



CPSC Notes

COUNCIL FOR PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL COUNSELLORS

No 18 – November 2021

Stories of hope

My dear fellow Pastoral Caregivers

When we look back on 2021, we are filled with gratitude, because we survived many hardships and faced numerous challenges. This also applies to our office and I want to thank Anita and Ilse who toiled with patience through more work than they were signed up and paid for. They were prepared to walk the extra mile to keep our office running. I want to thank the CPSC board members for their dedication and wisdom throughout this challenging year. God is good for us and blessed us with precious personnel who excel in their work.

We all have many stories to tell. Some are painful and some will bring joy and comfort. The important part is that we need to tell the stories. Stories bring hope and understanding, help others to identify and **persevere**¹, and help us deal with whatever comes our way.

Stories will guide thoughts and decisions, create dreams and often lead to forgiveness and renewal in life. God is investing His stories in our lives daily, using mentors, spiritual leaders, pastors, friends and family.

We are reminded of God's grace, kindness, love and care when we take time to listen to His story of reaching out to mankind (the Christmas story) when He did everything to save them from the consequences of their sin (the story of Passover) and invest Himself in His followers (the story of Pentecost).

When we listen to the testimonies of the apostles, we discover the true Gospel – God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). When we allow God's story of love to be imbedded in our



lives by His Spirit, a new story starts – the story of a newly born child of God and of a new beginning.

As pastoral caregivers we have the privilege to reconnect our clients' meaningless life-stories to the story of God's love and compassion, the story of forgiveness and hope.

You cannot give what you have not received. The stories of God's intervention in our lives and the discovery of the works of grace in our clients' lives may create a magical moment of

understanding the depth of God's love and care for us all.

Paul and Peter announced that nothing and nobody will stop them from telling the story of God's redemption and love, the story of new and second chances, the story of real peace which we can only find in an honest relationship with the risen God, Jesus Christ.

May we keep on telling stories, stories of hope, even as Covid become part of our daily conversation. May we discover the loving God also within our sad stories, when we grieve about loved ones, because in Jesus, our stories will never end. The story of "God with us" will never end, will guide us through patches of darkness but will end in a life of abundance in God's living presence, now and for ever!

We are delighted to attach the ACRP Newsletter for December/January in the e-mail. Also see the ACRP message on the last page of this newsletter.

God bless!

Dr Tertius Erasmus

CEO: Association of Christian Religious Practitioners and Chairperson of CPSC. ■

¹ Perseverance

Cambridge Dictionary has announced "perseverance" as its Word of the Year 2021, after a spike of searches as Nasa's Perseverance Rover made its final descent to Mars in February. They define perseverance as "continued effort to do or achieve something, even when this is difficult or takes a long time".

The word perfectly captures the undaunted will of people across the world to never give up, despite the many challenges of 2021—and, of course, global interest in the Nasa mission to Mars. It also takes perseverance to face the challenges and disruption to our lives from Covid-19, climate disasters, political instability and conflict.

The story of Covid-19 in Christian Counselling

By dr. Arnold Smith

Dr Smith presented at the recent CPSC conference on the topic of "The story of Covid-19 in Christian Counselling."

He is a recently retired minister in the DRC and a professionally registered Christian counsellor.

The Covid-19 pandemic that showed up in full force with level 5 lockdown in March 2020 had a disastrous effect on South African communities and resulted in a "new normal" around which we all have to adapt our lives.

This "new normal" with its masks, social distancing, sanitising, empty churches and isolation had a huge impact on the South African economy and our social lives. It was a confusing time, as it was not clear how the pandemic would progress and how it would end.

One specific group are the vulnerable people in our midst, who with their families and communities was touched spiritually, emotionally, psychologically and physically. This is the people older than 65 (the elderly) and also the people living with co-morbidities.

In this presentation, I referred specifically to the needs of the elderly, residing in flats or rooms in centres for the elderly. These people are cared for away from their support of the close family. Lock-down sometimes presented harshly in a prison-like experience to the age group most vulnerable to its effects.

Other groups also deeply affected by the pandemic include the staff and boards, their families and the wider community where an institution for the elderly exists.

A place of hope

Onze Rust is a centre for the elderly in Steynsrus, a small and peaceful town in the Free State. This centre is a beautiful, practical building, very effective and something to be proud of for Steynsrus. Like other centres under the supervision of Engo, it also has an excellent management that had to abide by the rules of the Department of Health.

Before Covid-19 everything was fine, with families coming to visit, people going in and out, going to church or town. Meditations took place every Thursday. People were comforted when someone died and visited when ill.

Residents could partake in Church services through television broadcast. The pastor could see people for counselling and also encourage staff, empowering them. Having board membership, the pastor had an active role in ensuring the welfare of the elderly. Birthdays were special occasions. Then Covid-19 came!



In a closely knitted and intense community like Steynsrus, the townspeople share in the same traumas and joy. They are family. Everyone was hurt by the drought, the theft and slaughtering of livestock, the destruction of vehicles and infrastructure during riots.

The Onze Rust residents are the former farmers or farmers' wives, teachers, business people. Their children are the new business people, the farmers, teachers, etc. A disaster such as the Covid-19 lock-down af-

fects literally everyone.

The story of Onze Rust

With the practical theological model of Osmer in mind, I did an empirical study, using a narrative technique. I asked the staff, residents, family and the head of police to tell their stories through questions such as What is happening? Why is it happening? What should happen on a normative level? and How should we respond?

We got to learn their experience and emotions as the pandemic dragged on. The process of telling their stories provided much-needed comfort.

The lives of the residents of Onze Rust did not normalise as quickly as in the community itself. This is especially true if one of the elderly had Covid-19. Residents that went to see a doctor or visited someone, had to self-isolate for 10-14 days in their rooms.

Life also changed as residents were not allowed in the communal dining area, or watch the church service on the television as a group.

The death of three people because of Covid was a terrible experience. People also died of other causes. The lack of rituals such as funerals and wakes was difficult to adapt to.

It was tough times for the manager and staff of Onze Rust as well, who continued to tend to the needs of the people. This included doing residents' hair, helping with exercise and arranging families to visit, as far as was allowed.

Further trauma was brought on by a continued feeling of being isolated, not touching or hugging each other, as well as fear and anxiety in residents and staff, created by an uncertain outcome of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the relatives and children of the elderly sometimes vented their anger to staff and management. There were some complaints as well, even though staff kept relatives informed and there were serious efforts to provide comfort to the residents of Onze Rust.

Christian counselling on an individual level and group level continued, but remained difficult. There were WhatsApp messages, voice messages and television services from an empty church. Life got easier when the lock-down level was relaxed from time to time. The fear of contracting the virus and spreading it was so strong. Isolation makes people sick.

What will make a difference?

We should have better counselling in general, to both individuals and to groups.

- In addition to the residents of Onze Rust, counselling must also address the board, management, and staff.
- Counselling must empower people.
- Counselling is needed for groups, including from the pulpit, at the farmer's union and everywhere in the community.

Why implement proper counselling?

Trauma in society must be dealt with on a counselling base because with every traumatic event, trauma "value" is added. More people need to be equipped to handle trauma for when disaster strikes. This includes trauma in their own lives, as well as in the lives of others. Factors to consider are:

- Residents don't understand what is happening to them in a disaster and lock-down situation.
- Staff that come from outside of Onze Rust and other places of hope do their job, but may not always have the empathy needed.

- Families and communities at home may have some understanding, but they cannot truly comprehend what the staff, board, managers and the various departments of such an institution is going through in dealing with a disaster situation with full lockdown.

There is hope

Sometimes we are so focused on individuals in a Western individualistic way that we forget what effect Christian counselling can have in group intervention and that our counselling service can empower others to respond pastorally in times like this.

- Pastoral care as the meeting between God and man accompanies or mentors people to understand the intention of the Word of God in their lives (*kerugma*).
- The witness of the Church must be the interpretation of the Word coming straight to people according to their particular need in everyday life. It creates community among people (*koinonia*).
- The witness of the Church further also encourages believers in service to the world (*diakonia*).
- The end result is the empowerment of us as believers.

For us to be a society of hope and not of despair, the ministry and counselling effort need to be more timely and have much higher priority in taking care of the elderly and needy in our midst. ■



A blessed Christmas time to all

The staff and executive of CPSC wish you a joyful time with your family and loved ones.

May this be a time for us all to reflect, rest and recover for a powerful 2022.

Rejoice in the birth of Jesus Christ and seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Professional indemnity for pastoral counsellors

By Andries Preis

"When you build a new house, be sure to put a railing around the edge of the roof. Then you will not be responsible if someone falls off and is killed." - Deut 22:8, Good News Bible.

Pastoral counsellors have largely been immune from malpractice actions in South Africa. One rarely reads about a formal malpractice action in which a pastoral counsellor has been held liable or sued by an unhappy congregant or client.

While doctors, lawyers and psychologists are often sued, the pastoral counsellor mostly remains removed from this tumultuous scene. Of course, it does not mean that it will never occur, as the potential for legal action always exists.

One may ask, can faith-based counsellors be held to the same standard of legal accountability as secular ones? Or does the broad shield of religious freedom protect them absolutely, no matter how incompetent or negligent their actions might be?

The concepts of therapy, counselling and pastoral care imply a profoundly personal and professional relationship between the counsellor and his/her client. This relationship creates duties, one to the other, which must be clarified and understood to conceptualise the potential problems and danger areas that may arise.

As a general rule, the law holds a person responsible for the consequences of his or her actions. If your intentional or negligent conduct results in injuries (be it emotionally or otherwise) to another person, you may be held liable for the reasonable monetary value of any damages proximately caused by your actions.

Service providers, including pastoral counsellors, must be aware of the trade risks they are exposed to when dealing with the public. They should endeavour to take proactive measures like obtaining indemnity for possible liabilities they may incur for damages accidentally involved.

Why professional indemnity insurance?

Insurance policies may be aimed at certain occupations to ensure that they cover the specific risks and exposures relative to that occupation. It may include any breaches of legislation governing the occupation, as well as other relevant legislation.

Professional Indemnity Insurance is specifically designed to protect anyone who provides advice to a third



party and charges a fee for that advice. Common claims include negligence, misrepresentation, violation of good faith, and inaccurate advice, to name but a few.

Your professional body, the Council for Pastoral and Spiritual Counsellors (CPSC) has initiated a professional indemnity insurance policy with First International Portfolio Managers which is bespoke and designed to address the exposure particular to your duties as pastoral counsellors. The scheme for professional indemnity insurance for pastoral and spiritual counsellors commenced on 1 June 2021.

The commencement date of your certificate confirming cover under the policy is determined by your date of successful application. The certificate is issued for cover of 12 consecutive months, as stated on the certificate. The member needs to renew the cover with First International Portfolio Managers before it lapses.

The Indemnity limit is R5 000 000 with a deductible (first amount payable by the insured) of R10 000 per claim. The annual premium is R500.00 and is payable by debit order on application or renewal of your cover.

Coverage also provides for the counsellor's defence costs, even if legal action turns out to be groundless.

For further information, contact Andries Preis, 0824915218 or Wayne Matthews, 0823217718 or at e-mail: andries@fipm.co.za / wayne@fipm.co.za.

First International Portfolio Managers, FSP 16438 ■

Boundaries (Part 16)

By Dr Hanlie Meyer, Counselling Psychologist in private practice and CPSC affiliate

How do we set boundaries for our children? This is guided by the commandment given to the recently freed group of slaves at Mt. Sinai, that children must obey their parents if they intend to live long in the land that the Lord has given them. For now we digress away from studying the Ten Commandments, but eventually we will circle back there....

The previous article emphasised the importance of focusing on transitional stages in our children's lives. The next series of articles will lean heavily on the work of Drs. Cloud and Townsend: *Boundaries with Kids*, 2002.

In their work, the authors state as a point of departure that we raise kids with an eye on the future (2002, p 13). The principle is clearly that we do not discipline our kids to get them off our backs, to "make" them do what we want, or to get them to behave so that we can relax or enjoy our holiday, weekend or TV show!

We do not bring children into this world to fulfil us or as evidence that we are "complete". We bring children into this world to teach them to be healthy, worthy citizens of God's Kingdom on this Earth and thus be in a position to extend God's Kingdom until Jesus returns to finally reveal His intentions with His good Earth.

Parenting is relentless – it is a full-time commitment that will probably take more from a parent than a job or even the marriage itself.

If we were to raise children with an eye on the future, the core questions we need to ask ourselves are: is what we do being done on purpose? Do we foresee the transitional phases and guide our children forward through these or are we acting from our own emotions or for our own comfort? Are we scared of our children and fear that they will not like us or are we more intent on obedience to Christ and wait on His comfort and support through the Holy Spirit? Can we weather our children's suffering in overcoming their selfishness and the demands they make on us to alleviate their discomfort?

Our children can never be our fan club! Developing a child's character is the ultimate aim. The discomfort of boundaries is a critical vehicle to achieve this. Think of Paul, James and Peter who stated in their letters in the Bible that character is formed through the way in which we deal with difficulties, temptations and hardship.

However, God never withdraws His presence and His love and caring from us as a way to discipline us. In the same way, we as parents should never use emotional



withdrawal and the withdrawal of love (or even the threat thereof) as technique of discipline.

Our children need to learn to take responsibility for their feelings, thoughts, behaviours and attitudes. Clear boundaries, set in love and implemented consistently, help our children develop a healthy and well-defined sense of self. They will learn what they are responsible for and can be taught tools on how to discern between responsibility for and being responsible to.

They need to understand that they are not responsible for somebody else's emotions, thoughts and happiness. However, they need to learn that they are responsible to helping where help is needed.

Cloud and Townsend (2002, p13) define the parents' roles as falling into three categories: that of guardian, manager and source.

The roles of parents

As *guardian* the parent or care-giver is legally responsible for the child and as such protects and preserves the child. In this capacity they have to set boundaries to keep their child safe, growing and healthy. The parent as guardian needs to set limits to the child's freedom and enforce these for the child's protection. If this were done in love yet firmly and from a very young age the child will learn to trust the parents' wisdom and internalize these boundaries to become part of their own set of values and guidelines. The child will however challenge these boundaries – what they are actually challenging, is the parents' resolve to stick to these.

If these boundaries are wisely chosen and made less strict as the child develops, the child will learn to respect the parent for sticking to a decision. The child has to learn that every choice has a reality consequence, including the choice to "nag" the parent consistently: crying, blaming and even swearing at the parent.

The example that parents set in their marriage communication and relationships with the children guide the children and indicate what is acceptable behaviour. It is of the utmost importance that parents do not give double messages or give the impression that the other parent has the final say.

As *manager* the parent makes sure that things get done: that goals are reached, demands and expectations are met. Please bear in mind that children are not born with self-discipline. They will need to be disciplined by someone else – the parent as manager. It is important not to abuse the child because as parents we are too

lazy to do things. A distribution of chores and responsibilities are necessary.

Parents take on the bigger responsibilities and children get chores and responsibilities according to their ages. Rather co-operate than sit in front of the computer or the television and dish out orders. In this way the child can learn to take ownership of the problem of not wanting to do something and take responsibility in dealing with it. This teaches the child not to project the problem of their selfishness or laziness on to the parent.

Finally parents are *the source of good things* for the child – both material and immaterial. Boundaries play an important role in this: their desire is not always the parents' command! If the child knew a week ahead of an assignment that would require certain materials, but

chooses to inform the parent on Sunday night about it, the parent needs to set the boundary that this is not acceptable and then stick to it. The child will challenge this and rebel and even call the parent bad names, yet the parent has to stick to the resolve. Our children need to learn that every choice has a reality consequence. It is better to learn it in the safety of the home than be confronted with it as adults when they cannot be diligent in their jobs.

Boundaries need to be set and employed in such a way that children will have a better chance to internalize them as part of their own value system. We will turn our attention to this topic and much more in the following article. ■

Cloud, H. and Townsend, J. Boundaries with Kids. 2002.

POPIA: Compliance for Pastoral Counsellors

Adv. Frikkie Marais presented at the CPSC conference on the impact of the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPIA) on pastoral counsellors.

The purpose of the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPIA) is to give effect to the constitutional right to privacy by safeguarding personal information when processed by a responsible party, subject to justifiable limitations that are aimed at:

- balancing the right to privacy against other rights, particularly the right of access to information, and
- protecting important interest, including the free flow of information within South Africa and across international borders.

Pastoral counsellors must consider the provisions of this legislation regarding privacy and confidentiality in handling personal information of clients, due to:

- **Liability for damages:** An individual who has suffered material or non-material damage as a result of an infringement of the POPI Act can claim compensation from your organisation.
- **Sharing of data:** Other organisations, like your church, school, etc, cannot share any information with you if you can't demonstrate that you are POPIA compliant.

Definitions

Processing of information is defined as any operation or activity, concerning personal information, including data collection, dissemination, merging or destruction of such information. The processing of information must be done in accordance with the provisions of POPIA to be considered lawful.

Data may be a video recording of a person, storing personal information in the organisation's records and collecting the name, address and phone number of someone at an event. As service providers and experts, pastoral counsellors may process personal information of data subjects and need to be aware of the impact of POPIA on their activities.

POPIA differentiate between 3 categories of personal information of a data subject, summarised as follows:

- **Personal information**, that includes data on race, gender, marital status, national, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental health, well-being, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth of the person; information relating to the education or the medical, financial, criminal or employment history of the person; any identifying number, symbol, e-mail address, physical address, telephone number, location information; fingerprints; the personal opinions, views or preferences of the person; views expressed in an evaluation form at a workshop and their information captured in a curriculum vitae; correspondence sent by the person that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature.
- **Special personal information**, that includes the religious or philosophical beliefs, race or ethnic origin, political persuasion, health or sex life; the criminal behaviour or offences or proceedings in respect of any offence, etc.
- **Personal information of children**, being a natural person under the age of 18 years who is not legally competent.

Records

Records mean any recorded information:

- Regardless of form or medium, including writing on any material, produced, recorded or stored by means of tape recorder, computer equipment, etc; label, or marking; book, map, plan, graph or drawing; photograph, film, negative, tape or other device in which one or more visual images are embodied.
- Records in the possession or under the control of a responsible party, whether or not it was created by them and regardless of when it came into existence.
- Examples of a record would include taking pictures of someone, writing down and storing their details, scribbling down a person's identity number on a piece of paper.

The role players

POPIA differentiates five role players:

- **Data subject:** The person to whom personal information relates. In a pastoral counselling practice, the data subject is the client about whom personal information is stored.
- **Responsible party:** A public or private body or any other person which determines the purpose of and means for processing personal information. The majority of counsellors in private practice are likely to be responsible parties in relation to the parts of the practice where you have power to determine the purpose and means of the data processing. The pastoral counsellor may also be the responsible party if he or she is functioning in conjunction with a church or other organisation.
- **Operator:** A person who processes personal information for a responsible party in terms of a contract or mandate, without coming under the direct authority of that party, e.g. an internet service provider or email service provider. The counsellor may also be an operator of data, if engaged by another organisation, e.g. voluntary work for an organisation.
- **Information Officer.** Every responsible party do have an Information Officer that may be, by virtue of their position, appointed automatically in terms of PAIA and POPIA. An example is the Director-General in a

government department. For a *juristic person* (e.g. a company), it is the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent officer, or any person duly authorised by that officer. A pastoral counsellor in private practice is regarded as a *natural person* and therefore carries the responsibility of Information Officer. In a partnership, it can be any partner or any person duly authorised by the partnership.

- **Information Regulator (“the Regulator”).** The Information Regulator is established in terms of section 39 of the Act to protect data subjects in South Africa from harm and ensure that their personal information is protected by responsible parties. Similar to the Public Protector, the Information Regulator can hold responsible parties accountable for not complying with POPIA or PAIA.

When does POPIA not apply?

POPIA does not apply to the processing of personal information in the course of a purely personal or household activity or that has been de-identified to the extent that it cannot be re-identified again.

POPIA does not apply to the processing of personal information by a natural person in the course of a purely personal or household activity and thus with no connection to a professional or commercial activity. Personal or household activities could include correspondence and the holding of addresses, or social networking and online activity undertaken within the context of such activities.

Other topics

Other topics that were addressed include:

- Register your Information Officer
- Functions of the Information Officer
- Conditions for the lawful processing of personal information
- Data subject rights
- Prior authorisation. ■

Contact the CPSC administrator for the full presentation.

Contact the author on marais@assentcompliance.co.za.



Ethical financial management of a pastoral counselling practice during the Covid-19 pandemic

By Rev Wynand Louw

Ethical Financial Management of Pastoral Counselling Practice touches on several topics that are important and interrelated with one another. It is not a one size fits all concept. Each practice is unique and has to find solutions that is the right fit for them.

Your point of departure should be the motivation for choosing this particular vocation. Why did you decide to become a Christian Pastoral Counsellor and not a Christian Minister for example? You are driven by your passion.

Sometimes, people will choose a vocation because of the perception to make good money. On the other hand, it might make me look good in the eyes of my peers or the world when they see that I help people. If that was your motivation, you have to rethink your decision to have a Christian pastoral counselling practice. Your choice should be grounded in your passion. The person in need should be the focus, rather than your ego or image.

Two other important considerations include ethical values and moral behaviour. Most ancient religions' philosophers and ethical thinkers present some version of this golden rule: "Do to others what you want done to yourself". Within our environment, we want to focus on God's Word as our primary ethical and moral compass whilst we are working in this broken world. Ethics and morals are influenced by so many aspects of our society.

What then, is the main difference between ethics and morals? Is it not the same thing? No, it is not. Let me explain:

Although ethics and morals relate to one another through right and wrong conduct, that is the only similarity. It does influence one another in different ways. Ethics, in short, refers to the rules that a social system provides us with, whilst morals are our own principles.

For example, a person who knows the difference between right and wrong who chooses the right thing is moral. However, a person whose morality is reflected in his or her willingness to do the right thing, even if it is hard or dangerous, is ethical.

Is the law not the same thing as ethical values? Again, these concepts are related and influence one another,



but they are not the same thing.

The law sets minimum standards of behaviour while ethics sets maximum or ideal standards. It goes beyond the basic minimum compliance to the law that we have to abide by. We are all equal under the law and when we are saved through Jesus Christ, we are equal before God who will be our ultimate Judge.

A Pastoral Counsellor's inherent life philosophy, which includes their world view, values and cultural considerations, influences their decision-making and interaction with clients.

Values are the things that have intrinsic worth and usefulness or importance to the possessor of those values. This includes certain principles, standards or qualities that is considered worthwhile or desirable.

When you have a financial dilemma, it influences your ethical behaviour. Desperate people, in desperate times, do very strange things. This is a true test of your character. This is when you realise that you are your practice's best and most valuable asset. Without you, there will be no practice.

I want to encourage you to conduct and run an ethical practice, in line with your testimony as a pastoral counsellor in God's service. Adhere to the best business and governance practices, policies and procedures that is fair to you, your staff and your clients in need of help.

Focus on your calling through your passion to do what you love doing and the Lord will provide for you financially and spiritually. If you are struggling, invest in yourself and your practice by utilising a mentor or coach that can be your guide and voice of reason.

Get someone that may not always agree with you, but who are willing to ask the tough and uncomfortable questions as well.

To learn more about this topic and earn CPD points, visit our website for more information:

<https://www.aquila.co.za/index.php/component/hikashop/product/19-adhering-to-ethics-made-practical-online>

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Rev. Wynand Louw CFP® FIISA worked in various communities in South Africa as minister and in financial services. He serves on the Council Board in the Council for CPSC as part of the fiduciary committee. ■

Bibliotherapy in the pastoral counselling practice during the Covid-19 pandemic

By Dr Barbara Louw
(Inter Trauma Nexus), CPSC affiliate

Pastoral counselling involves helping people to cope with the pressures and crises of life. Most of the ministry opportunities I had since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic came from people with whom I built a professional relationship via Inter Trauma Nexus and Aquilla Wellness Solutions before the lockdown started.

The unprecedented challenges people face during the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown forced counsellors and pastors to look at creative ways to help people to stay rooted in their faith and to overcome adversity.

The three major groups of clients I counselled were nursing personnel, the elderly and the families of people who were affected by loved ones and friends who were ill. The helping relationship reached children, youth, and adults as well as the elderly of different racial, gender, and socio-cultural backgrounds.

The greatest needs in our interactions were to improve coping skills, reduce levels of anxiety and depression, increase self-esteem, social function, quality of life, better interpersonal and perception of support. Assessing and addressing spiritual needs is a key factor in the quality of life and overall wellbeing of Covid patients and their families.

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is a facilitated process where the counsellor guides the client to read, contemplate, share and question. I guided clients to start to read in Psalms, Proverbs and the Gospel of John. Thinking about the Word of God will bring comfort and when questions arise we will also find comfort in the Bible and prayer.

As a pastoral counsellor, the Word of God remains the primary resource I refer people to.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV)

In my practice, Bibliotherapy offers a delicate balance of Biblical texts and pastoral support strategies that alleviate cognitive and emotional symptoms of spiritual concern and facilitate finding meaning in life in general and illness in particular.



As an intervention, Bibliotherapy helps people receiving treatment and rehabilitation with the lifelong skill of reflective reading.

Many of our discussions included topics such as spirituality and religion. This was a safe environment to talk about these multi-dimensional, connected and overlapping concepts. In the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a complex relationship between spirituality, religion and health.

Spiritual and religious issues play a role in the healing process and the understanding of health risks, especially where there are strict controlling religious beliefs and communities, or beliefs that cause anxiety, low self-esteem, inability to live up to expectations and so forth.

Tailored Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is a guided method that can be tailored to the needs of ill people and concerned loved ones. It further promotes assertiveness, which provides spiritual fulfilment and growth towards wellness and wholeness.

- Clients' wellbeing was affected positively and they reported that they experienced an improved ability to make adjustments and find meaning in their circumstances.
- Other improvements included a reduction in self-focus and worrying, an increase in creative problem-solving and a greater sense of being rooted in the Word of God.
- There was an improved appreciation of different cultures, viewpoints and other life experiences.
- The sessions were successful in enhancing people's general wellbeing and emotional regulation.

There are disadvantages to trying to use unfacilitated reading for therapeutic purposes, because sick people generally don't have the energy to read or they choose to read material that can aggravate anxiety-causing beliefs, focusing on fake news and doom prophecies.

I believe that reading the Bible must always be in fashion. As counsellors, we are prepared for a time like this because we have God's Word and a God-given calling to bring comfort and share the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. ■

Pastoral counselling during Covid-19

By Prof Wentzel Coetzer, Department of Practical Theology, North-West University

Guiding and counselling victims and survivors of Covid-19 is extremely relevant today, with a new dimension of mourning that emerged: When the usual goodbyes and rituals were not possible after loved ones passed away, it often resulted in traumatic grief.

International trends

Some important and insightful perspectives come to the fore from the global scene.

- **High incidence of mental illness.** Researchers in the USA and UK found that having Covid-19 increases a person's risk of developing psychiatric illnesses. 20% of Covid-19 patients was diagnosed with a mental illness within three months, including anxiety, depression and insomnia, with an increased risk of dementia as well.
- **Higher number of psychiatric disorders.** Before the advent of Covid-19, South Africans had already wrestled with a large number of factors that promoted post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as high crime levels, farm murders, a weak economy, political uncertainty, etc. The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) has indicated that before March 2020 when the first lockdown measures came into effect in South Africa, they received approximately 600 calls per day. A month later, this number doubled and the calls were mainly related to aspects like anxiety, panic, financial pressure, depression, poor family relationships, suicidal thoughts and substance abuse.
- **New data related to the global impact of mental health.** A survey in eight English-speaking countries involving 49,000 adults indicated that 57% of the respondents experienced some degree of Covid-19 related stress or trauma. About a quarter showed clinical signs of a mood disorder while only 40% described themselves as well functioning (thriving). A lack of sleep, little exercise and no socialization through face-to-face contact proved to be crucial factors in the risk of poorer mental well-being (Yasgur, 2021).
- **The youth were hit the hardest.** Various studies show that the decrease in mental well-being in general has been most prominent in persons within the age group of 18-24 years, whose average mental health quotient (MHQ) scored 29% lower than that of persons 65 years and older. Worldwide, 70% of respondents in the category of 65 years and older, fell into the categories of 'succeeding' or 'thriving', compared to only 17% of those of 18-24 years (Brooks, 2021). For the church and for pastoral counsellors in

particular, this presents a tremendous challenge. With age comes greater maturity, with a greater degree of emotional resilience, but young people are still learning how to calibrate themselves in the world.

Typical problems within South African schools

Janene de Beer is a youth worker and pastoral counsellor on the East Rand in Gauteng where she is involved with a church as well as two high schools. The overwhelming effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the youth is very clear from Janene's experiences. During August 2021, for example, at only one of the schools within the span of one week, 30 children requested permission to attend Covid-19 related funerals of relatives and friends. Some of the problematic scenarios are:

- **Academic pressure.** Teachers have less contact with pupils resulting in a variety of complications for pupils, for parents and for teachers. Pupils complain much more often of poor school marks. When not attending school, lax discipline and a lack of routine at home creates a holiday feeling, resulting in pupils spending more time in front of the screens in their lives. Due to sports activities largely being curtailed during the pandemic, children are also gradually gaining more weight.
- **Optometrists in England indicate that they have been diagnosing more children with myopia (short-sightedness) since the beginning of the pandemic. This is attributed to less time spent outside the home due to all the restrictive measures, and more hours spent in front of screens. Parents should allow their children to play outside for at least two hours per day (BBC, 2021).**
- **Pressure on teachers.** The lack of discipline at home means children fall behind in schoolwork and then avoid tests at school, creating a vicious cycle that increases pressure on teachers: "I have never seen so many teachers in tears. The pressure is overwhelming. Some of them want to resign. I do not know what one can possibly tell them."

The large number of children who lost relatives at these schools and the church where Janene is involved complicates effective one-on-one grief counselling. They organized a camp, sponsored by the local church, focussing specifically on children who had lost loved ones. The children were counselled through the basic phases of the grieving process.

- **The church can help!** Janene suggests that churches make facilities available from 08:00-14:00 where children can do their homework under supervision - they can even charge a fee. David Bennett of *HomeLife Magazine* sees an opportunity for the church to truly

be church. Rather than trying to attract people through interesting programs, concrete action is now required to provide practical and spiritual assistance to families. The church can offer assistance to parents and children struggling with online learning programs and syllabi (Earls, 2020).

Unhealthy eating patterns

- The strict measures due to Covid-19 hamper social interaction and sporting events. Screen time and a sedentary lifestyle is very detrimental to the body and mind, that can be conducive to eating disorders.
- In the USA, consumption of healthy foods such as vegetables and whole grains declined during the pandemic. Unhealthy dietary patterns increase the risk for chronic diseases (Brooks, 2021a).
- Medical admissions for adolescents with eating disorders more than doubled at a hospital in Michigan during the first 12 months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Similar increases have been observed across the USA as well as in other countries.

Increase in suicide tendencies

- In the USA the pandemic has seen a large increase in visits by adolescents aged 12-17 to mental health emergency services for suspected suicide attempts.
- The crucial role of social commitment has repeatedly emerged as a protective factor regarding the crisis of possible suicide.
- The phrase 'each other' occurs 85 times in the New Testament. Positive interaction with and support of each other leads to *a sense of belonging*, together with *social connection*, improve the physical, mental and emotional well-being of people. This builds emotional resilience and serves as a powerful antidote to feelings of despair, hopelessness and despondency. The church, faith communities and counsellors indeed have a cardinal role in a time like this.

The grieving process

Together with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, David Kessler wrote *Grief and grieving: finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss*. the familiar five phases of the grieving process are described. Kessler emphasises that during a pandemic, many people experience the emotions of sadness and grief, although they do not necessarily realize it. Naming the emotion helps to better manage the losses, with some practical guidelines (Berinato, 2020):

- **A collective mourning process.** During a pandemic like Covid-19 we experience different forms of grief and sadness. The world has changed forever. The pandemic may pass, but some changes will remain. The loss of normality, economic implications and the

loss of contact with others are all affecting us and we are mourning it collectively.

- **Anticipatory grief.** When facing an uncertain future, anticipating sadness occurs, particularly related to death. It may be a serious diagnosis or the possible loss of a parent – we sense that something bad is brewing although we cannot see it. This loss of a sense of security is extremely confusing. Whole societies and its members are mourning on a micro and on a macro level.
- **The grieving process.** The different phases of the grieving process are rarely linear and differ for each person. It is not an exact route map, but can help us navigate the unknown emotions:
Denial: the virus is not going to affect us/me.
Anger: you force me to stay home and you rob me of my activities.
Negotiation: OK, if I maintain social distance for two weeks then everything will be better, right?
Sadness: Feeling discouraged - when will it all end?
Acceptance: I will have to deal with this. I can wash my hands, I can maintain a safe distance, I can learn how to work online.

Sadness and loss

Overwhelming losses can be devastating. Even seemingly strong Christians can wrestle with the feeling that God has forsaken them. The loss of control in your life has profound consequences on your emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions. Your familiar world is disintegrating and you start doubting things you thought you knew about life.

How can you properly mourn the loss of a loved one if they died alone and you were absent? How do you find closure without a proper funeral and insufficient rituals? Remember the following:

- **Grieving alone.** Being absent when the loved one died may result in the various phases of the mourning process being compressed into the anger phase. This anger must be ventilated.
- **To mourn in the absence of a funeral.** Complicated and traumatized grieving, recovery and healing takes much longer and may require long-term guidance and counselling.
- **Truly understanding.** The counsellor must guide the grieving person to gain understanding for being so extremely sad.
- **Validate the loss.** 'A ministry of presence' can assist the grieving person to validate and affirm the pain and loss experienced. In being present, the counsellor can use words, facial expression, compassion and empathy.

The absence of a ritual or ceremony

The lack of saying goodbye or attending a proper funeral service harms the grieving and the healing processes of loved ones. Help them to create new rituals.

- **Repeat the funeral ritual.** Help the person recognize and commemorate their loss. It may be useful to have a repeat funeral ceremony that will provide the circumstances for the release of emotions of sadness and grief.
- **Use balloons.** Helium-filled balloons can be let into the air for greeting a loved one. Attach a string of paper with a short personal message to a balloon that will be let go.
- **Plant a tree.** A tree can be planted in memory of a loved one. It could also be part of creating a small flower garden.
- **Visit a significant place.** A visit can be made to a place that is particularly associated with the deceased. A good example is the following: A man whose father died in a light aircraft accident when he was little, mourned his father's death for 30 years. He wrote a letter in which he expressed what he would have said to his dad, should he have had the opportunity. He read aloud the contents of the letter and some Scripture passages at the scene. This visit proved to be liberating and restorative for this man and his family as he was able to receive final closure and subsequently started with a new season in his life.

Other techniques

- **Empty chair technique.** Counsellors often use this Gestalt technique, especially where someone has passed away with a lot of unresolved issues. The counselee is encouraged to speak to the empty chair as if the deceased is there, raising all the issues not addressed before the loved one passed away. Someone can also 'sit in' on behalf of the deceased, even the counsellor. This provides the opportunity for emotions that could have been blocked due to the traumatic loss, to come to the surface.
- **Keep a journal.** For some counselees it can also be very therapeutic to write or journal the story of their loss - the story of their dream that fell flat or the unfulfilled dream about their child or their parent or spouse. Writing down painful emotions and memories have great therapeutic value (Pennebaker, 2016).
- **Write about it.** Writing about painful experiences of the past is also an accepted way of healing traumatic memory. Carolyn Foster advises: "If you bring the memory back through writing you will be better equipped to heal it or some of its sting. Though bringing back the details may be hard, you get the experience out of your body and into the paper and that eases the burden." (Foster, 1993:45).

- **Creating a collage.** A person that suffered traumatic childhood experiences that left her with emotions of loss and trauma may be unable to express her inner pain. As part of the healing process a collage can be compiled in the form of a scrapbook that depicts the complete story of hurt to healing and joy. It can consist of words, poems, Scripture passages, pictures and photographs that could all be applied to the great loss that was experienced and the great trauma related to it.

The healing impact of Holy Communion

There is a tremendous healing power in the ritual of the sacrament of Holy Communion. It may facilitate healing with regard to unprocessed emotional trauma and pain, as we can bring our brokenness and pain to be connected to the brokenness and pain of Jesus Christ (Hicks, 1996:190).

Seamands (2001:160) describes how he experienced miraculous breakthroughs over the years with counselees regarding trauma and pain after the Lord's Supper was served to them. In our guidance of counselees who are struggling after the loss of a loved one as a result of Covid-19 and where sufficient rituals could not take place, the healing power of the Lord's Supper and the liberating message related to this important ritual should not be overlooked.

God's promise of restoration

God repeatedly promises that He will restore, heal and renew us when it may seem as if everything has collapsed. He is the One who always gives hope and courage. "I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten..." (Joel 2:25)

What a privilege to be used by Him in this way and to be involved in a restorative capacity with those who may feel crushed and overwhelmed as a result of trauma and losses. May He enable us to discern the voice of His Spirit on a daily basis in order to be instruments of healing to His glory! ■

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Spiritual rhythms in the life of a Leader

By Rev Diane Pickford

Book Review: Part 3

Strengthening the SOUL of your leadership: Seeking God in the crucible of ministry by Ruth Haley Barton.

Being in a leadership position opens a person up to unexpected pain and criticism of one's decisions and character. This criticism of the leader is what family systems therapist, Edwin Friedman, calls a "systemic" part of leadership. Leaders who stand strong are always the target of sabotage.

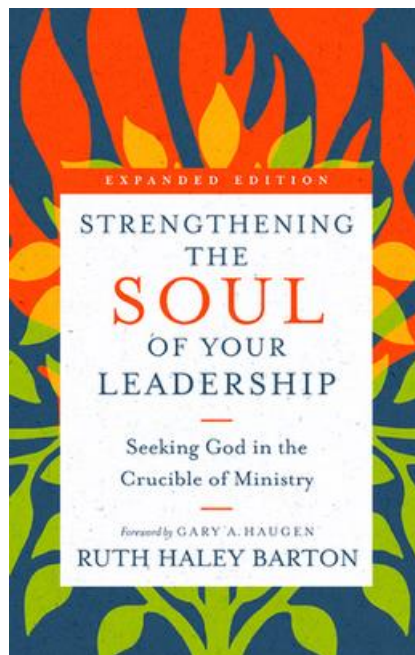
Ruth Haley Barton discusses the two essential weapons that effective leaders should include in their arsenal, to counter this type of sabotage:

The first weapon is the practice the disciplines of spiritual rhythms; i.e. Sabbath, silence, sleep and rest. The second weapon is the practice of intercession.

Disciplined Spiritual rhythms

Moses led the way for the Israelite community to practice sabbath as a way of life. By practicing sabbath, the people learned lessons about trusting God. They were to stop work for one day a week and turn towards God, trusting that His provision is enough. In this way, we honour God with our time. Christian ministry leads to burnout and exhaustion if not well practiced with the disciplines of sabbath, sleep and rest. Without these disciplines Christian ministers fall victim to assimilating our cultural busyness, hurry sickness and overload. Then we lose the ability to be present to God, by marginalizing Him and His word. In this way our ministries become ineffective - we do not make time for true discernment and worship. When there is no replenishment time built into our inner lives, outside voices get relied upon, instead of God's presence. We become dependent on ministry models and data, instead of listening to God.

We need to acknowledge the limits of our bodies, to build in sabbath, and times of extended retreat, before



we become defeated and depressed. For those of us who use words a lot, extended times of silence and solitude are needed to restore our souls. Silence is also needed to become aware of false patterns of thinking and being, which take time to surface.

In silence too, God's love can soak into our own brokenness and weariness, so we can lead from our authentic selves and not an ego driven self. This is a counter cultural practice that helps us live responsibly in the world, and not in 'prayer-less striving.'

The Practice of Intercession

As leaders, we need to understand the psychological process of projection. Ruth Haley Barton describes it as,

"... the way human beings unconsciously project their doubt and darkness onto someone else rather than taking responsibility for dealing with their own fear and anxiety."

People also tend to project unspoken idealized expectations onto leaders, they then become angry when leaders do not meet their expectations.

Instead of getting defensive and arguing with the people, leaders should use their energy to battle the situation out with God in private. Moses, and his practice of prayer and intercession for the people, is our model in the book of Exodus.

Intercession for others is learnt through practice, it teaches us to depend on God for the outcomes and not our own competence. We learn to hold people and situations in God's presence, listening for His word, ideas or answers. The ability to hold people in God's presence as we meet with God, is the essence of intercession. ■

Facing the grief of self-death in Covid-19: Emotional Logic as a grief tool

By Annette de la Porte

Our problems are our teachers. For 35 years of the 37 years that we were married, my life was shaped by André's intense journey with clinical depression, combined by his life passion for the pastoral care of the sick in government hospitals. His suffering became our shaping.

Death is unexpected. It is a stone that drops in the pond of your life that continues to make circles. It changes your life irreversibly. We cannot choose what life puts on our plate. We can choose our response to it. Grief can devour you or transform you. I choose to become better not bitter.

Our story

Clinical depression had its onset after his experiences of war trauma as a chaplain. Lockdown was hard for André. Not going to the gym was like being on half of his medication. The week before his self-death, there were no obvious symptoms of depression as confirmed by a Zoom consult with his psychiatrist. He was anxious about his NGO losing income due to no training courses being presented.

Friday evenings were pizza and movie night. We celebrated the birth of our first grandchild the previous day. We watched a movie of Forest Gump and I wrote down a sentence that struck me: "Life is like a box of chocolates – you never know what you are going to get."

On Saturday morning I supported a friend whose son had three self-death attempts that week. She talked about the Scripture in John 14 where Jesus said: "In the house of my Father there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." I cried and said: "If your son or my husband decides to end their lives, this will be a comfort to us to know that they went to their home in heaven."

On Saturday afternoon 30 May 2020, André and I had coffee together at 3pm. I expressed my concern about him being withdrawn. He did not say much. I made use of my permit as a social worker to have a meeting with a colleague outside our house, to plan our debriefing sessions with nursing staff for the next day.

Our theme for the week was about protecting our hearts against all the losses of the pandemic. You can sanitise your hands, put on your protective clothing and mask, but how do we protect our hearts? I was away for two hours. When I drove back, I stopped at a red robot. Suddenly an image of André lying dead flashed before



my face. I burst into tears and drove home with a sense of trepidation. I found him dead just like in my vision. I did not check his pulse.

From the peace that was present in the room I knew that he was birthed into eternity. I said three things to him: I accept your choice and value your autonomy, even though I do not agree with your decision; I choose to forgive you; enter into the joy of your Lord that you yearned for so intensely. It puzzled me for many months that André ended his life at a time when there were no active symptoms of clinical depression.

I eventually remembered a dinner conversation we had with friends about the fact that it often happened that someone completed their suicide ideation, only when they have the energy in remission and there was a new stressor. I find comfort in the fact that André's last act on Earth, cannot cancel out the salvation Jesus bought for him on Calvary. Christ's last act on the cross overrules any act of man.

Failure to thrive

In the depression of loss, many people experience a failure to thrive. André preached a sermon on this theme in November 2018. It is a syndrome that babies are diagnosed with when their weight gain is less than average. With elderly people it can manifest by losing interest in socializing. The risk is increased by depression or the death of a loved one. In grief, we may fail to thrive.

Grief is like the story of Alice in Wonderland - you fall down a rabbit hole into a whole new world. Here you are the wrong size and nothing works the same way as before. You lose your I-identity. Who am I without my beloved? What is my role and purpose now? The Mad Hatter recognised Alice and said with great concern in his voice: "Alice, you have lost your muchness." That is the impact of grief. You lose your muchness and the identity you have built in the relationship you had.

I was blessed to finish my specialisation in Emotional Logic as a Coach and a Trainer in March 2020, three months before André's death. It is a life skill that equips you to make sense of your inner emotional landscape. It was developed by Dr Trevor Griffiths from England in his general medical practice as a family physician in the 1990s. He left medical practice in 2004 to teach EL full-time to prevent mental illness rather than just treat it.

Emotional logic is a visual tool that brings integration between your logical reasoning and your emotions. It assists people to make sense of their inner emotional landscape. As part of your training, you get access to a website where people can unpack cards, identifying their different feelings about a situation. In my grief process, I consistently did card patterns, loss sheets and made smart plans to regain my emotional balance.

A depression whirlpool

The true current pandemic in SA, might be self-death rather than Covid-19. Statistics are hard to find. Before the pandemic it was 1 person per hour (24 per day). After the first lockdown it increased sharply to 3 per hour (72 per day). SADAG reported an increase from 600 calls per day to 2200 since Sept 2021. A newspaper article published on 19 Nov 2021 states 9% of all teenage deaths in SA are due to self-death: 23 deaths per day and 460 failed attempts daily. Self-death is the completion of a pattern of suicidal thoughts, driven by an anger/depression whirlpool that has no outward outlet. It causes you to self-destruct. You do not need to suffer from a mental



*A personal encounter with grief.
Card patterns three weeks after André's death
- an effective tool for self-debriefing*

illness to experience an emotional whirlpool. It is when you experience two strong emotions simultaneously without being able to express either of them. It causes inner conflict and the emotions cannot fulfil their useful purposes because they pull you in two different directions. This causes feelings of emotional stuck-ness. With Emotional Logic as a life skill, people are taught a strategy how to step out of these whirlpools with an action plan to recover a loss of something they value. It offers new choices for people who live in problem saturated narratives.

Depression reframed: When I discover my insignificance, I can find my significance.

Depression can be a normal and healthy response to a situation. When I feel desperate, empty and hopeless, I can realise that depression has a useful purpose. "Seeing your limits might allow you to stop trying for the impossible." Depression is a place where my honesty grows. Here I am faced with my truest identity. I discover that I am not the Messiah or Superwoman. When I face my limits as a human being, I can in humility acknowledge what I can do and draw healthy boundaries for what is outside my circle of influence. Emotional distress is not mental illness. When people get feelings of depression they stop believing that they are of value – they think they are the problem.

Naming my losses

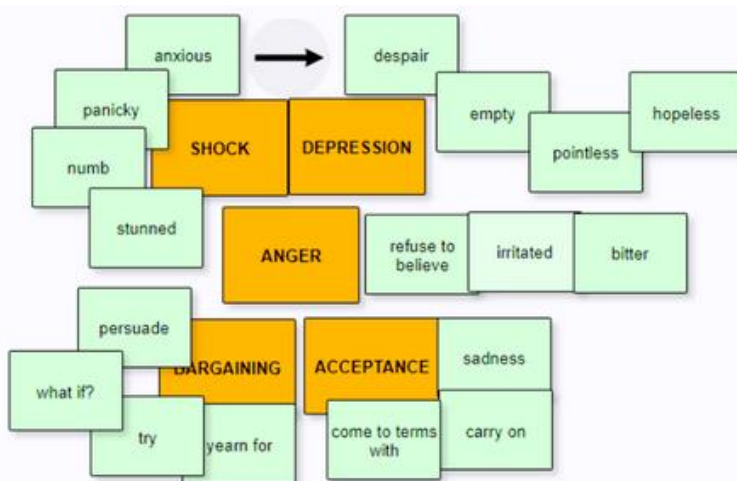
When I am able to name what I valued about being married, I am able to mourn my losses more effectively. Understanding the values behind my emotions of grief, can assist me in making new plans of action to meet my need for connection and improve the quality of my life.

SMART BARGAINING PLAN

I face my limits: I cannot bring my husband back from the dead. Set new boundaries: counselling and training only on Zoom Sound-board my decisions with friends in my inner circle. Respect my grief: daily disciplined rest periods.

A theology of hope

- Proverbs 13:12 "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life."
- Romans 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by



*Being a widow: A card pattern in April 2021 (11 months later).
Notice the shock & depression whirlpool, with cards touching.*

the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

As counsellors we need to learn how to restore hope to people by:

- Equipping them to befriend their emotions and become unstuck from the whirlpools that drive self-death.
- Reframing Depression: Introduce new wisdom when we are willing to face and embrace our limits.
- Give people a toolbox to understand and interpret their emotions. When they don’t feel overwhelmed by it, it restores a sense of inner wellbeing.

We are wounded healers. Henry Nouwen said: “When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and who face with us the reality of our powerlessness - that is a friend who cares.”

“Together we brought the stars closer. You don’t change the world by looking at it. You change it by the way you live in it.”

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Navigating pastoral counselling pitfalls

by Heinrich Lottering sC

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Following years of training and counselling experience, one might be tempted to feel that the fundamentals of effective counselling are so basic that no time should be “wasted” on it any more. Yet as a very wise saying goes – one stumbles over stones and pebbles and not over huge rocks. So let us reflect on a few basic yet very crucial principles of effective counselling in a pastoral milieu. Pastoral counselling differs from pure clinical psychology and counselling in the sense that the first has an aspect of shepherd-ship and brotherly affection added onto it – which potentially opens the door for specific pitfalls.

LESS EFFECTIVE

Firstly most Christians do not realise that there is a substantial difference between pastoral discussion and pastoral counselling. The first being a talk or discussion with a spiritual leader or shepherd, while the latter is based on training and tested principles of psychotherapy. Although pastoral discussion is crucial for pastor-sheep relationships and is necessary for a healthy Church environment, pastoral counselling can be effective in much deeper and profound emotional or psychological pathology.

Due to the fact that most congregation members or Christians going for pastoral counselling perceive it as a mere “spiritual chat”, they expect less results and efficacy from it. I have found that this perception negatively influences the effectiveness and possible positive results of the sessions. Hence, with a first appointment, I

always point out the difference between pastoral discussion and counselling.

DEPENDENCY / EMOTIONAL CRUTCH

As a shepherd is in a authority position he/she often become a guarding father/mother figure for the congregants. Although this very often has positive results for spiritual growth, teaching and guidance outcome – emotional dependency is a realistic risk with certain individuals. Most shepherds feel they have a responsibility to be there for their sheep and often tend to be available seven days a week and after hours. Yet when a congregant start contacting you for counselling every occasion he/she is upset or emotional, expecting time to be made immediately for a counselling session, the relationship is unhealthy. There is little doubt at this point that the counsellor/pastor has become an emotional crutch instead of a teacher and objective counsellor guiding an individual to sustaining optimal emotional health. The best remedy for this is to ensure every time a congregant contacts you in an emotional state, to schedule the session at its earliest for the next day, to encourage the individual to take time to calm down and draw on inner strength/techniques as taught in earlier sessions.

SOCIAL MEDIA SESSIONS

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit and in many instances turned our lives upside down, social distancing for long periods of time has become the norm. One-on-one sessions were not advisable or possible. The options left for us are Zoom sessions, WhatsApp- video calls etc. These options already substantially limits the counsellor’s effectiveness due to the fact that so often more information is drawn from non-verbal communication than the actual words spoken. Not being able to meet face to

face is not ideal - non-verbal communication, like tone of voice, facial expressions, body language and conversation rhythm contribute over 70% of effective communication. Rather opt for the sessions where the counsellor and client can still see each other and hear each other's voices. Unfortunately e-mail or simple WhatsApp message "counselling" substantially reduce effectiveness.

REFERRALS

Usually in the Church setting a pastor will not only know an individual but the whole family. Due to this familiarity often one member of a family or a spouse will approach the pastor to arrange counselling for another family member or spouse about whom they are concerned. This causes a very difficult situation! Refusing to make an appointment for someone while looking into the eyes of a concerned loved-one undoubtedly comes across as uncaring. Yet I have found that individuals "forced" into a counselling session by a family member, spouse or friend most of the time do not open up or truly engage with you as counsellor in the sessions.

Clients that phone for an appointment or send a message requesting counselling themselves, has a "switch" click on in their minds that make them accessible for counselling and probing questions. I counselled a teenager a few years ago whose mother forced a session onto him. His repertoire consisted of only two responses: "I do not know" and "I am not sure". When I am approached by a concerned loved-one, my response is always that I shall gladly assist, provided that the family member in question must phone me personally!!

EAR TO VENT IN

Sadly most counsellors and psychotherapists know from experience that some clients request sessions not for counselling (professional guidance and help) but only as an opportunity to vent their discontent to a captured audience (the counsellor). As therapist one quickly picks up that the person sitting opposite from you has no desire for guidance or resolutions being found – but simply needs a willing ear to vent their discontent and anger. Especially in a church set-up, where many pastors offer counselling free for congregants, this is a big reality. As these venting sessions can be extremely exhausting and time consuming for the counsellor, kindly but honestly confront the client about their intentions for being there.

DISHONESTY

Linking onto a previous point about individuals making appointments for others, take care not to engage under a smoke-screen of deceit. As an example of such a request, as pastor I was asked to counsel an elderly parent going through emotional struggles – yet the request was made that I go under the pretence of Bible study for counselling the individual. Although I am sure the request was made with deep concern for the parent in question, it is never wise or professional to build a

counselling relationship on deceit. Furthermore, asking penetrating questions during a seemingly informal Bible study visit may easily be perceived as inappropriate.

RATHER REFER

After counselling an individual privately who is also a congregation member, the individual in question may feel singled out in the sermon if the Sunday sermon reflects on the same problems. Most individuals will find this very uncomfortable. Hence it is often advisable if a person or family is very well known by the shepherd in a congregation, to rather refer them to a colleague for professional counselling.

TOO KIND TO BE EFFECTIVE

Although counselling is always done with a sense of empathy, often very truthful and confrontational statements or discussion must take place to really penetrate to the core of the problem or truly address problem areas and wrong behaviour. Most of the sheep have an expectation from their shepherd to be a loving and gentle leader. Hence an unpleasant yet often very necessary counselling sessions may negatively impact on the shepherd-sheep relationship. Once again referrals to colleagues will be the wisest and most effective strategy.

As counselling in a Church set-up where pre-existing relationships already exist, pastoral counselling can easily fall into pitfalls that can do more harm than good. It is crucial for pastoral counsellors that are also pastors/ministers to be keenly aware of these potentially danger areas.

Contact Heinrich Lottering at 0837302887

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Loss Reaction Worksheet

View Instructions
Exit

Worksheet loaded

Title

A: Being a widow

Description

Needing to set new boundaries

Named losses		Shock	Denial	Anger	Guilt	Bargn	Dep'n	Accept
Soundboard and support		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Joint decisionmaking		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drive and energy		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Caring for our mental health in 2022

By Dr Steyn Venter, Pastoral Therapist - Centurion

As we prepare for 2022, I want to use the opportunity to discuss mental health and specifically the effect the that the Covid-19 pandemic has on us all.

We should carefully guard our mental health, as many of our physical sicknesses are caused by poor mental health. *If you don't make time for your wellness, you will be forced to make time for your illness.*

Some of the more difficult areas that we are struggling with right now are the following:

FRUSTRATION

What is frustration:

- A mixture of anger, disappointment, and irritation.
- This is a normal reaction when we must deal with things we cannot control.
- Although we cannot really help that we feel like that, we can control how we react to it.

What causes frustration?

- As far as the Covid 19 is concerned:
 - Who ever thought that something like this could happen to us? Suddenly the whole country was under house arrest.
 - The ever-present masks that make your glasses mist up, tickle your nose, and makes it difficult to breath properly, that gives you big ears, and hooks on your glasses when your take it off.
 - The hand sanitising at every shop you go into.
 - The temperature measuring machine that feels like it shoots you between the eyes every time.
 - The lockdown, the out of bounds beaches, churches, restaurants.
 - The banning of liquor and cigarettes.
 - The closing of the provincial borders.
- Bad communication:
 - We often communicate in such a way that others do not understand us.
 - We often say: "You don't listen to what I'm saying."
 - They do listen, but they do not understand what you want.
 - We often confuse others. Ex: I'm going to the shop, do you want to come with? What are you saying? Do you want the person to come with, or not?
- Different experiences:

- We all experience things differently and we need to respect each other's experiences.
- We often hear: No man, you must not feel like that, it is stupid to feel like that. How another person experiences something, is real. Take note and listen.
- Don't be too quick to give advice, perhaps the other person is only looking for sympathy or a hug.
- Lack of improvement:
 - People are ambitious.
 - We want to grow, change, better ourselves.
 - This is how we feel good or better about ourselves.
 - Just be careful, not everybody moves at the same speed. Some of us are fast, others are slow. Respect each other's speed.

How can we reduce these feelings of anger and frustration?

- Acceptance:
 - Do not get rebellious.
 - The more Covid 19 upsets us, the worse our lives become.
 - Accept the situation. Adapt to the rules, do not get upset, otherwise you will be in a jail.
 - My experience at university. There were so many rules – many students moaned and protested. I never worried about any rules and was not even familiar with all the rules, and I was never in trouble, because my way of life agreed with the rules. I was completely free.
- Breathe slowly:
 - You will see that when the emotions run high and you want to break things and throw things around out of frustration, that you breathe faster and shallower.
 - When you regulate your breathing, you can direct more oxygen to your brain and help yourself to calm down.
 - You can try the 4-7-8 technique. Inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds and blow out for 8 seconds.
 - When the session or meeting gets too tense, drink a glass of cold water. It literally cools you down
- Relax your muscles progressively:

- One of the ways your body reacts to high emotion, is that your muscles stiffen and contract.
- By relaxing that physical tension, you also help your mind to relax.
- Go and lie down for a while and work through your muscles. Stiffen them when you inhale and relax them when you exhale.
- Exercise:
 - Go outside. Get fresh air.
 - Take off your shoes and feel the ground or the grass under your feet.
 - Go and work in the garden.
 - Play with the dog.
 - Jump into the swimming pool.
 - Physical activity helps to regulate stress and adrenaline to help get rid of cropped up energy.
 - Go for a run and concentrate on your feet hitting the pavement or go for a walk.
 - I cannot stress this enough. When you feel frustrated, anxious, angry and depressed' there is wonderful medicine which will help you a lot. It is sun and water.
- Manage your expectations of other people:
 - Misplaced expectations of others create a lot of frustration and negative feelings.
 - Accept that you cannot fully anticipate other people's behaviour.
 - Change your own framework so that you do not expect other people to do things like you do it – you will only hurt yourself.
 - Accept the speed of the other person.
- Spoil yourself: It is OK to lie down with a packet of chips or chocolates and watch a movie on Netflix or something.
- Sleep: When you feel that things just get too much and your nerves reach breaking point, get into bed and sleep for a while.
- Get creative: Draw a picture, paint something, or make something.
- Listen to music:
 - Music has a great influence on our brain.
 - Listen to a romantic song and place yourself in a soft and romantic environment.
 - If you would like to, you can dance with an imaginary lover in your lounge.
- Go and wash your face:
 - The cold water will cause your heartbeat and your breathing to slow down.

- By lowering your physical symptoms of frustration, you also lower your emotional frustration.

LACK OF SOCIAL CONTACT

- Humanity is wired to touch and be touched.
- Without this contact, relationships are weakened.
- We can sometimes be so cold and hard at the workplace. As if we are dealing with machines or furniture. Maintain your humanity.
- Touching reduces stress and lowers blood pressure.
- It activates the pleasure and love hormone, oxytocin, which is critical in building relationships.
- Oxytocin affects our general mental health.

Now what do we do with the Covid situation?

- Remember that the virus is spread through droplets, not touch.
- The employees of your workplace is a very close family.
- Now you are separated from your normal relationships and environments.
- You perhaps feel isolated, lonely, thrown away, and not really part of the company anymore.

What must you do?

- You must realise that you need your colleagues, not only for work, but also to socialise.
- It is necessary to keep your friendship ties strong.
- If there are colleagues living close by, get together socially and just chat.
- Phone or drink coffee with a colleague or colleagues on skype or zoom, just to chat.
- Keep your relationships with your colleagues warm.
- If you do not do it, the whole company will suffer.
- You must also ensure that you do not neglect your family.

ANXIETY

What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is our body's natural reaction to stress.
- It is a feeling of apprehension and nervousness about what lies ahead.
- It is a normal part of life.

Symptoms

- A feeling of nervousness, restlessness, and tension.
- A feeling of threatening danger - you have a feeling of that something bad is going to happen.
- The rhythm of your heart increases.
- You breathe faster and start sweating.

- You may shiver, feel weak and tired. You find it hard to concentrate, and you only think of your present problems.

How can we prevent it or lessen our anxiety?

- Stay active:
 - Take part in activities that you like and that make you feel good about yourself.
 - Enjoy social interaction and caring relationships.
- Stay clear of alcohol or drugs:
 - Take care that you do not drink more than usual, or smoke more, or drink more coffee than normal.
 - These things can cause anxiety or make it worse.
- Do not work longer hours: Keep to office hours.

FEAR

What is fear?

- Fear is a natural, powerful and primitive human emotion.
- It involves a physical as well as an emotional reaction.
- Fear prepares us for present danger and the possibility of hurt, whether the danger is physical or psychological.
- Fear is generally triggered by real threats, but it can also be caused by imaginary danger.
- Fear is a survival emotion.

Physical reaction.

- When we become aware of threatening danger our bodies react in a specific way.
- You sweat, your heartbeat increases, and your body is pumped full of adrenalin.
- It is also called the “fight or flight” reaction.
- It is how your body prepares itself to either fight or to run away.
- That is when you can jump over a high wall when a bull chases you.

Emotional reaction.

- This reaction is highly personal.
- Because fear includes some of the same chemical reactions in the brain as positive emotions like happiness and excitement, fear can, under certain circumstances, be perceived as fun. Bungy jumping etc.

Psychological reactions

- We can feel overwhelmed.
- We can feel unhappy.
- You can feel out of control.
- Have a feeling of imminent death.

How should we handle this fear?

- Don't listen to what everybody has to say about Covid.
- Don't read everything Facebook has to say. Decide: Is it truth or fake news?
- Be as safe as you can.
- Be calm in the knowledge, that you do what you can, without getting paranoid.
- Live and enjoy what you do.

OUR FINANCES

Luckily many companies did not cut salaries or lay off people. These workers are privileged. But perhaps the salaries of some of your family members have been cut or they were laid off and the family's income has been drastically reduced.

What to do now?

- Accept your present circumstances:
 - Accept that your life will be different for a while and concentrate on things that you can control.
- Confirm your family ties:
 - Do not fight and don't blame.
 - Work together to handle the problem.
- Do not start eating more, drinking more or start gambling or buying things you don't really need on Amazon.
- Change your lifestyle:
 - Accept that you cannot buy KFC as often as you used to.
 - Eat simpler.
 - Wear your clothes longer.
- Get your family's cooperation.

That is it:
Protect your mental health,
relax,
be happy, and
live!

Be safe. ■



The Sycamore fig and Olive trees – providence of God

By Mrs Roxanne Bailey, Career Guidance Counsellor, Independent Psychometrist and Pastoral Counsellor

Scripture:

Deuteronomy 8:8, KJV

A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey.

Genesis 3:7, KJV

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons..

"It is not difficult to imagine how, with their huge trunks reaching upwards from the earth and their branches seeming to touch the sky, some of the world's giant and most ancient trees – whose lifespans far exceeded those of human beings – must have seemed immortal and come to occupy a special place within the greater scheme of things; to appear connected with the forces governing the Earth, and to be able to directly influence peoples' lives"- E. Parker and A Lewington (2012)

According to E. Parker and A. Lewington (2012), many trees have been called the 'tree of life' and 'afterlife'. Furthermore, there are about 750 species of fig in the world, found in all tropical and some temperate regions, such as Mexico, China, New Zealand and Namibia. In addition, the fig has been planted in 288 BC and is still thriving today. It seems that the common fig has been named not fewer than 57 times within the bible.

These authors also indicated that the olive oil were seen and is still seen today as a precious religious and ceremonial, as well as healing resource; where it symbolised 'goodness and purity'.

The fig- and olive trees are seen as ancient trees that symbolize judgement yet also new beginnings, thus the providence of God. In Genesis 2:16-17, Adam and Eve wore leaves of the fig tree after they ate from the Tree of Knowledge and realized that they were naked. Already from the beginning of the creation man didn't listen to God. The fig tree loses its leaves as winter approaches and provides shade during the summer. Where the olive, the cedar and the palm, are more evergreen and excellent all year round trees. Yet, at times the olive tree depending on the watering and severe seasonal changes might at times lose their leaves.



Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane where an orchard was situated at the foot of Mount of Olives. Here grew olive groves, as symbol of God's providence to us. This is believed to be the location of the Garden of Gethsemane, just west of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

God has provided us with providences throughout the ages. The greatest providence: His One and Only Son, Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins; so that we would have the opportunity to

enter God's Kingdom: "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit"- 1 Corinthians 15:45.

The bible makes reference to the olive leaf, Genesis 8:11, during Noah's time, as well as the healing with olive oil, Luke 10:33-34 and the anointment through olive oil as written in Exodus 29:7, as well as pure olive oil used within the lamps, as stated in Leviticus 24:2.

Olive trees that has been carbon dated around 1100 A.D. symbolises God's blessings- longevity, peace, fruitfulness and prosperity.

Although God has granted us with many symbols of 'Providences' throughout the ancient times, as well as the modern era; it is in the human nature to disobey His Grace bestowed upon us. It seems that power is sought. S. McAleer (2020) states:

"Suppose that Socrates is right that no one can be happy in a polis not governed by philosophers. Given 'the madness of the majority' the fact that 'hardly anyone acts sanely in public affairs', a person trying to live well- which requires living justly- is 'like a man who has fallen among wild animals and is neither willing to join them in doing injustice nor sufficiently strong to oppose the general savagery alone'".



It seems that from the philosophical era that human beings were caught in their own realm of firstly thanking God for His 'Providences': His Gifts, to us and then asking for more and more, as well as complaining and falling in the 'madness of the majority'. Furthermore, if you believe in God and

acknowledge the greater good, as well as trust in His omnipresence, during a society, that calls itself post-modern; one sometimes get seen as unusual.

The Cave Allegory from Plato displays this human ignorance or blindness to the greatness that God provides to

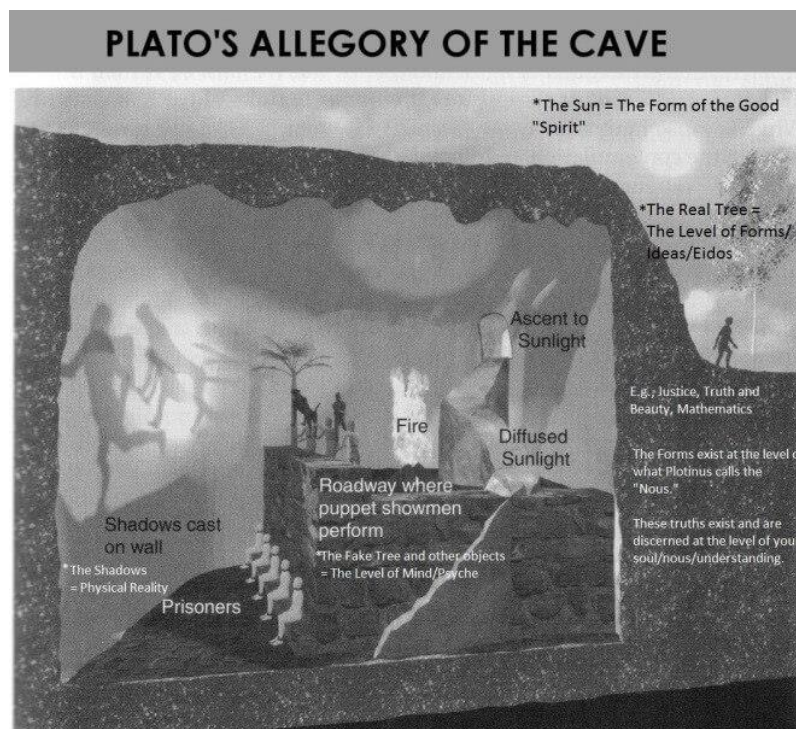
us. Socrates imagined that there was a cave-like dwelling, with the entrance stretching up towards the daylight. It seems that the cave dwellers have been in the dwelling, since childhood. Moreover, the cave dwellers have been in shackles by the legs and neck; so as to stay in one place with only viewing the visual images seen in front of them. Since, being shackled around the neck, unable to turn their heads; they could only see the light thus glow from the glare, cast from the fire behind the lower built wall. Behind this lower built wall the people behind the wall was carrying all sorts of things: artefacts. Some are talking and others were silent. The following question was stated by Socrates: "...if someone, using force were to free the prisoners and pull them up the cave's rough and steep ascent and not to let go of

as later betrayed and crucified Jesus Christ. However, God saw some good and greatness in His creation, thus He gave His only beloved Son, to firstly according to this parable, act as our vineyard keeper and protector, as well as advocate. Jesus pleaded on our behalf to the vineyard owner (God) to give us (condemned fig tree) a chance for one more season before cutting the fig tree (us) down. It is sad that only after the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus, who pleaded by God beforehand, our new beginnings, thus season started. Humankind kept on with our bad ways (not bear fruit, thus trust in God), yet God cared so much for us that He still gave His son to us (Rom 8:34).

Subsequently one reads about Jesus who made the fruitless fig tree to wither (Matt 21: 18-19); "Now in the

morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee hence forward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away". Jesus was upset, he was feeling pain and turmoil; yet again, we as God's creations, will betray God, as well as disobey Him...; we dragged Jesus to be tried before Pilate, for blasphemy- claiming to be the King of the Jews. Jesus wanted to plea to the people (God's creation) to repent and to give Him praise, but instead man leads Jesus to be crucified.

The greatest Grace, mankind didn't realize, that God bestowed onto us; was His gift of 'Providence', thus to give His only Son to die for our sins and be able to bear fruit again. God believed in humankind's greatness even if we have, since Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses, Lot etcetera, disobeyed and discarded His existence and Grace.



them, until they had dragged them out into the light of the sun..."; would they be able to see or be filled with pain, rage or blindness...?"

Plato's Cave – VoegelinView - voegelinview.com

Jesus often visited the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of Mount Olive to be in the silent presence of His Father. It was at the foot of Mount Olive where Jesus saw the barren tree (Luke 13: 6-9): "Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' "

'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' "

It seems that humankind is the supposed fruit to be borne. Yet, the people became so disobedient, as well

It is like the Allegory of the Cave, as seen by Plato. We are blinded by His Light and fail to whole-heartedly trust Him. We would rather trust manmade laws which lead to wars, corruption, misfortune; yet God bestow on us His Grace and 'Providence' many a time and still we do not rely on His Word.

As counsellors and mentors when someone feels that they might be stuck in a cave and being blinded by all the difficulties faced on earth; one may use a combination of logo therapy and hope therapy.

A.L. Mutcher (2002), refers to the following by Weingarten, 2007: "Hope is a resource. We hoard it at our peril. The effects of hope are profound, as are the effects of hopelessness". Furthermore, Harris and Larsen (2008) found that hope has protective qualities, because it is part of the positive feedback loop: as hope increases high risk behaviours decrease. According to the vast medical research that Mutcher refers to, hopeful thinking minimizes the impact of the problem, assist

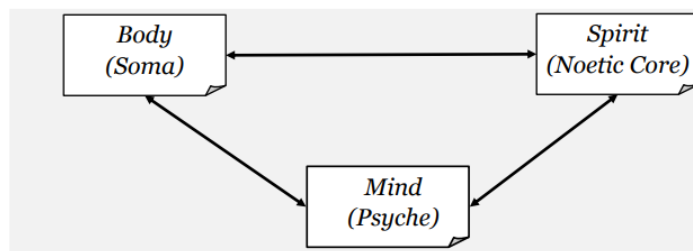
in more successful psychological adjustment, and provides guidance to more effective coping with barriers between the person and their goals.

Hope therapy may with mindfulness, the wheel of wellness by Seligman, REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior) therapy by A. Ellis and assisting a person from the self firstly; to lead the individual towards self-actualisation, can bring forth hope. Hope might be threatened by: setbacks, feeling of helplessness, loss of a family member, mental illness, failures, personal limitations or even feeling depressed, physical pain, abandonment, divorce, isolation, being bullied, financial crisis and many other uncertainties or trauma. Although, hope is seen as a silent factor within the therapeutic relationship, when utilised in a co-constructive way amongst the client and the therapist / counsellor / mentor with the same goal in mind – greatness of renewed life through Jesus Christ and the acknowledgement of the clients greatness of self in the Eyes of a loving God.

Thereafter, if one could rekindle the hope it could lead to positivity, reduced hopelessness and increased faith; in order to enjoy God's 'Providence' of His True Light. Moreover, logo therapy by V.E. Frankl (1905-1997) may be applied, thus guiding the client to finding meaning.

According to Victor Frankl's dimensional ontology image of man; the human being is an entity consisting of the following:

"This is an image of man, where the scientific and the philosophic views are combined. Although we can experience sickness in the body and the psyche, the human spirit, our noetic core, remains healthy; however, access

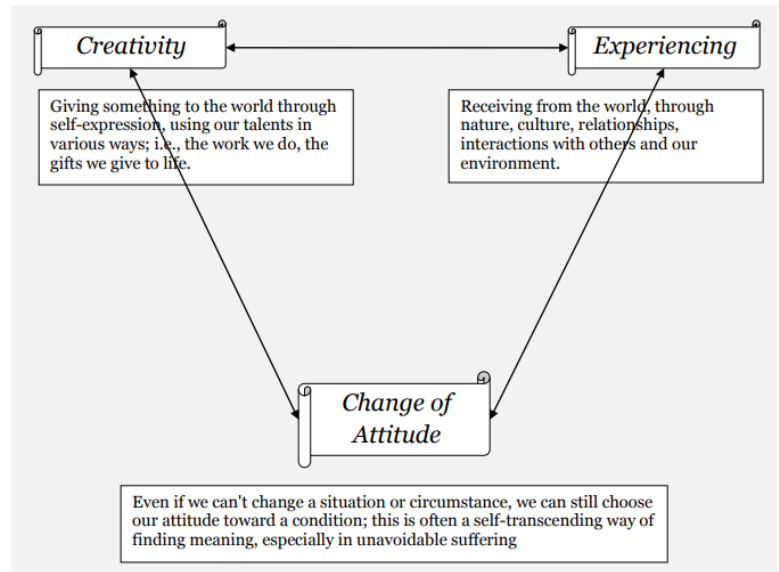


to that healthy core can be blocked" - goyourown-way.org Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy.

According to Victor Frankl's 'Meaning triangle' one may be able to find ways in obtaining meaning in life; as seen in the following image:

God's gracious gifts of 'Providences' are more than three folds available to us if we just seek His guidance towards inner peace. As therapist / counsellor / mentor, one might be able to provide guidance through spiritual hope and rejuvenate the 'logos' thus meaning in life. It might be to find meaning in the moment, thus to become mindful of all the small little things and blessings in each twinkling.

Furthermore, there might also be the Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) and mindfulness to assist the more cognitive-emotional-spiritual self. Albert Ellis Institute (2014) states the following: "The goal of REBT is best summarized as "disputing" – challenging and questioning our irrational and dysfunctional beliefs and replacing them with more sensible and functional beliefs. The result is not just changes in a few thought patterns or reducing some problematic symptoms, but a new perspective on life". A. Ellis's (1950) therapeutic stages states that we can change our thoughts that is under distress:



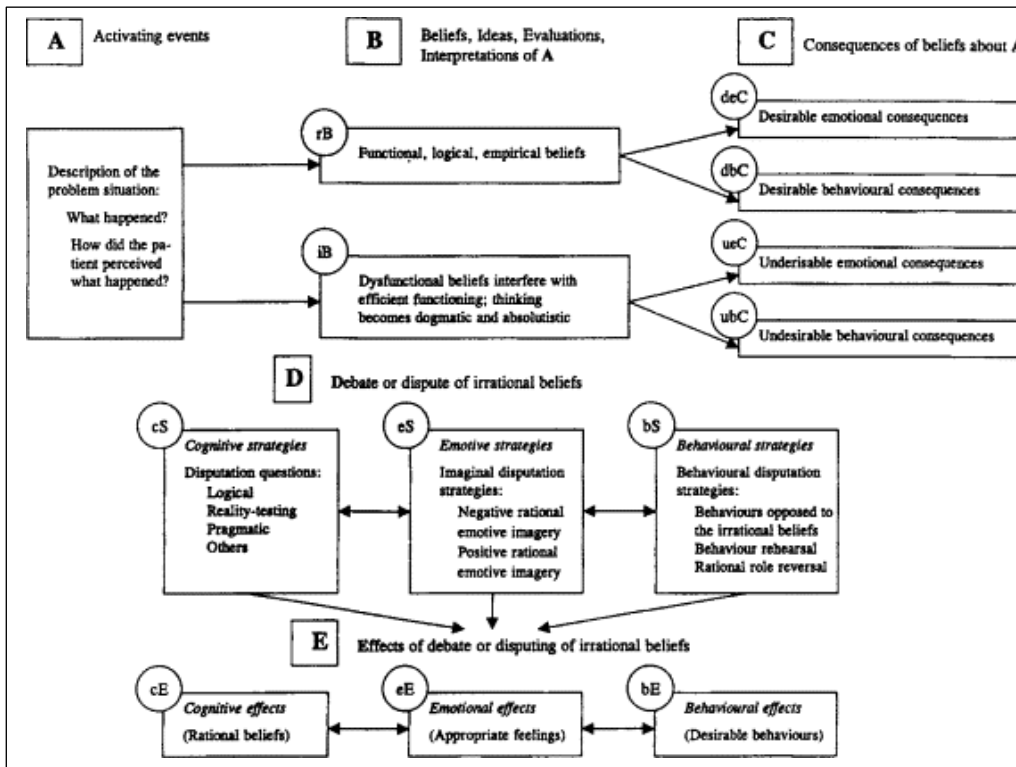
Re-learning our A-B-Cs

The cognitive theory is that our thoughts can have an effect (either positive or negative), on our physical, behavioural and emotional responses towards a particular situation. This is illustrated in the diagram below:

However, to find God's providences thus Grace for us, we can start the healing process of the self with these helpful therapies, yet also need to be mindful and find spiritual solace, through the Word of God. To be mindful means to be in the moment and using our senses to create a sort of awareness and inner peace, to listen and respect everything in nature that surrounds us. It is about

the following aspects (T. Stead, 2017):

- Knowing God's Presence
- Trusting God
- Knowing God's Will
- Finding Peace
- 'Inner Healing'
- Prayer and Worship
- Practicing Love



materialistic things; we should make God our Fig or Olive Tree of Light.

As a therapist / counsellor / mentor one can provide guidance through using Hope therapy, Mindfulness, Logo Therapy, or even REBT: Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy. These are things within the human realm that God has given us to assist or guide the Spirit of the distorted self, towards experiencing His True Grace for us- 'Providence of Life in His Kingdom in Heaven'.

If we look at the lyrics by L. Rosselson on the Song of the Olive Tree, it was written as an anti-war song for the turmoil Israel went through. The song is written in such a way

to plead by the people to listen with empathy to understand the cries of the world; that He has given us so much, yet we do not acknowledge His 'Providences'.

Song of the Olive Tree (5.46) (L. Rosselson) and sang by Janet Russell

My father's father's father planted here
In this now broken earth an olive tree
And as a child I sang to it my secrets
And as I grew I felt it part of me.
Its branches gave me shelter from the sun
Its grey green leaves shaded my young dreams
The fruit it bore was like a gift of hope
Of all the olive trees I loved this one.

The settlers came, they beat us black and blue
They said, "Next time we shoot you. Understand?"
But still we dared to come we had no choice
We came at night like thieves to our own land.
Like ghosts we came, men, women, young and old
To pick the crop as we have always done
For centuries we harvested in peace
The oil we pressed was sweet, precious as gold.

Now look. This is a cemetery for trees.
Their great machines crushed hope into despair
They ripped the heart from every living tree
Except for one, my tree they chose to spare.
They dug it up, they smuggled it away
This ancient tree, they saw it as a prize
For some Israeli rich enough to pay
Five thousand dollars' worth, that's what they say.

Do you believe in ghosts? Last night I dreamed

Conclusion

My six year old daughter lost her first tooth, which I pulled out for her, yes firstly there were pain, anxiety and a bit of fear for the unknown, yet there were trust and afterwards her eyes lit up with excitement and acknowledging her bravery, as well as the tooth fairy that will visit. Sometimes we experience different emotions, yet if we just trust and believe in His Light of Love for us, we can bear fruit and enjoy God's many 'Providences' for us. Moreover, if we can find joy in each moment and gain hope; it can lead us to the deeper gift from God-meaning in life, but also His unconditional Love and Grace for us.

Jesus bore pain, fear, and anxieties for us and where beyond human bravery. Matthew 24:3-31 (KJV): "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet".

God wants us to become as the largest sycamore fig (and probably the oldest) that stands in the Kruger National Park in South Africa, which is well over 1,000 years old. He wants His children to use His gifts of 'Providence' bestowed on us from the day we were born, and become abundant in spirit and soul, as strong as the fig and olive tree. Instead of finding a substitute for our fears and anxieties, such as alcohol, drugs or

My father's father's father came to me
 He took my hand and held it in his own
 And said, Take heart, here is my olive tree.
 And when I woke it was a kind of birth
 And in my hand I found an olive stone
 And in the field where once my tree had been
 A thousand shapes arose out of the earth.

I saw their faces, women, children, men
 And each hand held a perfect olive stone
 And each heart held a vision of to come
 When all our olive trees will rise again.

The lyrics states, that instead of mankind fighting and becoming the 'cut' olive or fig trees; of broken spirit, hope and dreams. To awake from all the horrific things in life and stand tall with renewed strength like new 'born' trees of hope. To obey God, since He gave us a chance, a third season, so that our trees are not 'cut', but rather to bear Gracious Fruit. ■

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The story of Silent Night

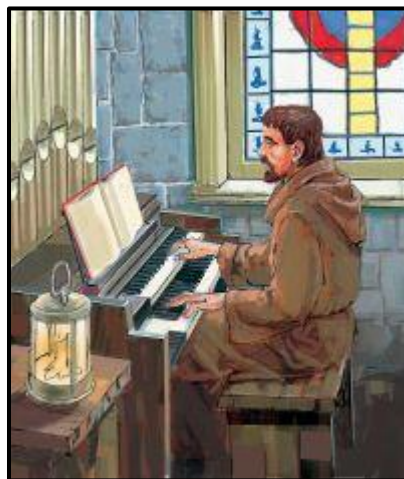
A true and well-known story, shared here by Ilse Grünewald

Father Joseph Mohr sat at the old organ. His fingers stretched over the keys, forming the notes of a chord. He took a deep breath and pressed down. Nothing. He lifted his fingers and tried again. Silence echoed through the church.

Father Joseph shook his head. It was of no use. The pipes were rusted, the bellows mildewed. The organ had been wheezing and growing quieter for months, and Father Joseph had been hoping it would hold together until the organ builder arrived to repair it in the spring. But now, on December 23, 1818, the organ had finally given out. St. Nicholas Church would have no music for Christmas.

Father Joseph sighed. Maybe a brisk walk would make him feel better. He pulled on his overcoat and stepped out into the night. His white breath puffed out before him. Moonlight sparkled off the snow-crusted trees and houses in the village of Oberndorf in Salzburg, Austria.

Father Joseph crunched through the snowy streets to the edge of the little Austrian town and climbed the path leading up the mountain.



From high above Oberndorf, Father Joseph watched the Salzach River ripple past St. Nicholas Church. In the spring, when melting snow flowed down the mountains and the river swelled in its banks, water lapped at the foundation of the church. It was moisture from the flooding river that had caused the organ to mildew and rust.

Father Joseph looked out over the Austrian Alps. Stars shone above in the still and silent night. Silent night? Father Joseph stopped. Of

course! "Silent Night!" He had written a poem a few years before, when he had first become a priest, and he had given it that very title. "Silent Night."

Father Joseph scrambled down the mountain. Suddenly he knew how to bring music to the church.

The next morning, Father Joseph set out on another walk. This time he carried his poem. And this time he knew exactly where he was going -- to see his friend Franz Gruber, the organist for St. Nicholas, who lived in the next village.

Franz Gruber was surprised to see the priest so far from home on Christmas Eve, and even more surprised when Father Joseph handed him the poem.

That night Father Joseph and Franz Gruber stood at the altar of St. Nicholas Church. Father Joseph held his guitar. He could see members of the congregation giving each other puzzled looks.

They had never heard a guitar played in church before, and certainly not during midnight mass on Christmas Eve, the holiest night of the year.

Father Joseph picked out a few notes on the guitar, and he and Franz Gruber began to sing. Their two voices rang out, joined by the church choir on the chorus. Franz Gruber's melody matched the simplicity and honesty of Father Joseph's words.

When the last notes faded into the night, the congregation remained still for a moment, then began to clap their hands. Applause filled the church. The villagers of Oberndorf loved the song! Father Joseph's plan to bring music to St. Nicholas Church had worked.

A few months later, the organ builder arrived in Oberndorf and found the



Silent night, Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child,
Holy Infant so tender and mild;
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing Hallelujah,
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born.

Silent night, Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord at Thy birth.

words and music to "Silent Night" lying on the organ. The song enchanted him, and when he left, he took a copy of it with him.

The organ builder gave the song to two families of travelling singers who lived near his home. The travelling singers performed "Silent Night" in concerts all over Europe, and soon the song spread throughout the world.

Today, cathedral choirs and carollers from New York to New Zealand sing the simple song that was first played in a mountain church in Austria on Christmas Eve more than 200 years ago. ■

*Have a blessed Christmas
and a joyful festive season!
Ilse*

By Dick Smolinski, accessed at <https://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/holidays-christmas/inspirational-christmas-stories8.htm>

Notes from the Financial Office

Dear CPSC Affiliate

In my first "Notes from the Financial Office" and in my capacity as the CPSC Finance Officer, I wish to thank every CPSC affiliate for the loving support over the nearly 5 years that I was in the admin position and the continuing support and ongoing kindness in my new position.

The 2022 renewal notices were issued via the central system on 22 October 2022 and I want to thank the 32,2% of the CPSC affiliates who have already paid the 2022 annual subscription based on the payments received in the bank up to 6 December 2021.

Please note that the renewal date for the CPSC subscription is 31 December 2021 and that your current CPSC certificates are valid until 31 December 2021.



There is a grace period for payments until 31 March 2022 for affiliates to remain in good standing, but please make a note of that date, as after 31 March 2022 you are technically not in good standing according to SAQA regulations if the annual CPSC fee is still outstanding.

I want to wish you a peaceful and richly blessed festive season. Always remember that Jesus Christ is the only Reason for the Season – may His eternal

Peace fill our hearts and engulf our lives.

Best wishes and Jesus' blessings for Christmas.

Anita ■

Notes from the Admin Office

Dear CPSC affiliate

The past year has been challenging for many of us. My prayer for each of you is that 2022 will be an extraordinarily wonderful chapter of your story.

ACRP is the professional body of our council. The ACRP Newsletter for December/January is attached in the e-mail. Also see the ACRP message on the last page of this newsletter.



• **Mrs Annette de la Porte:** "Facing the grief of self-death in Covid – how Emotional Logic can be used as a grief tool."

• **Prof Nicolene Joubert:** "Casting a vision for the future - from lament to growth through the lens of ancient Israel's history."

• **Advocate Frikkie Marais:** "POPIA: Compliance for Pastoral Counsellors."

Get the conference material

We are excited to announce that the CPSC Executive Committee approved that the recordings and questionnaires are now available to affiliates that were unable to join the live presentations.

All the relevant information and documentation will be forwarded to you following payment of the R200 fee (see banking details below). Send the proof of payment to Anita at finance@cpsc.org.za. Please include your initials, last name and state "CPSC Conference".

This is a wonderful opportunity to obtain 11 CPSC CPD points!

Ilse

Conference 2021

Despite load shedding and bad Internet receptions, our very first online Zoom Conference took place on the 19th and 25th of November 2021 respectively, turned out to be very successful!

The fact that CPSC decided to present a conference via Zoom meant that attending the conference was made accessible to our affiliates all over South Africa. More than 150 affiliates attended the presentations.

The very relevant theme of the 19th was "The Story of Covid-19 in Christian Counselling", and on the 25th, we were instructed about the implication of the new Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act for pastoral counsellors.

Conference programme

The programme included the following :

- **Dr Arnold Smith:** "The story of Covid-19 in Christian Counselling: The disastrous effects of the "new normal" created by the Covid-19 pandemic."
- **Dr Barbara Louw:** "Bibliotherapy in the Pastoral Counselling Practice during the Covid-19 pandemic."
- **Rev Wynand Louw:** "Ethical financial management of Pastoral Counselling practice during Covid-19 pandemic."
- **Mr Benaya Niyukuri:** "Covid-19 as a challenge to pastoral care."

New contact details

Please note the new CPSC contact details:

- Reach Ilse at the CPSC Admin Office at 072 705 1183 (am), or at admin@cpsc.org.za.
- For any questions regarding member subscriptions, payments, and financial matters, please contact Anita at finance@cpsc.org.za.
- Forward all CPSC CPD points related questions, feedback form requests, submissions and requests for the evaluation of material for CPSC CPD points to cpd@cpsc.org.za. ■

CPSC CONTACT DETAILS

CPSC Administrative Office

Ilse Grünwald

Cell: 072 705 1183 (am)

- Email for administrative matters: admin@cpsc.org.za
- Email specifically for matters regarding CPSC CPD points: cpd@cpsc.org.za

CPSC Finance Office

Anita Snyders

- Email for all financial matters: finance@cpsc.org.za

BANKING DETAILS

CPSC (The Council for Pastoral and Spiritual Counsellors)

Nedbank

Branch: Woodlands

Branch code: 136-305

Account no: 1020501553

E-mail proof of payment to the CPSC Finance Office at finance@cpsc.org.za.

Please state your initials and last name as reference for any deposit made.

DISCLAIMER

While CPSC supports initiatives for equipping pastoral and spiritual counsellors, statements and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views and/or opinions of CPSC. CPSC does not make any warranty regarding the information supplied. CPSC shall in no event be liable for any decision or action taken in reliance on this information.



Association of Christian Religious Practitioners

ACRP is a professional body recognised in South Africa by SAQA in terms of the section 13 (1)(i)(ii) of the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008 - SAQA Reg No.: PB 0000110



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Dear Affiliates of ACRP

We pray that you are well.

As we draw near to the end of the year 2021, let us look back on all that has happened: the good as well as the bad. Having lived with the Covid-19 pandemic for almost 2 years now with all the repercussions thereof, it is easy to become so submerged in the now, the immediate situation, that it is difficult to see beyond to what may come. We pray that this Christmas season will give you time to reflect and to once again discover the Light of faith so that your life will be infused with hope, positivity, joy and peace.

As you may be aware, a new variant of the coronavirus, Omicron, has been identified. President Ramaphosa in his address to the Nation on Sunday evening, 28 November, confirmed that there has been a rise in infections and that we can expect to enter a fourth wave very soon.

For the time being, however, we stay on Alert level 1, keeping to the regulations as previously stipulated.

Please keep on adhering to the basic health protocols, keep on wearing your masks in public, try to avoid large gatherings and encourage each other to get vaccinated.

To quote from the President's speech:

"Fellow South Africans,

The emergence of the Omicron variant and the recent rise in cases have made it clear that we will have to live with this virus for some time to come.

We have the knowledge, we have the experience, and we have the tools to manage this pandemic, to resume many of our daily activities, and to rebuild our economy.

We have the ability to determine the path our country will take. Every one of us needs to get vaccinated.

Every one of us needs to practice the basic health protocols like wearing masks, washing or sanitising our hands regularly, and avoiding crowded and closed spaces.

Every one of us needs to take responsibility for our own health and the health of those around us.

Every one of us has a role to play.

We will not be defeated by this pandemic.

We have already started learning to live with it.

We will endure, we will overcome and we will thrive.

God bless South Africa and protect her people."

Please find attached our ACRP Newsletter for December / January, which includes an article written by the ACRP Chairperson, Dr Vincent Mazibuko, and also a short message from our CEO, Dr Tertius Erasmus.

In conclusion, we would like to share this Christmas Prayer for Action by Howard Thurman:

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with the flocks, then the work of Christmas begins: To find the lost, to heal those broken in spirit, to feed the hungry, to release the oppressed, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all peoples, to make a little music with the heart. And to radiate the Light of Christ, every day, in every way, in all that we do and in all that we say. Then the work of Christmas begins.

Stay safe,

The ACRP Management Team.

Blessings,

Andrea Leipoldt

Administrator

073 557 4716

Mon-Thurs: 08:00 – 16:30

Friday: 08:00 – 15:00