jeff had been appointed to a new church as the first full-time pastor. He was young, full of energy, and personable. He wanted this church to be a loving and growing congregation. There were young couples with children, middle-aged people with older children, and seniors with grandchildren—all in all a nice, balanced congregation.

One day Jeff received a call from a woman whose husband was an engineer. They had two adolescent children who were both active in the

church. She indicated she wanted to talk to him and could he make a call at their home.

> Jeff arranged a time for the afternoon and showed up on time. The children greeted him at the door and then retreated to the back of the house. He and their mother went to the living room. She pointed to the sofa and asked him to have a seat. She then placed herself quite close to him on the sofa. His first impulse was some discomfort, but he rationalized that she wanted to share without the children overhearing. That was probably a correct assumption, but what he heard next increased the discomfort. She began by saying that she knew he had been speaking directly to her the last few weeks in his sermons on love and that she wanted him to know she shared his feelings for her. In his befuddlement he said that he had not intended to speak in a personal way to her and that he was speaking in a general way to the whole congregation. It became clear she did not think that was so. Jeff said that he needed to leave. He said that he was pleased that she cared about him, but he would hope it would be in a way that all of the congregation cared for him and not inappropriate to his role or her marriage. He asked her to think it over, speak about her feelings with her husband, if she could, and see what they could work out. Over the next two days she called several times, indicating her strong feelings and hope to pursue a relationship. At this point Jeff decided to call her husband at work. He asked the husband if he could come by the church on his way home for an urgent matter. The husband came, and Jeff shared his experience; and though the husband was upset and embarrassed, Jeff assured him that his wife and he needed to work with a therapist

> and that it did not mean that she did not love her husband. Jeff gave the husband a card for a referral to a good marriage therapist and one for a good psychiatrist. Jeff offered to make calls and introduce the husband to the referral resource. He asked the husband to be supportive since his wife was experiencing some detachment from reality and needed to be cared for until she could work it out.

In this case, Jeff realized he could not be a pastoral counselor to the woman and her husband, since, in her mind, Jeff was part of the issue. He recused himself from that role but continued to express pastoral concern. He also reminded the husband that this experience was all in confidence, and the rest of the church would have no knowledge that would create a problem for their continued church activities.

As the story turned out, there were other indications of psychological problems that were discovered, and the woman was able to receive appropriate treatment and the family was saved a breakup based on a misunderstanding.

It is flattering to have congregation members, or others, think us to be their heart's desire. If you feel a need to share that feeling, it is a sign that you are not paying attention to unresolved issues within yourself. Integrity is based in self-honesty. Integrity is easily lost through self-deception and is difficult to regain. When these invitational flirtations arise, and they will, realize that in some way you are part of the problem. That means you cannot be the pastoral counselor who helps you resolve it. When confronted by the offer, thank the person for his or her flattery and encourage him or her to share his affection with someone who is available.

Sexuality is an open part of culture in our country. Entertainment features it; the news indicates prominent people crossing boundaries not heard

of even two decades ago. Adolescents, transitioning to adulthood, receive mixed messages about sexuality and morality. Clergy are not immune to sexual fantasies and sometimes acting out these fantasies. In recent years, since the Internet has become ubiquitous, increasing numbers of clergy have succumbed to affairs, pornography, and "sexting" addictions. There are two issues to address in the limitations of this book. The first is the crisis of counseling a church member who presents with the problem of sexual addiction, either Internet based or behaviorally in the community. Unless you have had specialized training, this issue is beyond the pastoral counselor. It is not beyond pastoral care though. Regardless of their crises, all people are deserving of the support, guidance, and love of God, as demonstrated in the nonjudgmental response of the pastor. The second is when the person with the crisis is the pastor, male or female, who recognizes that he or she is attracted to the seamy parts of the Internet and is spending time in arousal while visiting pornographic sites. The potential for pain and harm is immense in this issue. Without treatment this sexual addiction will destroy the pastoral family and the pastor's credibility and will shake the congregation's faith in future clergy for some time. If this is your dilemma, don't wait. Get the help you need, now. Take a healthcare sabbatical, or whatever time you need to work through the behavioral, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of this part of your being. If you believe you can work it out by yourself, in secret, mark yourself as delusional. Avoid the pain you will cause yourself and others, and act.

Crisis in the Pew: The Critic

There are few churches that do not contain in their membership a few people who deem it their calling to "improve" the pastor by criticism.

Their insistent nattering, on one issue after another, drains the energy from those who attend to them. There is great temptation to treat them so poorly they will leave the church. Unfortunately that usually compounds the problem. When they leave, they become regular critics of the church through the community. Unhappy people tend to let a lot of people know they are unhappy. The alternate choice requires the communication skills reserved for conflict. In the following example, Janelle, the pastor for six months, was learning about Marge, the resident critic, firsthand.

> Marge: Pastor Janelle, I really want you to be a success here, you're so nice, so there are some things you need to know.
> Janelle: What would it be helpful for me to know, Marge?
> Marge: Well, first, you want to watch your step around the Carlsons. He was treasurer for a while, and we never have gotten the books straight. I think he made off with some money. And then he lead a group to get rid of the pastor!
> Janelle: Marge, it sounds as if you have a strong accusation against the Carlsons. Do you have any evidence of that charge?
> Marge: No, but you better keep an eye on them.
> Janelle: Thank you, Marge. What else do you think I should know about?
> Marge: Well, I hate to mention this, but it's for your own good. You know the dress you wore last Sunday, I think it is a little suggestive, and the men are paying too much attention to it.
> Janelle: Marge, I appreciate your concern for me, but what I hear from you so far is your opinion and not much concrete, useful facts. I would like you to think about how you can make the church better by finding what you like about things and not just what you don't like. It would help me know what to continue

supporting in the church. Thanks for being concerned. Let me know when you have your list of what's right. I want to hear it.

Notice that Janelle was firm, fair, and factual with Marge. She avoided engaging in the game that Marge likes to play, called "aren't they awful." Over time Janelle will continue to be firm and fair with Marge and reinforce that she is not interested in gossip but is open to hear about what is working well. Since Marge likes having the ear of her pastors, she will slowly learn the best way to do that is to bring something positive to the table.

If Janelle alienates Marge, she may open a can of worms. Other church members know about Marge's gossip, and they have tolerated and mostly ignored it. But she has been there a long time, and they would not want to see her hurt. Janelle has chosen to respond to Marge's critical Parent comments with her own Adult responses. That combination will only become satisfying to Marge if she follows Janelle's lead, which she is likely to do to keep her status as one to whom the pastors listen.

Marital Stress, Separation, Divorce, and Death

Only love is big enough to hold all the pain of this world.
Sharon Salzberg

Working with couples who are trying to renegotiate their relationship is a common task of the pastoral counselor. In chapter 1 a process called the Pinch Theory was described and recommended. The pinch process not only helps couples see how the pinches developed in their relation-

ship and perhaps went unresolved, leading to a crunch time, but also teaches them a way to commit to staying caught up with the inevitable times of disrupted expectations. When using the pinch process, the counselor is both a teacher and a facilitator. Teaching the process is brief and easy. Facilitating the conversation for a couple to examine the pinches and renegotiate a commitment requires using listening skills and coaching the couple when they slide into arguing about whose version of history is most accurate. It is important to use the pinch process as a model for couples to look at their relationship but not as a tool to pick through every pinch they have ever had and left unresolved. Its value is for the couple to see a way to create the relationship they want in the future through renegotiation in a timely manner. As a counselor, you can creatively use a few questions to focus on the present and future rather than on the past:

- If your relationship were presently working, what would you be doing differently?
- If, in a week, you woke up one morning and your marriage was clearly loving and happy, what would you personally have been doing that helped it be that way?
- What qualities does your spouse have that would make a better marriage if they were used more?
- When you have had pinches in the past, what strengths have you used to move through them and restore your relationship?

By focusing on what strengths a couple has exercised, and what future they wish to create, the arguments of accurate recall of history can be reduced or dropped and progress can be made. Using this model can move a couple from crisis to solutions.

If a couple clearly do not wish to restore the relationship or remake it into their desired quality, then the counseling moves to how they will manage a separation or divorce.

With marital separation and divorce, the counselor may only have the opportunity to work with one party in the marriage. If it is clear that the relationship is irreconcilable, then the focus of counseling is on supporting the counselee through the transition process. With one party, and occasionally with both parties, the therapeutic task centers around the issues of the erosion of love and the persistence of attachment. Couples often think of divorce as the end of a relationship. It is usually not. Rather, it is a major change in the nature of the relationship. This is especially true when children are involved. But even without children, couples often have developed relationships with each other's family, siblings, friends, and colleagues. When the separation and divorce occur, all these relationships go through transitions. Often her friends will remain hers, and his friends will remain his. Those people who were friends of both have a tough decision either to choose one, go through an uncomfortable time of trying to support both, or drop the relationships altogether.

It is less important here to discuss all the reasons a marriage might come apart than it is to understand what people experience when it does fall apart. In marriages that last less than two or three years, a separation may occur that has little emotional trauma because it is likely the couple have not become attached enough to feel a deep loss. A marriage that exists for five or more years will usually exhibit the same types of emotional response as a marriage that has existed for twenty or more years. Research on marital separation by Robert S. Weiss, professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts, reported in his book *Marital Separation*, indicates the person "leaving" and the person "left" have very similar emotional transitions. Although the timing of the erosion of love

may differ between partners, the persistence of attachment will continue in interesting ways. In fact, for couples with children or business partnerships, there may be a legal requirement that they remain accessible to each other though divorced.

When a decision to separate or divorce is made by one or both parties in a marriage, a process of transition begins and will continue for more than two years, and in difficult circumstances may continue for over five years. An attorney informed one counselee that it would take ten years to untangle the business investments she and her husband had across the country. Emotional closure is difficult to achieve when an ending is delayed.

On a different note, there are some couples who choose to retain some attachments while separating others.

> Doris and Roger were married for twenty years. They had an amiable relationship but not an evenly satisfying one, according to their description. They were quite different in personality, vocations, and aesthetic interests, and so they often spent time with other people who shared those interests rather than with each other. They finally concluded they would divorce although neither had an immediate interest to marry anyone else. For several years they would regularly get together for sex because that was one area that had been very satisfying for both. It remained a significant attachment for a number of years until Roger decided to move across the country. This final separation was the most difficult. This was the part of their marriage that really worked. They felt no loss for the rest of their relationship since most of the relationship was spent with other people, their friend networks.

The transition from married to single, whether short or long by the calendar, will follow a generally predictable path. Knowledge of this enables the pastoral counselor to recognize when his counselees are moving along the path and therefore will be most helpful to them.

In the pinch model, we used the term *disrupted expectations*. In separation and divorce, more than expectations are disrupted. As a counselor, you will likely hear people describing themselves as:

- Dis-identified – "I used to be 'Mrs _____,' and now I am not sure who I am." "I used to be a 'partner,' and now I don't know how to say what I am." "My identity was with my spouse, and now I have no sense of myself."
- Dis-oriented – "I used to get up and go through a routine each day: wake, shower, eat, feed the dog, go to work, come home, walk the dog, eat, watch the news, go to bed. Now I get up and I feel almost dizzy. I have trouble deciding what to wear, what to eat, how to care for the dog. Sometimes I even feel unsure how to get to work and am late. I have never been late."
- Dis-engaged – "I am feeling disconnected with a lot of people. My neighbors, friends, people at church, some at work; it is like my separation has pulled a plug on so many relationships."
- Dis-enchanted – "I grew up believing that marriage was forever. I had friends whose parents were divorced, but mine had been together forever. That was the way I thought my marriage would be. Now I'm not sure what to believe about marriage. Can I ever trust anyone again?"

All these "dis's" are normal effects of the loss of attachment.[2] These are typical in the first stages of transitions. All change begins with an

ending. Something that was there is no longer there. Something I counted on, accepted as always accessible, is no longer there. This time of endings can be very painful, as indicated, and disorienting and can create almost numbness in the person experiencing the ending. It appears to be true both for those who leave a relationship and for those who are left, although it may be felt first by the one being left.

As the ending progresses and reality becomes clear, the second stage of transition emerges. We call this the chaos time. It is best described as a feeling that "I am no longer where I was but am not where I will be." Poet Robert Frost once described it as "being lost enough to find oneself." The chaos time may last for months, but gradually a glimpse of new beginnings will break in.

We each have gone through these stages, and we know them not to be neat but rather to weave in and out of one another and to eventually lead to a new beginning. If we reflect on our many beginnings, we realize that most have not been planned but have arisen out of a transition when a door or window opened and we saw a possible tomorrow.

The pastoral counselor can help the counselee avoid rushing into a beginning to avoid the pain of an ending, helping the person slow down and take the time to learn what is needed to make the passage in a healthy manner. A powerful tool for this passage is journaling. Ask the counselee to write each day about his thoughts, feelings, confusions, dreams, actions, inaction, or anything at all. After each two-week period ask the person to describe what he is learning about himself in this process. Remember that counseling supports the person while he designs his way to the future.

In addition to marital separation that occurs through the choice of one or more partners, there is also separation and the ending of marriages that occur through sudden and tragic death. In the next chapter we will see the similarity and differences in responding to acute and episodic crises.

When relationships end, whether through divorce or death, there is a grief process on the part of all parties. The pastoral counselor can help people recognize the signs of grieving and support the process, helping them let go, work through the inner chaos, and embrace new opportunities.

Having described a situation in which couples may renegotiate and resolve a crisis and a situation in which their choice is to separate or divorce, as a pastoral counselor or you also have a choice. Somewhere in this process you will become aware of how much time you can give to this couple and how much skill you have to help them. Being aware of the factors of skill and time allows you to prepare them for a referral before they are bonded with you and find a referral feeling like a rejection. I find it helpful to raise the issue at the very beginning of the counseling. I use a declaration something like this: "I understand you need some counseling to help you sort out your marriage at this time, and I am pleased you have asked me to help. I want to be clear up front, however, that should we decide you need more time and more skills than I can offer, we will work together on a referral to make sure you get the very best help at this time." You will have your own way of communicating this boundary issue.

Some considerations for the pastoral counselor include the following beliefs. I have found them changing the way I view people, how effectively I listen, and how our relationship contributes to the change they seek. Until proven otherwise I believe that all counselees:

- Are doing the best they can under difficult circumstances
- Are invested in ideas they generate
- Want to be ethical, courteous, polite, and honest and want to improve their lives

- Want to get along with others
- Want to be accepted and belong to a group
- Want to make their lives better as well as the lives of those they love, respect, and admire
- Want to take care of important others and be taken care of by them
- Want to leave a positive legacy and make a difference in the world
- Want to be respected by others and to respect others.[3]

Approaching pastoral counseling through this lens keeps the focus on supporting counselees' search for solutions they wish to implement for their problems as they define them. For the counselor to become an expert advice-giver in the many issues people face is to inadvertently communicate that you believe they are incompetent to work through their own lives or that their idea is wrong and only yours is correct. Both interpretations tend to sever counseling relationships.

Chapter Five

Episodic Issues: The 24/7 Challenge

I'm not afraid of death, it's just that I don't want to be there when it happens.
Woody Allen, filmmaker

I think we are all like Woody Allen. We would like to avoid the experience of death, and, even more, we would like all those we love to avoid it. When it does occur, it is a challenge to climb over the grief wall and face what's on the other side. When we have advance warning, we imagine what we will experience in dying or the death of a loved one. When it occurs, all that advance consideration usually provides little comfort for the reality.

Episodic issues are those that occur suddenly. They may be major or minor, but they are not planned for on your calendar. Though not planned, they usually require changing other plans and addressing them

due to their urgency and, usually, importance. Let's list a few that might come under that category:

- Sudden death, no illness or warning, may be due to an accident or military action.
- Violence or terrorism, such as recent school shootings, bombings, and murders.
- Suicide, with either no warning or misread signals.
- Natural disasters such as hurricane, earthquake, flood, drought, volcano, blizzard, or fire.
- Economic based, such as layoffs due to a major employer closing or moving.

These, and others, are unique issues for a pastoral counselor for the suddenness of their occurrence and the impact on large numbers of people. There are three areas for consideration as a counselor. The first is, whatever the issue, to be there for the people, regardless of how skilled or unprepared you may feel you are.

The second issue for the counselor is preplanning. Connect with local law enforcement and other first-response agencies in your area. Find out if there is a response plan and how your church can be part of it. Ask your congregation to volunteer and become prepared. The pastor and pastoral counselor can mobilize a small community, with inclusion of first responders, to develop a disaster-response plan before such a plan is needed. Examine what the church can provide, such as volunteers, food preparation, temporary housing, clothing, meeting space for all involved agencies, and a communication link to many in the community. In addition, the church can train some members to be therapeutic listeners to individuals and groups in the wake of a tragedy. The Trauma Intervention

Program (www.tipnational.org) offers training and guidance. Gather useful printed material such as CareNotes (800-325-2511). Have a readily available cash reserve to purchase needed supplies. If the church has to have several meetings to access resources, it will be of less help.

Third, the pastoral counselor can become prepared as a critical resource to provide Critical Incident Debriefing. A critical incident is defined as any event, such as a shooting, that presents a physical or psychological threat to the safety or well-being of an individual or community, regardless of the type of incident. The Oklahoma City bombing and the 9/11 airplane hijackings and crashes in New York City, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., are recent major examples. Critical incidents need not be as large as those mentioned to affect your community.

When terrorists flew airplanes into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, the building materials, ashes, fire, and impact of the explosions damaged many other buildings in the vicinity. One was Trinity Episcopal Church, one of the nation's oldest churches. Some windows were blown out, and the building was filled with dust and ashes. The adjoining cemetery, with stones dating from before the Revolutionary War, was buried in debris. The small chapel, St. Paul's Chapel, was closest to Ground Zero but was mostly unharmed. The people of Trinity, many other churches across the nation, and agencies of all types established this chapel as the respite center for all first responders. Little by little they determined the needs. Food, clothing, a place of peace and rest, and replacement boots for those working on the hot ground all became the ministry of the chapel. There had been no advance plan. The plan was developed by caring people driven by the urgency of the event. Today St. Paul's Chapel is even more sacred because of the ministry of thousands in a time of crisis. Your church may never be called upon to serve in such conditions, but it can still prepare, plan, and train for whatever ministry may be required.

Critical Incident Debriefing

CID is a process for debriefing small groups of people, usually groups of eight to ten, who have all experienced a recent traumatic event. It is designed to reduce the effect of physical and psychological symptoms usually associated with trauma exposure. CID provided within twenty-four to seventy-two hours after the incident has been proven to reduce the short- and long-term crisis reactions to the trauma. Those exposed to traumas who do not receive CID are at greater risk of developing long-term clinical symptoms of such disorders as post-traumatic stress disorder. Groups of different sizes can be offered depending on the need. The following guidelines can be used:

- Assess the impact of an event on support personnel, first responders, and survivors. If people seem disturbed, overwhelmed, or disoriented, CID is called for.
- Make sure the event is over and safety and security have been achieved.
- Encourage all exposed to the trauma to participate in a CID group to benefit themselves and others.
- In the group, ask people to sit in a circle to see and hear one another best. Begin by saying, "We have all been exposed to a trauma, and so we are here to share and support one another as we face the trauma and keep it from doing more harm to any of us."
- Lead the group in a process of structured "ventilation and validation." Ask each person to share, using the following questions to guide the process:
    - Where were you when the trauma occurred? What did you see and hear?

  - If you were not at the trauma site, how did you hear of it?
  - What did you feel when you heard of or saw the trauma?
  - What did you think as you felt that?
  - What are you thinking or feeling right now?
- As each person shares, validate that what each is thinking and feeling is normal given the event. We all experience strong feelings such as anger, fear, disorientation, and helplessness. (Remember, these are similar to the feelings associated with losing any attachment.)
- Make note of those persons who seem to be more overwhelmed and less able to handle the trauma. Provide referral to appropriate therapeutic professionals for these individuals. Follow up to see that they get their appointment, have transportation, and connect with the referral resource helpfully.
- Talk with the group about the future. What is the likelihood of another such trauma? What might need to be done to prepare for such a possibility? Thinking ahead helps people regain some control in the midst of helplessness.
- Provide a list of information and referral sources with contact information, so people can connect if symptoms develop in the days following the event.
- Share with the group that symptoms such as sleep disturbance, persistent anxiety, reactive depression, phobias, inability to be alone, inability to return to work or school, and overwhelming fear indicate the need for immediate professional support.
- There is some evidence emerging that CID is not as effective as originally thought in reducing the incidence of PTSD. It is clear that normalizing the emotional response by providing for trauma victims to hear one another's stories does reduce anxiety. Follow-up with victims can determine what else is needed.

Not all episodic issues are of the acute nature of those just mentioned. They may be issues such as a sudden hospitalization of a family member, a nonfatal car accident, or some other event in which there is no loss of life. Still, church members appreciate a thoughtful and prompt response at these anxiety-provoking times. Again, the counselor is the listener, letting the person or family tell their stories, express their concerns, and talk through what is needed next. In some of these settings, listening and validating feelings and plans is all that is needed. Depending on the theological culture of your church, prayer may be expected as part of the counseling presence. Be cautious to not make promises for yourself or God in prayers. Prayers of assurance or caring and presence are almost always helpful.

A Disaster-Response Plan

As pastor, you, along with members of your church, may feel that disaster preparedness is beyond your capacity and that you have little to offer. I believe every church, no matter the size, has something to offer and needs to be part of the solution. In most towns, counties, or regions there is a disaster-preparedness organization. It usually includes first responders such as police, fire departments, public safety, political representatives, and sometimes counterparts to federal groups such as FEMA. It often also includes what are called NGOs, or nongovernmental organizations, such as the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and churches. As has been mentioned before, when beginning your ministry at a small-membership church, it is important to make a call on the leaders of your area's emergency-response group. Find out what they have planned for an emergency and what your church might do to be part of it. For example, interim housing for people who have lost their homes, food service out of the church kitchen, meeting space for

emergency groups, and volunteers for many different tasks are all resources the church can provide. In addition, members can be trained to help in ministering to people traumatized by the emergency. After you have made the contacts to educate yourself on what is available in your area, create a disaster-response committee in your church.

As I write, the tornado-prone areas of Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri are suffering repeated disasters. Homes, businesses, churches, and lives are all being lost in great numbers. The Mississippi River valley is flooded for hundreds of miles covering thousands of homes and farmlands. This destruction can remind us to avoid having emergency response plans that are dependent upon the existence of a building, but instead to develop plans that have the flexibility for whatever needs to be faced.

Layoffs and Other Job Loss

The economic crash left few communities free from job loss. Businesses have closed, reduced employees, cut working hours or wages, or merged with other companies to survive. Many communities have seen the loss of major employers as they close or move to other countries. In previous good economic times people felt the loss of security but could count on other jobs being available when they needed them. Over the last few years, and probably for a number of years ahead, a very different job scene has developed. Many of the jobs lost will not return. In some cases industries will not return. People who have lost jobs will be faced with unexpected early retirement, or the need to return to school or acquire job-skill training to prepare for very different types of jobs. In the last decade, or more, many families had become accustomed to being a two-income family, with all the benefits that additional income could provide.

Now they may be faced with the loss of one or both of the jobs and a rapid readjustment of their finances. They may also be facing bankruptcy or loss of their homes, an idea they would never have anticipated.

As we mentioned in a previous chapter, all losses have some similar characteristics for the person coping with them. Employees assume that if they work hard and are paid fairly that there exists an unwritten contract for that arrangement to continue. That loyalty value system has operated in the workforce of our country until fairly recently and has now been all but shattered as businesses have been faced with unprecedented challenges. So the loss of a job is also experienced as a loss of trust in employers. It is that emotional component of the job loss, along with the desperation created by financial stresses, that makes job loss one of the biggest issues in many communities. The stronger the trust and the higher the financial expectations, the higher will be the susceptibility of the employee to depression, anxiety, anger, and all the disorienting emotions of significant endings. Though we focus here on those who lose a job, those who remain employed also are affected by similar emotions because no one knows who will be next. Those who are still employed enter an anticipatory loss process that may or may not become a loss. They feel guilty still working when their friends are not. "Why me?" expresses the frustration common to both those who are fired and those who are still employed.

If your church is in a community in which many are unemployed, providing a group ministry for both employed and unemployed is an effective counseling intervention. Some of the issues to be discussed are similar to the list for CID. In addition, the following may fit:

- Common symptoms or experiences
- Existence of denial
- Shared symptoms of unemployed and survivors

- Helping resources for those whose resources are exhausted or stressed
- Long-term symptoms
- Networking to help one another

It may be that your church membership will include both those who have been laid off from a company in the community and those who are still employed there. Since those who were laid off and those who survive will experience a similar track of anger, fear, anxiety, and guilt, a counseling ministry should include both parties in the same group. This allows each to hear the feelings and experience of the others and avoid polarizing the congregation around this issue. The more each side can join in the recovery process of others, the more likely the church and community will return to health and have a positive future. Since even those who are still employed carry the fear they may be next, both parties can benefit from shared resources. A counseling ministry can evolve into groups for developing job resumes, networking area businesses, hosting seminars on interviewing, job retraining, managing finances, and other appropriate subjects. Participating in these resources allows the pastoral counselor to watch for symptoms of depression, fatigue, and stress and then to follow up with individual contacts and listening.

For people who have worked most of their adult lives for the same employer and then have been laid off, the effect is quite devastating. In those cases time will not heal all wounds. The feeling that there is not enough time to recover all that has been worked for feeds a persistent depression and hopelessness. Paying attention to and supporting these folks can save a life.

If you are in a position to hold an employee support group in an employment-downsizing environment, consider these four levels to address over time with the group:

1. First few meetings: a listening process similar to CID, to let people describe the layoff process. How were they told? How do they feel they were treated? What do they wish managers had said? What could have made it easier?
2. Next few meetings: time to share grieving, to deal with repressed feelings, and to release the energy that is being used to maintain those feelings.
3. Next few meetings: focus on breaking their dependence from their organizations and reclaiming their sense of self-control and self-esteem.
4. Next few meetings: create the structural systems and processes for people to act on their own behalf to create new futures. Help group members face the fact that long-term employment is being replaced by flexible, diverse, and situational employment. Help people become part of the new workforce.

There are numerous other episodic events that may call upon your counseling skills. As you pay attention to what is happening in each, you will discover that what has been described in the previous chapters is likely true in those situations also. The same stressors often come dressed in different clothes. Your use of listening skills and creative support as people tell their stories will help you know if you are helping or if it is time to consider a referral.

Chapter Six

Life Cycle Opportunities for Pastoral Counseling

Helping is a fundamental human relationship. Helping is a basic relationship that moves things forward.
Edgar H. Schein

Though helping is fundamental, as Edgar Schein suggests, it is often fraught with error and misunderstanding. Most of us recognize when someone has been helpful, and we often express gratitude for it. We also recognize when someone attempts to be helpful and isn't. How we respond then may be quite different. It is a little like the gentleman who helped the elderly lady across the busy street only to discover she hadn't wanted to go there. Counseling, when it works, is helping. It is, however, a more formal mode of helpfulness. In previous chapters, I have written of crisis response and structured ways to assist people handling trauma. In the church, there are many situations that present an opportunity for counseling that are not nearly as heavy with

emotion. They may also include quite happy occasions such as weddings and births. Though we cannot address here all the potential scenarios, I will take a swing at some of the opportunities that arise from the human life cycle.

Births

Couples preparing for the birth of their child, whether the first or latest, experience a wide range of emotions. Pastors can be alert to the mix of feelings and use them as a cue to pastoral care. The hormones of mothers go through many changes during pregnancy. That is to be expected. I believe that, to a lesser extent, the same thing happens to fathers.

From highs of expectations to lows of fear, the expectant parents ride the prenatal roller coaster. Staying close to expectant parents enables a pastor to be responsive when issues arise. If sonograms show something amiss, parents may go into panic mode. Listening to their fears and helping them sort out what is real and what they need to make choices about is therapeutic listening in the midst of their crisis. Enabling them to tell their story with their hopes and fears can help them hear themselves and regain some emotional control. It is also helpful to note if either is not sharing a hope or fear with the other to avoid disturbing the partner. Counseling can help them share their concerns and join in support of the birth process together. Many parents may not exhale until the birth occurs and all the toes have been counted. Your regular presence through this intimate process makes you a partner for many things in the future.

Parenting

New parents, if they came from stable homes, are likely to parent much the way they were parented. For those who had poor role models for parenting, it is taking a trip without a map. Either way, all parents hit some bumps as children present them with issues. Many will deal with behavioral problems. Parenting is a wonderful time to build a cross-generational connection in your congregation. You may not be married or may not have had children, thus making you a bit tentative as a resource person. But your church may have wonderful grandparents whose own children and grandchildren are far away and who would love to be a church partner for young couples. Most parental anxieties will dissolve as the child progresses, but sometimes children have severe problems. Most of these require skilled diagnosticians to correctly identify the problems and prescribe treatment. When parents express their concerns to you, it is a good time to pull out your referral list. Get them to the right professional and stay with them in your pastoral care.

So consider avoiding the tendency to be all things to all people and organize your congregation to minister to one another. Parent support groups, cross-generation partners, and Wednesday evening speakers using local experts such as pediatricians, social workers, family therapists, and others are all ways of providing and engaging the church in ministry.

Adolescents

Ministry to the youth in your church will expose you to the rainbow of adolescent life, from those who are talented delights to those whose

hormones are sending them screaming through school and church and driving their parents mad. Adolescents respond well to group settings they can share with a trusted adult. If you can, be that adult. If not, make sure they have one or more adults to guide them. Again for the boundary cases, pull out the referral list and support them as you can.

Teens often have not grasped the fragility of life. That fact coupled with a need to show off for friends, a tendency for speeding, and a willingness to try or use alcohol and drugs can form a lethal crisis. Sometimes the impact is on the innocent.

> Sarah was a high school senior with lots of talent, a commitment to hard work, good grades, and numerous friends. She was making a success out of her life in spite of a mess of a family. Her single mother, with whom she lived, drank a lot, and her mother's boyfriend drank more. One evening, just an hour before my daughter was to meet her for an activity, her mother told Sarah to go to the store with the mother's boyfriend for a list of items. The boyfriend was driving. A few blocks from her house the car dead-centered an oak tree at a high rate of speed, and Sarah was killed.
>
> Within a short time my daughter, her friends, and other people from school were all in shock and grief to think their friend was gone after working so hard to create a different life for herself.

This kind of crisis is far too common and one in which you, as pastor, can be a powerful resource. Following the process for CID, you can help a group of young people or adults work through their fears, anger, and all the varied human emotions such events trigger. You can remind them, not preach to them, that their love for one another will be an important

resource in the days and weeks ahead. Obviously, if it is personal to your church, you can hold follow-up groups for a few weeks at the church. Your congregation can offer to hold groups in the school as a way to expand your ministry and help the kids who are affected. When tragic deaths occur, it is immensely important to note the event on your calendar for the coming year. Anniversaries of tragedies bring back unresolved grief and can trigger other issues. Recognizing those dates in public can normalize human grieving and bring it out of the shadows to light and love.

Premarital Counseling

Engaged couples come to speak with the minister about marriage with all sorts of issues. Some couples are mature, well prepared, and know each other well. They understand some of what marriage will hold for them and may have solid role models in their families. Some may come because "they have to get married" or think they should, but their commitment may be a little shaky. This might not seem like crisis counseling to the pastor, but it may feel like that to the couple. One might consider it preemptive crisis counseling, although even the best therapy cannot ensure a solid marriage over a lifetime. Many couples come to arrange a calendar date for the wedding. My own practice has been to say I require a minimum of three sessions of premarital counseling, and after that we will see about a date or further work.

When I began working as a pastor, I accepted each offer to celebrate a marriage, believing it was my duty to do so. After a while I realized that my duty was more than just being present at the ceremony; I had a responsibility to the couple also. From then on I required a minimum of

three sessions of premarital counseling with each couple, with the decision about the marriage to come at the end. After the three sessions, the decision usually was: (a) more counseling; (b) the couple had changed their mind or decided to wait; or (c) the wedding was scheduled. I was not creating rules to be authoritative but to communicate that the decision in which they were asking me to participate was an important and sacred one. I feel deep joy when a couple, married long ago after counseling, takes the time to thank me for my part in their marriage. I know they did the hard work. I just pointed toward the road.

In the last decade or more, fewer couples have felt it necessary to marry at all. They may live together for a short or long time and may or may not marry that person. There may be a series of trial commitments before finding one that leads to marriage. If they do come for counseling, the following steps may be helpful:

- The counseling process is a time, like the pinch process, to sort out expectations.
- Listen to what each expects of himself or herself and of each other.
- How do they see their bonding develop? What will help that process?
- What are their similarities and differences?
- How do they see sharing life tasks?
- What has attracted them to each other? Will any of that change with time?
- What are their goals, individual and shared?
- How do they make decisions together?
- How do they resolve differences?
- What difference will being married mean to their relationship?

Couples are often more aware of the areas of attractiveness than of the areas of differences that can become conflict areas. Using a relationship

profile such as LIFO® or PREPARE® can help the couple lift up their areas of similarities and differences and explore what effect these have on how they live together. Premarital counseling can cause some couples to take a second look at the prospect of marriage and thereby avoid an early divorce, but even the best counseling will not ensure a lifetime of success.

Death and Funerals

Pastoral counseling with your terminally ill members is one of the great honors of your ministry. It also may be one of your most difficult challenges. It will be hard for you to listen to a person's last journey unless you have considered your own. If you have not, each time the person shares you may find yourself subconsciously trying to lift the conversation to a lighter subject.

> Charles: I've wondered a few times in my life what it might be like to die.
> Pastor: How about the Packers? Think they'll make it to the finals?

The disconnect between the pastor and Charles is driven by unresolved pain within the pastor, not by any desire to minimize Charles' dying.

> Charles: I've wondered a few times in my life what it might be like to die.
> Pastor: What did you think it might be like, Charles?
> Charles: I guess I thought it might be more grand, you know, just fade away one day to something better.

Pastor: So how is it working out? Is it like you expected in any way or quite different?

Charles: Well, I guess I didn't consider the pain.

Pastor: So the pain is making it different than you thought?

Charles: Yeah. I guess in my wandering thoughts I was imagining somehow just fading away.

Pastor: Is that what you're feeling you would like to do right now, Charles?

Charles: Yeah, Pastor, I guess, since I'm going, I kind of wish God would just put me to sleep, or I would drift away with him.

Pastor: Well, Charles, the pain may take a while, but maybe the moment will come when it will be just like you said, just sort of drift away with God.

Charles: Hope so, Pastor, thanks for being with me until that happens.

In the second conversation the Pastor sticks with Charles's concern and image of his dying and affirms that his image of it is just fine. Being present to the dying is a passage for pastor and counselee. Both are participating in a transformational crisis. If done well, both move on to another dimension in life. Each has been a gift to the other.

Funerals can be genuine celebrations of life for those who die after a full and meaningful existence. Pastor and family and friends can share stories of the deceased, and with tears and laughter they can bid farewell with an inner joy and release.

Crisis funerals such as those for young children, youth, and others whose lives are cut short through accidents, illness, war, and suicide can be very difficult for pastors and everyone else. Relating to both the dead and the survivors takes listening for what meaning the survivors are

pulling out of their own pain. It is not a time to debate theology. It is a time to listen for and build on the projected hopes of the family. That hope is usually built on the years they were able to share with the person, the gift of the person's life to them and others, and the affirmation that God's love is taking care of them. Crisis funerals are difficult for even seasoned pastors. But a special case exists when there is a suicide. The grieving process requires attentive caring by the pastor and sometimes referral sources. Suicide brings with it a lot of guilt. What did we do? What did we miss? Why? Could we have stopped it? Why didn't the person tell us he or she was hurting so much? These and a hundred other guilt-provoked questions will be worked through during the months after the death. In addition, suicide can beget suicide. It is important to touch base with and talk with friends of the deceased, especially if the person was an adolescent.

> In a Midwestern town, a wealthy suburb to a larger city, a young man and woman, seniors in high school, made a suicide pact, went to the young man's home when the parents were not home from work, and carried out their pact. Obviously the parents were emotionally destroyed to come home and find them. The next day, another of their friends also committed suicide and the next day, another—four high school seniors, talented, bright, accepted for college, no apparent signals recognized beforehand. In a state of near panic the school, a church, and parents brought all the school together in groups, with parents and without them, to talk with and listen to a pastoral counselor to encourage friends to tell someone if there was talk of suicide, concerns about being depressed, and other indications of being highly stressed. People had an environment to share their concerns and experience and their grief.

> Parents met in homes in small groups. Students met in larger groups at school and individually with counselors. There were no more suicides. It took another year and a half for the school to return to a normal spirit and environment as the grief worked its way through the community, the families, and the school.

In debriefing the families and other parents, it came to light that people could identify behaviors, comments, and other actions that worried them. They had dismissed the concerns by telling themselves nothing bad happens in our community, not here. No one acted on the family tensions, the layoff of one father, the lack of admittance to a desired school, and other unacceptable events in a high-achieving small town.

In terminal illness, like that of Charlie, there is an anticipatory process of grief, triggered by the diagnosis of the illness and the prognosis that it is terminal. That process, well documented by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, has five stages, not experienced as neatly as the list:

1. Shock and denial (It can't be true.)
2. Anger (Why me?)
3. Bargaining (It's me, but maybe if I . . .)
4. Depression (It's me, what's the use?)
5. Acceptance (It's me and I accept it.)

In the case of suicide there are no anticipatory stages. The suicidal person has an internal dialogue that leads to a conclusion of "what's the use?" and the depression allows the taking of one's own life. In the aftermath, the survivors go through the five stages until they can find some peace with it, which often takes a long period of time. In addition, the bargaining stage may include working through guilt. Survivors express guilt that they did

not know the person was hurting so much, that they did not recognize early warning signs, or that there was something else (they are not sure what) they could have done to stop the death. This is another time, potentially, to pull out the referral list, while remaining a pastor to the hurting.

Bereavement

Bereavement is a universal crisis. Even when death is anticipated, the survivors do not escape bereavement. It is estimated that two American families experience bereavement each minute. Bereavement—the experience of grieving over the loss of a significant relationship—is the gradual process of releasing emotional ties to the deceased. In our culture, and in some others, we grieve the loss of pets, jobs, opportunities, and many other things, but bereavement is mainly the process of addressing the transition from a present meaningful relationship to a permanently past relationship. There are several things pastors and church members can do in response to the crisis of bereavement:

1. Attend to the person's—or family's—sorrow by walking with the person in support and participation in the rituals of grieving.
2. Provide emotional first aid by offering and providing sensitive guidance for the many "business" decisions that must be made under emotional duress.
3. Watch for a sign that the person's inner resources may not be adequate, and make a referral.
    a. Build a bridge to the referral resource.
    b. Remove any blocks to utilizing the resource.
    c. Ensure the person maintains control of his or her own choices.

d. Reassure the person you will continue to support him or her during and after the referral.
e. If a hospice program was involved with the deceased and family, work closely with their guidance.

Pastoral Care of Gays, Lesbians, Transgendered People, and Their Families

According to census data, approximately 4 percent of the United States population is gay, lesbian, or transgender. That is somewhere over six million of our friends and neighbors, including church members. This subject may or may not be a crisis issue for your church. It is close to that for many churches. The subject is dividing churches and denominations. Fear of the unknown is driving rational people to irrational behaviors. We are a heterosexual-oriented society with lots of biases, myths, and fears about those who differ from us. Our ignorance of issues has often led to cruelty rather than to the compassion to which we are called. Some treat gay, lesbian, or transgender people as lepers were treated two hundred years ago. The paradox of the issues of gay, lesbian, and transgendered people and their families in the church is that in many, if not most, churches we act as though they do not exist. The fact is that many churches have members who share this orientation and do not know it. Churches have some leaders, pastors, choir directors and members, committee chairs and members, and other members who are gay, lesbian, or transgender or who have a son or daughter, brother or sister, or some other relative they love who is. By pretending they do not exist we have made them nonpersons. The church has encouraged the life of "don't ask, don't tell" out of its anxiety over this issue. We accept the church

membership and service of those who are homosexuals and transgender as long as we don't ask and they don't make their sexual orientation known. As pastors and pastoral counselors, we have a charter, in love, to rise above myths and fears and become educated about our own biases and the reality of this part of our humanity. As I write this, the federal government has repealed the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law that applies to the military after support from the public and the military. It seems appropriate that an organization committed to a life and ministry of love, such as the church, would do well to behave in a similar manner.

I applaud those churches who have become so open and accepting that this is a nonissue. I support those pastors who have modeled that love and caring for their congregations, but not everyone is in that place yet. So the issue of homosexuals in the congregation can be a crisis issue for the church.

Recently we have seen public figures such as a the vice president and a well-respected senator share that their daughters and sons are lesbian or gay. They show their love for them in public, even when they disagree on political issues. This is what families do when they are healthy; they love their children no matter what.

Those who are discovering their sexuality in early adolescence have the hormonal anxieties we all face. Those who begin to realize they are most interested in those of the same sex also realize that they confront a major dilemma. Our dominant culture finds ways to punish those who are not like us, whether because of ethnicity, color, socioeconomic class, or even looks. We especially punish those whose gender identification is not the same as the majority. This can be the basis for bullying in our schools. We allow those who are different to entertain us on television or in film or in comedies. We don't want them in our families, churches, or schools. That personal and cultural bias has been, and remains, a painfully

dangerous place for someone to grow up in and to survive with self-confidence. Adolescents are often extremely cruel to those who are different, leading to bullying, fights, and sometimes even death. Adults, with more sophistication, are usually subtler in their ostracism, but not always.

A few decades ago, when I experienced my first gay and lesbian counselees, I was befuddled as to what to do. Fortunately they expected that, and their patience with me—and my lack of understanding—allowed me to grow and be helpful. The culture has come quite a long way since then. Gays and lesbians are more open in the culture. They are more accepted in many areas of life—business, education, and often church. But for many the pain still exists. So a church may still experience the issues around gender and sexual orientation as a crisis.

Some of the issues that may confront you as pastor/pastoral counselor include:

- Counseling young people who are gay and in your youth group
- Helping the youth group understand the universality of gender differences (It may be less an issue for them than for adults.)
- Helping your church make the decision to be an open church to all regardless of differences
- Counseling young adults who have not yet shared their identity with their parents
- Counseling those who are already married but who need to own up to their identity and discuss it with their spouse, and following through as they make the difficult decisions about their marriage, family, and so on
- Becoming aware of your own feelings about gender issues and preparing yourself for effective ministry to this part of your congregation

- Become aware that though homosexuality is mentioned in scripture, it is in the context of an illiterate society two to three thousand years ago. We wouldn't expect medicine to be practiced now as it was then, and we err to think our understanding of human sexuality should be either.

I received a call for a pastoral counseling appointment from a man who said he was referred. He would be in town only for a week and would like my help with a problem. We set up the time, and he appeared. He was a military officer, in uniform, and he began our session with the statement, "I'm gay, and I want to talk with you about sharing this with my parents." He went on to describe his family. His father was retired military, very proud of his son's career, and very likely to go through the roof on the news of his son's gender identity. He suspected that his mother might already know, but they had never spoken of it. His sister knew and was his family confidant. He wanted very much to go home for Christmas and bring his partner to meet his family. He knew his father was hoping he would date and marry the beautiful daughter of a friend of his, another former officer. My counselee had been on a date with this lady a few years before, and she indicated she really liked him. So that was the scenario. He was going to invite his family to come with him for counseling so he could reveal his identity to them with my help. Unfortunately they lived in another city and he was only on leave for the week, so having more than one session was not likely. To share the short version, the family gathered, and my counselee indicated why he had requested this session. He shared, rather eloquently I felt, what he presumed each person's feelings would be and what he hoped could result. His sister announced her support and became the family mediator. His mother revealed what had been suspected, that she thought her son might be gay, but that she loved

him no matter what and would try to accept his partner as part of the family too. While the mother and sister shared, the father was visibly in shock. It was possible to see the range of emotions going across his face. He began with shock and disbelief. "It can't be!" Then moved to anger, then disappointment, then sorrow, and then back to shock and all over again. His son's revelation destroyed all the images he had formed for this military man. How he envisioned his marriage, family, life, retirement, time together, and stories he could share with his friends—all gone!

The end of the story is that the counselee and his partner did visit on Christmas Day, had dinner, and left, but it was a beginning. His father proceeded to try to find ministers, therapists, or anyone who could "change" his son. I don't know the rest of the story, but it is clear that restoring the family to a new reality will take time—lots of it, probably.

I tell this story to illustrate a problem for families in the church as new knowledge about a family member emerges and the family has to re-form around a new understanding of one another.

So how does the pastoral counselor respond when a counselee begins the session with, "There is something I have to tell you about myself"? After the revelation, it is helpful to say, "Will you explain why it is important for you to share this with me?" Another first question might be, "Now that you have shared that about yourself, what would be most helpful for us to talk about at this time?" Most counselees have rehearsed this conversation in their mind before coming to share it and are clear about what they are hoping will happen. They are often aware of what they fear will happen. Based on that I often ask, "What are you afraid might happen by telling me?" The fact that they have chosen to share with you is a sign you are perceived as trustworthy.

Adolescents present a little different challenge. Some adolescents may be the butt of cruel jokes because of a slight build or a sensitive spirit or just because a bullying group chose them. In preadolescence it is normal for children to identify with the same sex group. In middle or later adolescence, which occurs at slightly different ages for different people, attraction to the opposite sex group begins. When some are focused one way and others still with the same sex, it can be confusing.

A primary concern is that the period of confusion is leading to a three to four times higher suicide rate for adolescents struggling with sexual identity than for those who are not. Many who consider suicide because they have been called gay or lesbian, or are uncertain, are in fact not gay, but just delayed in sexual development. Due to the complexities around adolescent sexuality and the limits of this book, I suggest highly that if you are counseling adolescents or have opportunity to do so, that you use all the sensitivity at your command to support them at a very vulnerable stage in their life.[1] Also, I suggest you identify a talented, experienced therapist for your support team referral resource.

Counseling the families of gays and lesbians is likely to be a rare event for you as pastor. However, if it occurs, you can be sure that the family is in crisis. Whether it is a son or daughter coming out, a parent disclosing their orientation after years of marriage, or a depressed adolescent who is beside herself not knowing what to do with this dilemma, it will still likely be a rare event for you. If, or when, you have the opportunity, use your most empathic listening skills with an individual or family who is extending the highest degree of trust to you. Though some pastors may disagree, it is not a time to debate the meaning of scripture in either the Old or New Testaments. Escaping into a scriptural judgment is a way to avoid your own unresolved issues. As a pastoral counselor, your task is to provide some solace for the pain you are hearing and acceptance of the people as part of

God's family. They will be very appreciative of your acceptance of them, regardless of your personal theology. Your love as a pastor can help exorcize the demonic metaphor that what is different is evil, an exorcism that can free those bound by fear to release the gifts they have been given.

Questions for Thought

As you consider the issue of gays, lesbians, and transgender people in the church, work through the following questions to make peace with yourself:

- What are my feelings about people who are gender identified differently from me? How might that be affecting my ministry?
- What knowledge about myself might I need to sort out and make peace with?
- Are there opportunities to extend ministry in my church to those in the gay and lesbian community?
- What might I want to read or study to become better informed should I be faced with the opportunity to counsel a gay, lesbian, or transgender person?
- How do I reconcile my understanding of scripture with the accepting grace of Jesus to those who were the outcasts of his day?

Chapter Seven

Building a Care Support Team

All of us are smarter than each of us.
Unknown author

Being the church is not a solo act. If, as pastor, you try to do it all, many will let you do it. They will often resent it, but they will let you do it all until you fail. The more you do by yourself, the more you inadvertently communicate that you believe the congregation to be incompetent. The more you spend time developing their skills and abilities, the more the whole church will blossom in ministry. That is a leadership responsibility.

Building the Team

Some pastors have had the advantage of training in pastoral counseling through a seminary. Some may have had pastoral clinical education

with field experience in a hospital, prison, or some other agency. If you have not had those advantages there still is a need to respond to counseling issues that arise in the congregation.

Another reality facing a pastor is the matter of time. Most pastors do not have the time to spend many hours counseling a few people. There is much to be done as a pastor, and a few troubled parishioners can soon consume much time and energy. So I would like to suggest a simple criterion for pastors. If you can provide counseling help to a parishioner in three sessions, and you feel confident in dealing with the presenting issue, go for it. If it becomes clear that the issue is far more complicated, will require much more time, or requires skills or knowledge you do not have, then your task is to prepare a referral. I will talk about the referral process later.

Though it may seem that sometimes a church expects you to be all things to all people, it is important that you not expect that or contribute to the church's unrealistic expectations. Upon your arriving at a new church, begin building your team. Your team will be composed of a variety of skilled people in your community, county, or area who can be your trusted resource people. Your team is the people to whom you will refer counselees when the time comes. Your team might include physicians, psychologists, and social workers who work with aging, marriage, gender issues, and so on. If your church is in a sparsely populated rural area, your team may be scattered over some distance, but it is important to locate them, meet them, and set up a potential referral relationship. Let them know that you are willing to reciprocate should they have people with spiritual issues that you feel comfortable addressing.

Frank was called to be pastor of a small-membership church in a rural area of the Midwest. The church was formed from the

merger of three small congregations of three denominations to create a church large enough to have a full-time pastor and sufficient ministry activities, including a choir.

Frank accepted the call because he saw the new merged church as a challenge and because he had grown up attending a small-membership church and had always wanted to serve one.

When Frank arrived, he began getting acquainted with members and the local area. As he met members, he asked them where they shopped, where pharmacies were located, which area physicians treated most members, and other questions about area resources. From this list he began to build his team of referral sources. Frank made an appointment to speak to two doctors in a town about ten miles away and a psychologist in a town about fifteen miles away. From these appointments he built relationships for future referrals if they are needed. He also asked these health-care professionals about other resources in the county. Little by little he compiled a list of trusted resources that would come in handy in the weeks ahead.

From Frank's member visits, he found a family using the resources of a rural hospice program. From another he found good references for help for handicapped adults. By the time Frank had been at the church for three months, he had a reliable list of resources who would serve as his team in ministry to his congregation. In addition to gathering resource information, he also became acquainted with many of the expectations of his members and began the process of listening to their stories.

Another part of the puzzle is that effective ministry needs the best gifts of everyone. This applies whether the ministry is looking after elderly

members; visiting hospitals and nursing facilities; following up on births, illnesses, or deaths; or responding to crises. The major danger of carrying the whole load is professional burnout. To avoid burnout it is helpful to have several resources:

- Select a few members whom you will trust to tell you when they see you overdoing and nearing burnout. They will recognize symptoms such as reduced quality in your preaching, forgetfulness at meetings or in pastoral care, irritability with members, not taking time off, and so on. When they share their observations, don't make excuses; fix the problem. To avoid burnout *do* take your days off, vacations, study time, and other interventions to relieve stress.
- Develop a church care committee and train them to take on a variety of ministries with you, including disaster preparedness.
- Develop a professional resource group. Interview and invite professionals to be available to receive referrals when needed. Consider some of the following to be in your group:
  - Family physicians
  - Elder care specialists
  - Attorneys
  - Financial advisors
  - Psychologists and psychiatrists
  - Social workers
  - First Responders—Police and Fire
  - Resource groups: Alcoholics Anonymous, PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), Parents Without Partners, and others
  - Others appropriate to your environment

Introduce yourself to these professionals. Indicate why you want to know their abilities better. Choose those who seem compatible with your values and spiritual concerns. Identify some who accept Medicare or work on a sliding scale when needed. Ask if they are comfortable working with you, rather than simply turning people over to them. Remind them you intend to remain pastor of your referrals and would like communication when it is not breaking confidentiality. When you make a referral and it turns out helpful, be sure to write a note of appreciation to that person on your resource list. A "thank-you" now will open the door a little more for you in the future.

Steps in a Successful Referral

1. Decide with your counselee that a referral is needed and what the goals of that referral will be.
2. Ask the counselee if he or she has a preferred person to see for this issue. If not, refer to your list of professionals.
3. Help the counselee clarify what will be said to the referral source and how to state the presenting problem.
4. Ask the counselee if he or she would like you to call the referral source to see when an appointment would be available. If so, call the referral source, and then let the counselee set up the date and time.
5. Ask the counselee if he or she needs transportation, and if so, make arrangements with a church volunteer.
6. Give the counselee your card to give to the referral source so that he or she is reminded who sent the client.
7. When you next meet with the counselee, inquire as to the helpfulness of the referral. If he or she is not satisfied, ask for

clarification so a new referral can be made that fits better. If the resource was helpful, ask if the counselee's goals have been met or if he or she believes they will be with this resource.

8. If the referral is a success, that may end your work with the counselee, or it may allow you to address other issues if needed.

When Should You Make a Referral?

There are several answers:

- If what the person needs is something you know little about.
- If the person is recognized to have severe psychiatric issues or is severely depressed.
- If the issue to be addressed will take considerable time (chronic problems). There is no hard rule, but if counseling the person will require more than three to five one-hour sessions, it is best to refer.
- If the person is someone you work with closely, to avoid a conflict of interest.
- If your personality conflicts with the person needing help, which may interfere in your helpfulness.
- If the person has abused a spouse, child, or elderly person, report this as well.
- If the person is abusing alcohol or drugs.
- If you are angry at the person, for whatever reason.
- If you are sexually attracted to the person.
- If you are anxious around the person and believe him or her to be dangerous.
- If the person is not making any changes with your counseling.

Remember that as a pastor offering counseling your time must be distributed among numerous tasks. Focus on those you do best and find others to help on those you don't do as well.

Confidentiality and Liability

Contrary to common belief, there is no law guaranteeing clergy confidentiality. Since people sharing in confidence with their pastor commonly assume it, the courts have sometimes honored the assumption of confidentiality. But if summoned by the court, you might have to share your notes and records. In 1970 a grand jury requested the files of pastoral counselors who provided pastoral care to college students to see if the counselors were encouraging the students to avoid the military draft. The clergy, with the support of several denominations, refused to provide their files. The case resulted in a Los Angeles District Court opinion that since clergy confidentiality had been assumed, and counselees would not have shared without that assumption, the court would presume clergy confidentiality exists. So by case precedent it exists, but be prepared if you are challenged.

A few decades ago, ministers would likely never have thought about liability in their profession. But in recent decades there has been an increase in lawsuits against clergy and their churches. Some have been serious because of the behaviors of pastors or their leadership. Some have been harassment by disgruntled members or counselees. Since liability suits are still somewhat rare, insurance coverage is reasonable, and I encourage your consideration. The best antiliability protection is to provide moral behavior within the areas of your competence. The second-best help is to keep records of whom you

minister to, when, what the issues were, and how long each session lasted. These records should be locked in a file that only you enter. Do not rely on a church secretary to maintain confidentiality. Some are wonderful and trustworthy, and some are in charge of the church grapevine, though loyal to the church.

Chapter Eight

Pastoral Care from the Pulpit

It's Saturday evening. The sermon is ready and has been rehearsed and polished. You settle down for a little relaxation and turn on the television. A news bulletin interrupts your program with the announcement the president has been shot. From that moment on every channel has the story. What do you do? Is it likely that your well-prepared sermon is relevant now? Probably not. Crisis response from the pulpit requires a timely response to the fears, anxieties, and hope of your people. What are people feeling? What word of grace and comfort will they want to hear in the morning? Your challenge is knowing what to say to your congregation.

National crises require a pulpit response. The Oklahoma City bombing, a president who was shot, the 9/11 attacks, or Pearl Harbor, all these had an effect on the nation. The pulpit must respond. Local or regional crises such as floods, fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, and kidnappings have a regional effect. These crises require a pulpit response. People in the pew expect some help in a time of crisis to settle their fears, encourage the

support of their community, and provide a way of understanding the sometimes irrational events. Jesus grew up and ministered in a country under the occupation of a foreign army. What might he offer to our hearts and minds?

How do we respond when people expect the pulpit to speak in the midst of their loss and anguish? First some "don'ts":

Don't

- Don't be an alarmist. Speak of reality, but do not project fear of even greater calamity. Such phrases as "it could be worse" only stimulate the imagination and heighten fear.
- Don't be a bully at the pulpit. It is not a time to harangue about political rights and wrongs, the evil of an enemy, or the character of a criminal. Judgment is for the courts and God. Stimulating a congregation to judgment enables them to escape doing the real work of grieving.
- Don't see this as a time to work out your own anger, although you feel much because of a sense of injustice at the crisis.
- Don't use guilt to motivate your listeners to conversion or some other commitment.

And now the "do's":

Do

- Do provide a loving presence from the pulpit. The message is that you, the church, and God are together in this. The message is that of grace and redemption.

- Do begin with the story of the crisis, but that is only part of the message. People are not helped with a meteorological explanation of why the tornado hit; they are not helped by the geological explanation for a volcanic explosion or earthquake. The questions "why?" and "why me?" find little comfort in science, although part of the answer may lie there. Political answers as to the reason a bomber does what he does do not produce comfort. The message is that God has a community of people who love one another and are called to be with one another through all events in life, be they sad or happy. It is natural to ask why, but "why" seldom has any answers and usually masks the question beneath it, which is, "How can I stand this pain and loss?"
- Do know that there are no easy answers to many crises. Why does one child get kidnapped and not the one next to her? Even if the answer were known, it has little to do with the grief of losing a child, any child. It is right for us to weep with those who weep. It has been a decade since I listened to the pain and fear of first responders, business people, and families near Ground Zero and the Pentagon, but I still have trouble sharing the story without tears and a break in my voice. It was a great pain for many across the country, and great pain takes time to heal.
- Do exegete the scripture for the compassion of Jesus for those in pain. Trust, in God's ultimate love, in the presence of friends and family, and in the community of faith that surrounds us, is the way through the crisis.
- Do pray that the Holy Spirit will be present to your listeners that they might feel the meaning of the scripture, "God is our refuge and strength" (Psalm 46:1).

Chapter Nine

Care of the Caregiver

The mind is a lot like an umbrella;
it works best when it is opened.
Anonymous

Perhaps the greatest challenge for a pastor is to be and stay healthy while supporting the congregation to do the same. Insurance claims for ministers indicate that they are at risk for physical and psychological illness at a rate above the general population. Stress studies indicate that ministers have a stress-prone occupation due to several characteristics of the job. Among the most important stressors are:

1. Working alone with little support, and without colleagues with whom to share ideas and concerns
2. Stress of maintaining confidence and requirements to minister effectively without revealing the confidences

3. Public expectations of excellence and sometimes perfection, though in recent years that expectation has been lowered some
4. Lack of self-care
5. Fatigue

It is hard to encourage health in the congregation when it is not practiced by oneself. Practicing the following self-disciplines creates a buffer against stress-related illnesses that occur on the heels of crises. Consider the following for your own self-care:

- Spiritual Discipline—It might be assumed that pastors maintain spiritual disciplines, but research indicates that many do not. Those disciplines that have a direct benefit on stress-related illnesses include: meditation, relaxation processes (as described earlier in Chapter 4), contemplative prayer, journaling, meeting with a spiritual director, chanting, fasting, days of silence, and observing daily liturgies or scripture study.
- Letting Go Techniques—Progressive Muscle Relaxation (systematic self-directed process to reduce tension held in various muscle bundles), or Yoga.
- Time Out—Find your own rhythm but build a schedule for renewal that includes daily, weekly, and monthly time, with a year-long sabbatical time every six to eight years. Time out or time away is not time for sermon preparation but time to see and think about other things. It is time to reflect on who you are, and what is fun in your life, and to regain the energy spent in ministry.
- Get Moving—If you already walk or run regularly, good for you; if not, it's time to start. If you have been inactive, check with your physician before you begin to work out strenuously. Walking will

give you most of the benefits of running without the wear on your joints. Walking at a brisk pace, about three to three and a half miles per hour, will bring your heart rate up to about 120 beats per minute. If your resting heart rate is now about 90 bpm, you will lower that number to less than 70 bpm after a month of exercise. That means your heart will likely last longer. Any other physical exercise you can do regularly will also increase your stress hardiness.

- Limit Certain Foods—You will do your body a favor if you reduce your consumption of sugar, salt, white flour, and saturated fat. The more weight you carry because of the intake of these four items, the shorter your life span. Get your physician's advice on what program you need for physical health.
- Read—Brain science has shown that reading in a discipline different than your own helps prepare the brain for better problem solving. For example, if you are an engineer by training, read in the field of poetry. If you are a musician by training, read in the field of biology or botany. If your training is theological, read in a field that uses its hands to create things or the field of medicine. I have found too many pastors who have read little since seminary or their required study. Limiting your brain's exercise is like refusing to walk. If you sit all the time, you will eventually be unable to walk.

There are many other self-care resources available to you. If you practice the self-care disciplines described above, you will be better prepared to help others in crisis.

Chapter Ten

The Church as a Crisis Response Community

Though the pastor is often the person called in a crisis, it may not mean that the pastor has to do all the heavy lifting. The nature of Christian community is that we are to love and care for one another and to serve the large community. In addition to trained lay caring groups that provide regular care for special needs, the whole congregation can respond when larger crises occur.

A study of people during and after crises determined several factors that made an important difference in recovery from the crisis. The key factors are:

1. The presence of others—the experience of not being alone in facing the challenges of a crisis. Since we all face the same crisis, there is physical, emotional, and spiritual strength in our community.

2. Prayer—the experience of being supported by one another's prayers and feeling that God is in this with us. We take hope and energy from the larger sense of God's movement in creation to guide us through the uncertainties of a specific crisis.
3. Acts of kindness—when our community members share food, blankets, and numerous other items as needed. There is a special attention to the needs of others in the community of faith during a crisis. It is like the mother hen gathering all her chicks and counting to see if all are safe, then attending to the needs of each one.
4. Music—crisis is often accompanied with chaos and noise. Music allows a time of calm and meditation to collect one's thoughts and restore inner peace. Providing a place that is meditative with music can be a respite during a crisis. In the aftermath of 9/11 St. Paul's Chapel, adjacent to the World Trade Center towers, became a sanity-restoration center. Area musicians came and played for hours, providing quiet, reflective songs. First responders came in, settled into pews, and lowered their heads as the tears came down their cheeks.
5. Resilience—the stuff that gets us through those events we think we can't survive. Alone we may be vulnerable to a belief that we do not have the strength to bear such pain. In the church we experience many other people, who, alone, might feel the same, but who, when joining with others, can share the strength of the group. When individual resilience is combined with the larger group, few people suffer the psychopathology that often follows a crisis.
6. Empathy—an emotional presence to the suffering of another. No organization builds into its charter the requirement, and the encouragement, of empathy as does the church. Empathy requires "withness." It is not a solitary experience. In the church, survivors of a

crisis find others who have walked a similar path and who, therefore, know the inner story.

It is clear that what makes a difference in a crisis is also what the church does well and, with preparation, can do even better.

Thomas McGee, a mental health professional, has suggested that the church has qualities that other response organizations may not have. He suggests four qualities of the church: location, availability, mobility, and flexibility. Churches are in every town or area. The church's space and often its people are available. The church is not limited to providing services in its building but can move its response to meet the need. Many organizations have rigid rules they must follow to provide services in a time of crisis, including who may receive help and how. The church has the flexibility to see a need and meet it. So McGee has helped us see another way to understand the church as a crisis response community.

Summary

What is a crisis? A crisis is an event, or cluster of events, that confronts our sense of safety; comfort; and physical, economic, or spiritual well-being. Crises challenge our balance and our confidence, and they force change. As a result of crises, we may have to act differently, change our pattern of daily life, and move from the unconscious assumptions about life to a complication of choices and decisions. As we have written, crises occur in work, play, environments, relationships, health, and faith. Crises can be singular, confronting just one person, or global, affecting world populations. From the news that an individual has a disease to the announcement of an H1N1 virus we may all get, crises can be solitary or pervasive.

Therefore we can say that what is a crisis for you may or may not be a crisis for me. We can affirm, however, that we all face crises at some time. The pastor, as counselor, works to alleviate the trauma of those in crisis while tending to the resources of the pastor's own crisis. As the priest and writer Henri Nouwen has written, we are called to be "wounded healers." We are not above the fray but of the community. To respond to that calling, we can best serve if we have gained useful knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

1. Knowledge
   a. Mental models to support the understanding of individuals, families, and groups.
   b. Knowledge of brief therapeutic processes usable within the short time frames available to a pastor.[1]
   c. Information on more common mental and physical illnesses that assist the pastor in making effective referrals.
   d. Knowledge of crisis-oriented processes such as Critical Incident Debriefing.
   e. Developing a healthy, progressive theology that communicates grace in the most difficult times.
   f. Possessing Emotional and Spiritual Intelligences. Acting in full awareness of your effect on others.

2. Skills
   a. In-depth listening skills such as paraphrase, perception check, direct expression of feelings, fogging, behavior description, and negative inquiry.[2]
   b. Story listening skills to perceive the meaning in stories and hear the spoken and unspoken messages.

c. Special responses for handling strong emotions, criticism, and conflict.
d. Meditation and relaxation techniques.

3. Attitudes
   a. Peaceful in the midst of conflict.
   b. Centered in the midst of crises.
   c. Affirming of others when criticized.
   d. Appreciative, finding what is working and valuable in almost all situations.
   e. Solution oriented rather than blame oriented.
   f. As Rudyard Kipling wrote, "To keep your head while those around are losing theirs."
   g. Focused on the "God within" others and not on the obstructive behavior.
   h. To accept all, and yourself, as children of the same Creator and endowed with value.
   i. Patience to sort out the elements of the larger picture while being confronted to act on just a piece of reality.
   j. To humbly know one's strengths and limitations and cherish the power of joining others in resolving human needs.

Using the KSAs listed above and the checklist below, use the worksheet to create your own Professional Development Plan. Place an **X** in the appropriate box below, being as candid about your knowledge, skills, and attitudes as possible. As a counter check, you might ask someone who knows you well to also review your KSAs.

KSA	Not a current strength	Have some capability	Am moderately capable	Have strong ability	Have expert ability
Have several mental models that are useful					
Have brief psychotherapeutic skills					
Have knowledge of common mental and physical illnesses					
Know Critical Incident Debriefing					
Have theology appropriate for understanding crises					
Have high EQ					
Have high SQ					
Use paraphrase					
Use perception check					
Use behavior description					
Use direct expression of feeling					
Use listening skills for strong emotions such as negative inquiry and fogging					
Understand and use story listening					
Use meditation					
Know and use relaxation techniques					
Remain peaceful in midst of conflict					
Am centered in presence of crisis					
Can affirm others even when criticized					
Focus on what is working instead of what is not working					
Am solution oriented rather than blame oriented					
Accept all persons regardless of differences					
Am patient in the midst of urgency					

Review your responses to the items on the chart. Using the brief form below, create your own Professional Development Plan to maintain your areas of strength, increase your areas for development, and become informed about those areas you have yet to learn or practice.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Professional Development Plan</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">A goal I have for increasing my professional capability is:

I will achieve my goal by: _____</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">To achieve that goal, I will accomplish the following actions:
1.
2.
3.
4.</td></tr>
<tr><td>To support those actions,
I will need this budget:</td><td>Money:</td><td>Time:</td></tr>
<tr><td>To support my development,
I will ask the following
persons to serve as coaches
or observers.</td><td>Name:

Name:</td><td>Task:

Task:</td></tr>
</table>

It was my privilege to visit and work with a rural church and its pastor in the broad expanse of the West. This church served ranchers, villagers, and solitary residences from an hour's drive in any direction. Members said they were not concerned about what denomination people were since there was not enough of any one denomination to form a church. They also shared that they knew there were better preachers than their preacher, and probably many with more education and training. They also said they doubted that any other

preachers had more heart and love than theirs. He had come to know them and their families, their hopes, and their crises. Whatever happened, he was there for them. If he was unsure what to do, he diligently searched out the best resource and made sure people got the help. Since he was so present to them, they were there for him. Together they formed a committed spiritual bond that literally weathered storms, fires, illnesses, deaths, and fears. They also celebrated life in births, graduations, marriages, and other transitions. Together they found that God is within and among, and they lived out that faith. There will always be chaos in the universe. It was there in the beginning and continues to be the birthplace of all that is. Out of chaos comes faith, faith that transcends, supports, and empowers while giving meaning to all that would overwhelm us. What this wonderful church community didn't say was that their pastor was motivated for continuous growth and improvement, read a lot, took courses when possible, and also had a telephone-based coach and mentor. What they said was when he needed to know something he found it or learned it. The pastor went quietly about the task of making sure he could provide the best ministry possible, regardless of the great expanses surrounding them. His life was a testimony of the success of his growth.

You are called to be the bearer of that good news, in your word, your behaviors, and in your person. Peace be with you.

I do not believe in a fate that falls on men however they act; but I do believe in a fate that falls on them unless they act.
G. K. Chesterton

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.
Matthew 7:12

Notes

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2. Ibid.
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4. Hendrie Weisinger, *Emotional Intelligence at Work* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).
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9. William Bridges, *Managing Transitions* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003).

4. Crisis Issues in the Human Family

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A rare book is one that
comes back after you have loaned it out.
Journeyman Barber