



CPSC Notes

COUNCIL FOR PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL COUNSELLORS

No 26 – November 2023

Crisis in the workplace?

Dear Affiliates,

Many people experience a workplace crisis. It can be the result of sexual assault, or a dispute between workers and co-workers or supervisors.

Toxic workplace conditions, such as long hours of work, constant changes in shifts, being underpaid and poor leadership may lead to violence and cause a crisis in the workplace.

Lack of job security or being laid off may contribute to a crisis. During the Covid-19 pandemic, people's work and private lives were affected. The workplace environment changed drastically. Many people lost their jobs and a major health crisis turned into a major economic crisis. This crisis is still unfolding as the economic situation created many uncertainties, both for job seekers and those in jobs.

How do these issues affect believers and their vocational callings? How can you support and edify a fellow brother or sister in Christ struggling with a workplace crisis? The first step would be to listen actively and reflect on the type of crisis and loss your brother or sister is experiencing.

Job loss leads to emotions of grief and in some cases loss of occupational identity. You can come alongside your fellow believer, listen to, and share these painful emotions. It also leads to worry and anxiety in a time when companies are downsizing. This happened during the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is still happening.

If a crisis is the result of sexual assault, it creates a serious dilemma for the victim who is facing a choice of reporting the person and get fired, resigning, or keeping quiet. The right choice might not be a straightforward choice, and you may have to encourage and support the victim but refrain from making the choice.

As a follower of Christ, you need to pray and seek the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit in the situation. We need to look at these challenges holistically. The person in crisis suffers emotionally, cognitively and



spirituality. Feelings of shame, guilt, worthlessness, hopelessness, and anxiety often are part of a crisis. Negative thought patterns about the self ("I'm worthless"), others ("nobody cares") and world ("life is not worth living") may develop. The person often reacts by questioning God and his love or even doubting that there is a God.

The book of Job provides a good example of how loss may affect a believer. The narrative demonstrates multiple perspectives on suffering and faith related to Job's crisis and the responses of his friends. Job's own

feelings and questions of why and his own defences against the interpretations of his friends are narrated.

Perspectives of others, for example, "Job sinned, and he deserved it", "he is unrighteous" are given. His wife's solution: "curse God and die". None of these perspectives was the right one for Job. His crisis was answered by God himself. He reminded Job of his vastness, greatness, power, and goodness. This is the divine perspective.

If you're suffering a crisis in your vocational calling as a Christian, whether you're in full time ministry, or practicing your calling daily in your workplace, you could apply these steps. You should take time to reflect on your own emotional reactions, negative thought patterns and spiritual struggles. Spend time in prayer and share your inner emotional pain and doubt with Jesus. Remind yourself of God's vastness, greatness and goodness and drink from the Fountain of Life.

John 6: 37 *"On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink".*

Deuteronomy 31:8: *"The LORD himself goes before you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."*

Peace in Christ

Prof Nicolene Joubert

Chairperson: CPSC ■

Christmas Message

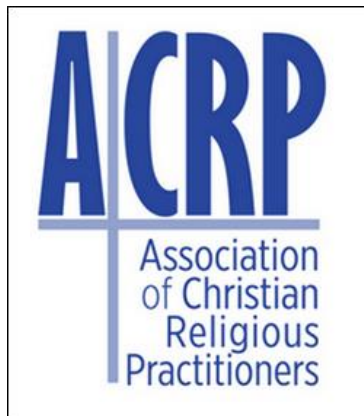
By Dr Gerhard Botha, CEO of ACRP

Dear Affiliates,

As we approach the joyous season of Christmas, I want to take a moment to reflect on the true meaning of this celebration and extend my heartfelt wishes to each and every one of you. Christmas is a time of love, compassion, and the spirit of giving—a reflection of the selfless gift that God bestowed upon us in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. In the midst of the holiday hustle, let us pause to embrace the message of hope and renewal that Christmas brings to our lives.

At the Council for Pastoral and Spiritual Counselling, you are more than affiliates; you are a community that supports and cares for all those in need of comfort. That is what the angels were singing when they proclaimed peace on earth.

This Christmas, I want to express my gratitude for the dedication and hard work of each and every staff and council member. Your contributions are integral to CSPC's shared success, and I am truly thankful for all that was achieved during 2023.



As we exchange gifts and share festive meals with loved ones, let us also remember those less fortunate and (again) extend a helping hand to those in need. The Christmas season is an opportunity for us to embody the values of kindness, generosity, and empathy that define our Christian faith. May the warmth of the Christmas lights brighten your hearts and homes, and may the love of family and friends surround you. In the coming year, may we continue to work together, grow together, and support one another in our professional and personal journeys.

Wishing you and your families a blessed and Merry Christmas. May the peace and joy of Christ fill your hearts and homes throughout this festive season and the year ahead.

I conclude with Isaiah 7: 14

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.

May this *Immanuel* indeed be with you,

Dr Gerhard Botha – CEO Association of Christian Religious Practitioners ■

May the peace and joy of Christ fill your hearts and homes throughout this festive season and the year ahead.



Counselling the aged

By Prof Wentzel Coetzer of the North-West University

In this article, we would like to discuss some important aspects regarding the counselling of the elderly person. The older we get, the more important it is to pay specific attention to certain areas. If neglected, the price we eventually pay will be very high.

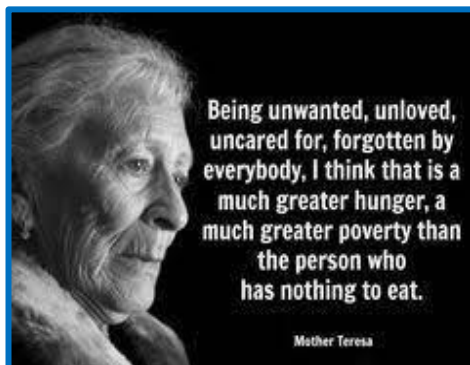
■ Loneliness and isolation

- Social isolation and the increased risk of dementia

Solitude and loneliness could have a very negative impact. The cry of the author in Psalm 25:16 will in this regard most probably resonate with many elderly persons: *"Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted."* Research shows that social isolation is associated with a significantly increased risk of dementia among older people.

A comprehensive study was conducted in this regard during which interviews were conducted, and data was obtained from 462,000 persons with an average age of 57 from across the United Kingdom. During a follow-up investigation nine years later with 32,000 of the participants, it appeared that those who experienced isolation, had a 26% greater chance of experiencing lower volumes of brain structures, especially within the temporal lobes, the hippocampus, the amygdala, the thalamus, and other areas of the brain.

All these areas are normally associated with the learning process as well as cognitive abilities, like being able to focus and to remember. They also appeared to have lower levels of grey matter in these areas of the brain which usually results in poorer cognitive functioning.



promotes the process of dementia, which could include the diseases of Alzheimer and Parkinson.



According to a 2018 Michigan University survey, unfortunately, one third of older people between the ages of 50-80 indicated that they experience a lack of companionship, while 25% said that they feel socially isolated.

According to the Bible, none of us can survive on our own, and therefore we need other people around us. Paul uses the phrase *'one another / each other'* 59 times, like in the following examples:

- Romans 12:10: *"Love one another warmly as Christians and be eager to show respect for one another"* (GNB).

- Galatians 6:2: *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."* (KJV).

We need people around us every day in order to be able to stay emotionally, physically, and mentally healthy.

- Emotional blunting

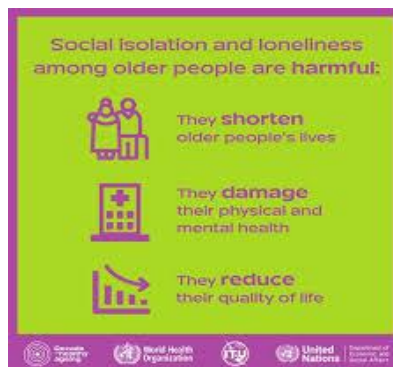
One of the ways through which people sometimes try to protect themselves from the stresses of threatening relationships, is by numbing themselves emotionally. In order to feel safe, such a person will withdraw from others, and avoid any intimacy. This usually results in social isolation and the building of walls around them. Because of hurt in the past, there is fear that it will be repeated.

Those who build such walls against intimacy often struggle with controlling their emotions. Their emotions are usually 'frozen' because of pain and trauma, and their stress due to unfulfilled needs are very high. This process leads to inflammation in the brain, which promotes the aging of the brain. In three different studies with aging persons, it was shown that the more socially connected the persons were, the lower the risk of dying.

- Loneliness and dementia

A study in 2016 found a connection between loneliness and the number of amyloid proteins in the brain, which contributes towards dementia. Large amounts were identified in post-mortem examinations in the brains of patients with the diseases of Alzheimer and Parkinson. According to this study, the higher concentrations of amyloid proteins was significantly associated with a greater degree of loneliness and isolation.

We must therefore build healthy and solid relationships earlier in our lives, and nurture such relationships - the older we get, the harder it is to establish new relationships.



Isolation and loneliness usually result in chronic stress, which undermines the immune system, causes inflammation in the brain, and thus promotes the process of dementia, which could include the diseases of Alzheimer and Parkinson.

- People who refuse to accept care

We must all prepare ourselves emotionally and psychologically for this stage of our lives. For children, it is a tremendous crisis if they are no longer physically able to care for the parent, although the parent refuses to accept other paid care. Fear of death, fear of rejection, as well as unresolved trauma from the past can play a decisive role here because all of these can result in a fear of any change. **We thus need to ensure that all our emotional baggage have been dealt with.**

- Meaning and purpose are linked to better brain health

One study indicated that meaning and purpose in life are conducive to the brain and to health. This also has direct implications for aging persons in terms of cognitive abilities because it helps your brain to stay focused. In this regard, researchers at the University College of London involved 62,000 persons with an average age of 60, in a study. The results indicated that meaning and purpose in life are associated with a 19% reduced risk of dementia.

Being focused on specific goals also acts as a protection against depression, while depression is a known contributing factor towards Alzheimer's disease (especially long phases of neglected depression, downheartedness, stress, and daily struggles).

In a study conducted at Harvard, it was found that there is a very strong connection between meaningful relationships on the one hand, and a long life on the other. Nurturing our relationships with our family and friends thus serves as a counterbalance against depression, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and Parkinson's disease.

■ Other problem areas

- The role of depression

In the Meier Clinics in the USA, they found that more than 80% of cases of depression is related to aspects such as unprocessed trauma, unprocessed grieving processes, bitterness, and resentments.

It is therefore critically important for elderly persons (like all other persons) to ensure that all trauma, losses, and resentments in their lives have been dealt with. Sometimes it will be necessary to go back to relationships of the past and ask for forgiveness, and also grant forgiveness.

Dr Daniel Amen, the well-known Christian psychiatrist specializing in brain scans, says that regarding older persons, it is often difficult to distinguish between Alzheimer's disease and depression, because the symptoms can to a large extent be the same. He says very often it could then be pseudodementia (depression with the mask of dementia) - the person may appear to be feeble-minded, although it might not really be the case.

- Chronic worry

The worries and concerns of many people relates to efforts in trying to control things that are not really their responsibility. They worry about things in life over which they have no control, how life will turn out in the future, and what others think of them, etc. We then forget that we are primarily responsible for making the right decisions about those things that we do currently have control over. Luke 12:25 reminds us in this regard: *"And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?"* (ESV). The future must thus be left in God's hands.

Research has shown that pessimism and negative thoughts about the future contribute to inflammation in the blood, which in turn leads to accelerated aging as well as health problems, and these could all promote dementia. Furthermore, it turned out that those who are positive about the future and about the aspect of aging, live an average of 7.5 years longer than those with pessimism and negative thinking.

- Chronic stress

There is extensive research confirming the debilitating effect of chronic stress on the immune system. In one study of caregivers of Alzheimer's patients, it appeared that only 20% of these persons could build up immunity after vaccination against influenza.

In contrast, 80% of a control group was able to build up immunity. The stress of non-stop caregiving weakened the immune system to such an extent that the persons were much more vulnerable to something like the flu.

In this same regard, the same research also indicated that there were stress-related delays in tissue

repair in these caregivers. The wounds of Alzheimer caregivers took an average of nine days longer to heal than those in the control group. As a result of factors like these it often happens that when a patient finally dies, the carer also experiences a total collapse shortly afterwards. Children of elderly parents as well as counsellors and pastors, must thus be vigilant for the red lights in the life of the caregiver – very often the spouse of the patient.

Considering above-mentioned facts, it is critically important that all stress, emotional heaviness, and worries must be dealt with. Research regarding the diseases of Alzheimer, Parkinson, and dementia confirmed that there are overwhelming indications that long periods of mental and emotional stress and hardship open the door to dementia. In this regard the Word invites us as follows:



- Philippians 4:6: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God”* (ESV).
- Proverbs 12:25: *“Anxious fear brings depression, but a life-giving word of encouragement can do wonders to restore joy to the heart”* (TPT).

- Unresolved feelings of guilt

Guilt and self-blame that have not been dealt with tend to activate the brain's fear circuits. This results in a state of hyper-alertness, exaggerated startle response, repeated self-condemnation, and anticipation of punishment or retribution. It also activates chronic stress circuits in the brain, with the consequent activation of the immune system; this in turn increases the harmful effects of some oxidizing molecules, which accelerates the aging process, which then promotes dementia. Counsellors thus must help the elderly person to deal with all feelings of guilt and self-blame.

-Feelings of uselessness and worthlessness lead to depression

Retirement increases the risk of depression by 40%, while your chance of being diagnosed with a physical illness increases by 60% according to Dr Daniel Amen. Factors like these can result in feelings of no longer having a purpose in life, including:



- No passion for life, usually due to trauma and losses.
- No future vision, and also wrestling with the question: What is God's will for my life at this point where I am now?
- Socially you feel that you can no longer make any contributions.
- No active and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a Person, and a force greater than yourself.

If factors like these are missing, then there is a much greater risk of developing brain and mental health problems. Furthermore, if you stop learning, and thus stimulating your brain, then your brain slowly begins to die. The door for depression would then be open, and this could lead to the first signs of dementia. Therefore, we must keep our brains active.

- Brain aging is optional

Your day-to-day lifestyle and activities could either speed up or slow down brain aging.

Just as you can train your muscles to be more fit and ready, you can apply strategies to optimize your brain functioning. Ultimately, brain aging is optional if you apply the correct strategies. In this regard the concept of 'brain reserve' is important according to Dr Daniel Amen. It can serve as an additional resource at your disposal in dealing with crises and stresses.

The more brain reserve you have, the more resilient you are, and the better your brain can cope with the aging process and keeping mental health disorders at bay. When the brain reserve is depleted due to wrong habits and lifestyle, the door is opened for symptoms such as anxiety, depression, memory problems, anger outbursts, etc. The degree of emotional health, resilience, and positive input by parents and grandparents will all determine how high or low the levels of this person's brain reserve will be.

Some people have more brain reserve from the start than others. The decisions we make every day and the habits we live out can either replenish those brain reserves, or they can drain them. Draining of brain reserves accelerates the aging process, accompanied by several complications. As Dr Amen says, we have a great deal of influence regarding the health and the age of our brains, and therefore our general mental health as well as our ability to resist mental illnesses.

Your brain can still improve if it functions within a healing environment, regardless of your age. Following many brain scans on elderly people who still looked very good and healthy, Dr Amen concludes that it was related to the fact that they were serious about taking good care of themselves, following basic health rules, and creating a pleasant environment for their brains. Factors that have been shown to play the biggest contributing role in brain aging are the following:

- Use of drugs
- Depression being neglected
- Neglecting ADHD
- Alcohol abuse
- Smoking
- Long phases of intense stress and worries
- High levels of iron in the blood.

As many as 10% of persons over 65 experience serious memory problems. Around 50% of people over 85 are diagnosed with dementia. Should you thus turn 85 or older, there is a one in two chance of dementia. However, Dr Amen's position throughout is that this does not necessarily have to happen. Betty, aged 94, came to see him, complaining that she had never been able to finish reading the paper. It turned out that she had quite a struggle with ADD. He started with treatment and when she came for a follow-up visit after a month, she excitedly told him that she finished reading her first book.

■ Pathological aging - people old before their time

There are some Scriptures referring to people who die before their time:

- 1 Samuel 2:31 (God's punishment on Eli): *“The time is coming when I will put an end to your family... All the members of your family will die before their time. None will reach old age”* (NLT).

- Isaiah 57:1: *"The good men perish; the godly die before their time, and no one seems to care or wonder why..."* (TLB).

Research confirms that healthy choices can help prevent dementia. 1 in 3 cases of dementia could have been prevented had the following lifestyle factors been in place:

Positive factors

- Educational level.
- Physical activities like exercise.
- Social contacts and interaction.

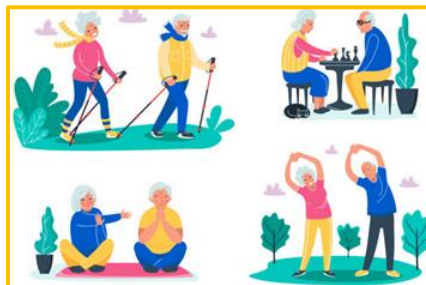
Negative factors

- Hearing problems must be dealt with as soon as possible.
- High blood pressure must be kept under control.
- Obesity - monitor your eating pattern and weight.
- Quit smoking.
- Depression, stress, and trauma must be dealt with as soon as possible.
- Diabetes must be dealt with, otherwise it could lead to inflammation, which in turn could promote dementia.

■ Physical exercise as a countermeasure against dementia

Benefits of physical exercise in relation to cognition are the following:

- Exercise reduces insulin resistance, which is a key factor in the diseases of Alzheimer and Parkinson.
- It increases the volume of the hippocampus in the brain, improving memory functionality and this part usually shrinks as a result of Alzheimer's disease.
- It improves the vascular function which is extremely important for neural and synaptic health.
- It reduces stress which is usually a key factor in triggering inflammation, which in turn promotes Alzheimer's disease and dementia.
- It improves sleep, which is another essential component of cognitive health.
- It improves general mood and cognitive health.



■ Stress management

Specific actions for reducing pathological stress could include the following:

- Forgiveness towards others

The act of forgiveness calms the stress circuits and reduces the inflammatory process in the brain. In contrast, bitterness and resentment are toxic, and activate the brain's stress circuits. This can lead to increased oxidative stress as well as damage to health on the physical, emotional, and mental levels. By forgiving, we are freed from carrying the toxic emotions of anger and bitterness with us wherever we go.

- Developing healthy relationships

Persons with chronic relationship problems generally

have higher levels of health problems, emotionally and physically.

- Stimulation of the mind

In order to have a healthy brain, we need to stimulate both our bodies and our minds. It is critically important to keep your brain focused and active - for example, our minds can be stimulated by reading new material which will imply focusing, thinking, and the learning of new concepts. As part of the mental exercise the focus can also be on writing, building puzzles, attending art classes, learning to play a new instrument, learning a new language, and practicing physical activities such as learning to dance. Research showed that activities like these are associated with lower levels of brain amyloid proteins, as well as a reduced risk of dementia. Learning something new increases the blood supply to the brain, make new connections, and increasing brain activity.

- Be a giver

Showing love to others proves to be healthy for the brain. Several studies have confirmed that being voluntarily involved with others and their needs, leads to the following:

- Better physical health.
- Lower blood pressure.
- Less use of prescription medication.
- Maintaining independence for a longer period in life.
- Lower levels of dementia.

- Minimize theatrical entertainment

Many elderly persons are tempted to spend most of their hours after retirement in front of a television screen - this is however a risk. Since the brain cannot tell the difference between a real and an artificial threat, stressful TV programs that activate the brain's stress circuits will increase inflammation throughout the body.

Just reduce the time spent watching stressful programs! The focus must rather be on educational and cheerful themes. Research shows in this regard that theatrical entertainment changes the brain's structure with consequent **underdevelopment** of the prefrontal cortex (where we plan, organize, apply self-control, pay attention, and exercise good judgement) and **over-development** of the limbic system (where we experience emotions, such as fear and irritation). This imbalance increases the risk of cognitive problems as well as anxiety and other emotional problems, and this in turn increases the risk of dementia.

- Build a relationship with the God of love

Individuals with a healthy spirituality, and who regularly spend quiet time in their relationship with the God of love, generally experience reduced levels of anxiety and stress, as well as a more meaningful and satisfying life overall. Research has shown that a healthy spirituality also reduces the risk of suicide while it also promotes healthier relationships and lifestyles.

- Spirituality

Two researchers (Roger & Hatala, 2018) evaluated 66 studies. In these studies, the focus was on the way in which persons living with chronic diseases used their relationship with God as a source of support and strength. It appeared that their religion contributed to the following:

- Improving their quality of life.
- Reducing depression and anxiety.
- Providing a perspective of hope.
- Proving meaning of life and purpose.
- Enabling them to deal with emotional and physical problems.
- Establishing a relationship with God.
- Improving confidence that their illness will improve.

An intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is therefore of inestimable value! This is confirmed by passages of Scripture such as the following:

- Proverbs 3:7-8: *"Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!"* (Message).
- Proverbs 14:30: *"A calm and undisturbed mind and heart are the life and health of the body, but envy, jealousy, and wrath are like rottenness of the bones"* (Amplified).

■ Unloading emotional baggage

- Identify all unresolved emotional baggage

Emotional pain can be suppressed and denied for many years, although its effects could be clearly visible in the person's daily functioning. The severity of emotional pain and the wounds that caused the pain, can be compared to a cancerous tumour because emotions are coded in the biochemistry of the brain and are therefore difficult to cancel. However, the first step towards healing and recovery begins with the willingness to change your thinking and inner choices. In this regard we usually need help, and as part of such a process the drawing up of a trauma history as well as an emotional timeline will be important and a great benefit.

- Generational baggage

As part of the counselling process, it is important to look at the bigger picture of the family. The genogram¹ can help determine the pain and hurt that

could have been passed down from grandparents to parents, and from parents to children, and from children to grandchildren. Research in this field indicated that all the unresolved trauma and pain of this generation is automatically transferred to the next generation.

- The impact on grandchildren

The following Scriptures are important in this regard:

- Proverbs 17:6: *"Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged; parents are the pride of their children"* (NLT).
- Psalm 71:18: *"Now that I am old and grey, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me"* (NLT).

As a grandparent, you have a tremendous impact on your grandchildren. In counselling, several persons in the past said that, depending on the circumstances, the funeral of a grandfather or grandmother was more traumatic than that of their father or mother, as the grandfather or grandmother eventually became their real role model.

- We are all called to be a blessing

Our prayer must constantly be that God must make our lives to be a blessing for others, as long as we live. Something of this truth is portrayed in Psalm 92:14: *"Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green"* (NLT). ■

SOURCE LIST

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¹ A genogram is a diagram illustrating a person's family members, how they are related, and their medical history. It helps identifying hereditary

patterns of behavior and medical and psychological factors that run through families.

Utilizing Biblically rooted principles to empower youth (Part 2)

The Influence Quadrant: Enhancing connections and empathy in client relationships

By Natasja Visser

In Part 1 of the article series, we addressed some practical approaches for grasping key biblical principles.

In this part, we introduce the Influence Quadrant model, developed by Dr Paul Jenkins, a clinical psychologist and founder of Live on Purpose.

Designed to facilitate effective communication and connection in various contexts, including counselling sessions and daily interactions, the Influence Quadrant offers a practical framework for understanding and empathizing with others.

This article explores the application of the model in the context of counselling parents of teenagers that are facing common challenges, such as academic struggles, peer influence, and behavioural issues. By cultivating a connection-oriented approach, the Influence Quadrant enhances the counsellor's ability to support clients while fostering a sense of understanding and empathy.

Working as a counsellor for parents of teenagers and forming connections with both the adolescents and their parents can be difficult. It's important to acknowledge the generational gap and that both parties have valid perspectives on the challenging situation. To be an effective counsellor, it's necessary to listen to both sides. Dr Paul Jenkins has created the Influence Quadrant, a useful tool for bridging this gap.

Understanding the Influence Quadrant

The gift of free will is undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary blessings bestowed upon us by God. Unlike God, who respects our autonomy and refrains from imposing salvation upon us, we humans often find ourselves trying to exert control over others, even when our intentions are genuinely good, such as a parent feeling compelled to guide their teenager. However, it's important to remember that we cannot force our teenager to do anything; their actions ultimately lie beyond our control.

Instead of fixating on control and making others do things, we have the power to connect with them in a meaningful way to positively influence their choices. The model encourages individuals to adopt a perspective centred on understanding, empathy, and genuine connection, as these qualities foster receptiveness to influence. Only when this genuine connection has been made, can we effectively share the principles referred to in the first article.

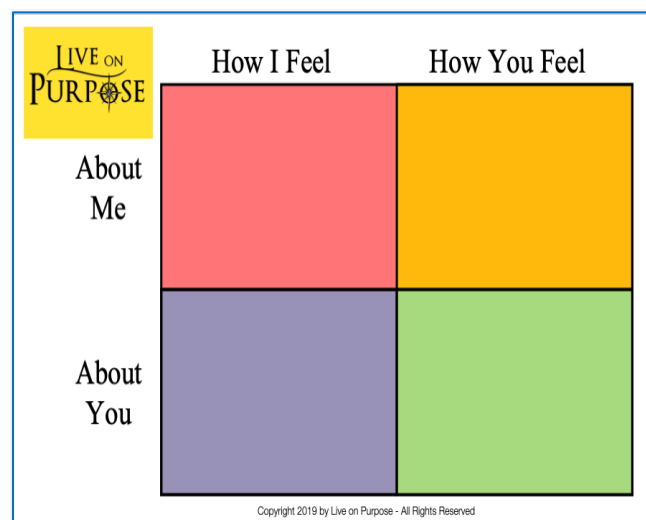


It is at this point that the client will be open to listen and receive the teachings of these principles. When the connection is established, the client becomes open to being influenced, creating an environment where the information is welcomed and embraced. On the contrary, if the connection is lacking, any information presented may simply be rejected, hindering the potential for positive influence.

Application in counselling: A scenario

To illustrate the practical application of the Influence Quadrant, consider a scenario involving a mother and her teenage daughter experiencing communication struggles related to social media activities. The mother desires to understand and guide her daughter but encounters defiance and a desire for independence. Emotions escalate, exacerbating the divide between them.

The Influence Quadrant Explained



The Influence Quadrant framework involves examining four key areas of focus in a given relationship:

- **"How I Feel about Me"** - Red Quadrant
- **"How You Feel about Me"** - Yellow Quadrant
- **"How I Feel about You"** - Purple Quadrant
- **"How You Feel about You"** - Green Quadrant

Counsellors are bestowed with invaluable insights into the intricate dynamics of the relationship, enabling them to identify pivotal areas for growth and healing by keenly discerning the focus of each client. The communication outcome between the mother and daughter hinges upon the Quadrant that captures their attention during their interaction.

● **How I Feel about Me (Self-Consciousness):** In this quadrant, individuals may experience self-doubt or negative self-perception. For example, the mother may feel inadequate and blame herself for her daughter's behaviour.

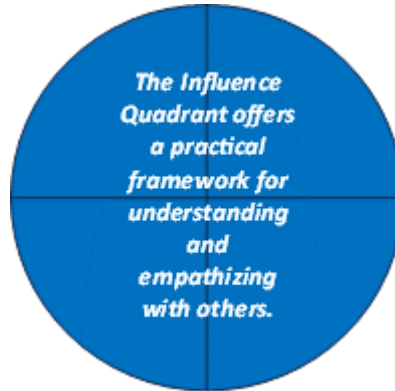
● **How You Feel about Me (Insecurity):** This quadrant explores the emotions individuals believe others hold towards them. The mother may fear that her daughter will dislike her or view her as mean if she sets boundaries.

● **How I Feel about You (Criticism):** This quadrant reflects negative perceptions or judgments individuals may hold about others. The mother may criticize her daughter, viewing her as lazy, selfish, and disrespectful. However, it is essential to remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1-2 (NIV): *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* This verse reminds us to approach others with understanding and empathy rather than harsh criticism.

● **How You Feel about You (Influence):** This quadrant encompasses empathetic understanding of others' emotions and struggles. Here, the mother can explore her daughter's perspective, seeking to understand the underlying reasons behind her behaviour.

The counsellor's expertise shines through as they skilfully guide both the mother and daughter to shift their focus towards the Green Quadrant during their conversation. By adeptly navigating the dialogue, the counsellor facilitates a profound realm of empathetic understanding and connection, paving the way for transformative and harmonious exchanges between the clients. This approach empowers the counsellor to unlock the true potential of the relationship, fostering an environment where healing and positive transformation flourish.

Moreover, the counsellor's astute awareness extends beyond the clients' perspectives, as they also direct their own focus towards the Green Quadrant. By doing so, **the counsellor deftly avoids the pitfalls of taking sides or engaging in criticism, and instead creates a safe and nurturing space for exploration and growth.** This method offers a comprehensive framework for counsellors to assess their own biases and potential pitfalls, ensuring that they guide their clients towards constructive outcomes with authenticity and empathy. As a result, the counselling journey becomes a powerful and transformative experience for all involved.



Potential Pitfalls

While the Influence Quadrant facilitates effective influence and connection, it is essential to avoid certain pitfalls.

Adopting the model solely to manipulate or gain popularity with others diminishes its authenticity.

Genuine connection and empathy should be the primary motivations for utilizing the Influence Quadrant, recognizing that true influence stems from a sincere desire to understand and support others.

As we navigate the delicate dynamics of relationships, we are reminded of the wisdom found in Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV), *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."*

This biblical truth calls us to embrace humility and prioritize understanding others' perspectives, enabling us to foster genuine connections that lead to transformative outcomes.

Conclusion

The Influence Quadrant, developed by Dr Paul Jenkins, offers a powerful model for enhancing connections and empathy within client relationships. By understanding and applying the perspectives outlined in the quadrant, **counsellors can create an environment conducive to positive influence and foster meaningful connections.** Embracing this approach not only enriches the counselling process but also contributes to the development of stronger relationships in all facets of life.

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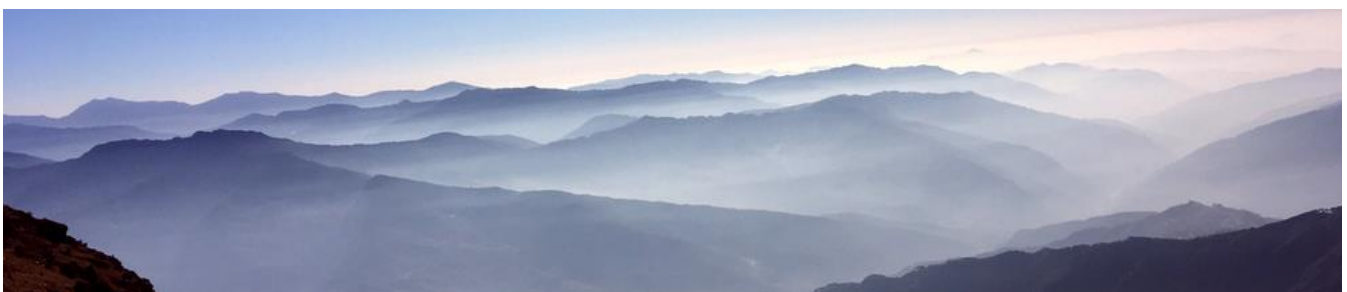
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The Psalms and the Life of Faith

Book Review:

A short overview by Sonya Hunt

The Psalms and the Life of Faith (Kindle Edition) by Walter Brueggemann
(Edited by Patrick D. Miller)
(1995) Fortress Press Books

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Brueggemann stresses the importance and value of the Psalms in terms of devotions, liturgy, and pastoral care in contemporary as well as ancient settings (Kindle p.182). He suggests that the Psalms are written from a most vulnerable human position, making them relevant in any state of emotion and when faith is being tested to the uttermost (Kindle p.182).

Under such trying circumstances, old worldviews that offer rational arguments, are no longer relevant. The Psalms legitimize the feelings of distress or complaint. Brueggemann proposes an orientation-disorientation-reorientation sequence as the most helpful approach for understanding the Psalms (Kindle p.208).

The Psalms of Orientation (descriptive hymns)

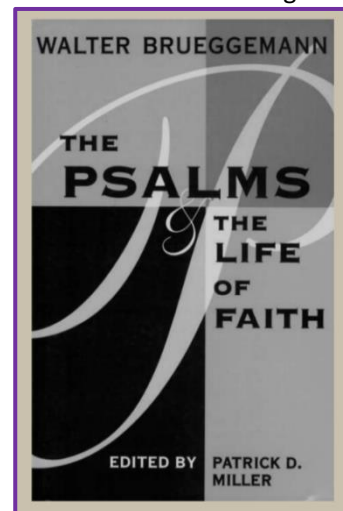
These Psalms are presented with no formal tension to be resolved, and at the same time these Psalms do not infer any significant movement. The best description of life, by the Psalms of orientation, includes words such as: undisturbed coherence, uncritical equilibrium; ordered domestic life; and expressions of gratitude for generous provision (Kindle p.210-220).



The Psalms of Disorientation (lament)

These are psalms of individual or corporate lament, which express anguish and distress when the ordered world falls apart and chaos enters (Kindle p.223). These Psalms embrace a broad spectrum of experiences within the space of a collapsed worldview. Some Psalms remember how things were before the collapse, and are embedded with various levels of anger, resentment, protest, complaint, resistance, or denial. Some of the Psalms indicate measures of acceptance of the new circumstances, and at times a resignation to the new space of dislocation.

In some instances, the Psalmists express a belief that orientation can be reinstated and that the losses can be retrieved (Kindle p.226). However, Psalm 88 is an example of the space within 'the pit' where all hope is lost, and no movement is indicated in the lament (Kindle p.248). In other Psalms the speakers recognize that the situation cannot be salvaged and embrace the possibility



of re-orientation (Kindle p.232). There is an expectation that their complaints are heard by Yahweh and that Yahweh will act to bring about a new order to life (Kindle p.229). The expectation includes the assurance that the new is not a re-invention of the old, but a surprise, and a genuinely new creation (Kindle p.229).

The Psalms of Reorientation (declarative hymns)

These Psalms celebrate feelings of gratitude for the genuinely new creation which has emerged as a gift, accompanied by the restoration of hope (Kindle p.251-253). These Psalms express surprise, in wonder and amazement, at the miracle of new life. The element of surprise positions the Psalmist within the space of re-orientation (Kindle p.253-263).

Having experienced the extremes of a perfectly ordered life, as well as the plunge into depths of the pit, the same Psalmists who spoke of ordered life, had also expressed uncensored lament in the chaos of disorientation (Kindle p.314). The songs of celebration at re-orientation reflect

the range of movements through orientation, disorientation, and reorientation (Kindle p.339).



These new songs are sung as celebrations of the new creation and are entrenched within the covenant of belonging where trust, faithfulness, and harmony have shaped the new reality (Kindle p.339). The new perspective and worldview hold the tension of remembering both the stability, and collapse of ordered life, and simultaneously incorporates a fresh confidence in the One who orders life within the covenant of mutual give and take (Kindle p.339). In Brueggemann's words:

The new song asserts that the waters will not drown, and the pit did not hold, that the captor was unnerved, and the enemy is shattered. The sky has fallen but is now secured again. The world has ended but begun again. And there is no word for that beyond doxology (Kindle p.353).

Brueggemann poses that the movements of our life can be interpreted by the sequences of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation (Kindle p.362). Israel freely expressed their emotions of grief, loss, fear, betrayal, and threat (Kindle p.1800). In the same vein, Israel expressed praise in gratitude for a faithful covenant-true God (Kindle p.1809). The authentic expressions of lament, during times of disorientation, reflect the realities of our lived experiences (Kindle p.832).

Psalm 39 assists in understanding the dangers of submissive silence when free expression is muzzled (Kindle p.1262). When the speaker does eventually speak, the anguish of the troubled earth is expressed in vigorous protest, and heaven is moved in response (Kindle p.1264). When God speaks, faithful human action responds by listening and yielding (Kindle p.1781).

Brueggemann urges the return of the Psalms within the liturgy of the church with the hope of regaining the passion for justice and liberation of the oppressed within the freedom and binding aspects of covenant (Kindle p.1264). Covenant is a risky life-space. The central binding aspects of faithful trust, within the covenant, is in tension with the dangers of the freedom posed by the presence of the covenantal partner (Kindle p.1850-1855). Relational trust is risky.

From a pastoral perspective, Brueggemann promotes a type of care that will learn from the psychologies of the day, without losing the 'radical and abrasive claims of the Bible'. He states the position in these words:

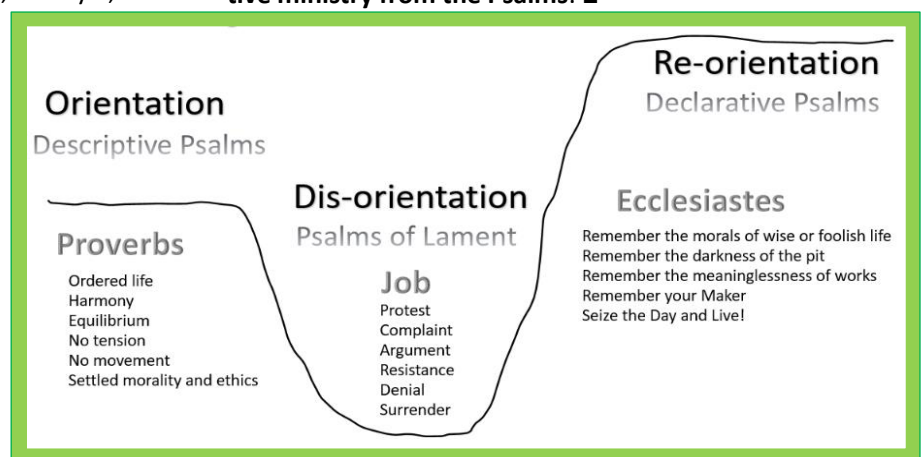
The claims of the Bible provide important alternatives to psychologies that, on the one hand champion personal autonomy, and on the other hand urge non-covenantal religion. The arena around the gospel calls for both criticism and construction (Kindle p.1887).

The Psalms offer a descriptive pathway for authentic expression on the journey through the life-sequences of orientation, disorientation and reorientation towards wholesome and productive lifestyles gleaned from tested and mature faith within a covenantal relationship with God.

Compassionate pastoral ministry: Facilitated by Psalms and wisdom literature

The diagram below visually presents Brueggemann's model from the Psalms. The visual diagram facilitates interpreting life on the journey through times of orientation, disorientation, and re-orientation with the aid of prayers and praise from the Psalms as well as from Wisdom Literature.

From a pastoral perspective, it is helpful to identify the space where the congregant, client or patient finds themselves at the time of pastoral encounter. An understanding of a person's state of being, as represented by the diagram, facilitates pastoral compassion and effective ministry from the Psalms. ■



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Sonya recently retired from her work as Pastoral Counsellor at False Bay Hospital and now runs a private practice from home. Her work comprises largely of cases regarding spiritual or religious trauma and existential distress. The current search for meaning found in the Psalms, led her to N.T. Wright's "A case for the Psalms: Why they are essential". The search was motivated by a close friend's very recent diagnosis of incurable pancreatic cancer.

Sonya has been married to Patrick for more than 40 years. They share their lives and home with many people. Despite the death of their youngest daughter 22 years ago, they enjoy the blessing of a blended family of Patrick's two sons and their daughter, plus their eight grandchildren.

Integrating scientific knowledge and Scripture truths to overcome anxiety

Dr Hanlie Meyer, Counselling Psychologist in private practice and CPSC affiliate, presented at the CPSC Conference on 1 September 2023.

Introduction

The ability to rewire the brain has been one of the most profound discoveries in Neuroscience. From a Christian perspective, the best-known scientist who describes the process of rewiring, is Caroline Leaf. In her book "Cleaning up your Mental Mess" (2021), she describes what she calls the neurocycle (p50) which, if applied correctly and conscientiously, leads to **neuroplasticity** – referring to the brain's ability to change. She uses the insights gained from Quantum Theory – (Quantum meaning energy) as part of explaining how the process of rewiring or neuroplasticity takes place in the mind-brain interaction (2021, p 49). According to Leaf (2021, p50–53), this neurocycle consists of five steps which she describes very practically and in detail in this book. The five steps she has identified, are gather, reflect, write, recheck and active reach.

This description corroborates with the process described by Jeffrey Schwartz and Rebecca Gladding in their book, "You are not your brain" (2012). The powerful impact of self-directed neuroplasticity can be achieved through this process.

Self-directed neuroplasticity indicates that individuals can consciously use these steps to change the way they



Neuroplasticity, also known as neural plasticity, or brain plasticity, is the ability of neural networks in the brain to change through growth and reorganization. It is when the brain is rewired to function in some way that differs from how it previously functioned.

think, feel and act and in this way clean up the toxic mess in their brains.

Schwartz and Gladding (2012) refer to a process called the Quantum Zeno Effect, indicating the release of acetylcholine when an individual **focuses deliberately and consciously on something**.

The acetylcholine stabilizes activated brain areas and holds them in place long enough so that Hebb's law can take effect. This refers to the wiring together of a circuit of neurons to form a new pattern or pathway (the think – feel – act sequence in the brain). The critical aspect is thus where the focus goes! The important concept to grasp from the

research, is that there is a difference between the mind and the brain. The brain is more "passive" in the sense that it cannot make value judgements about the wisdom or correctness of certain thoughts and behaviour choices. It just responds using the "physical" processes of electricity and chemistry as Leaf, Schwartz and Huberman describe. With our minds we

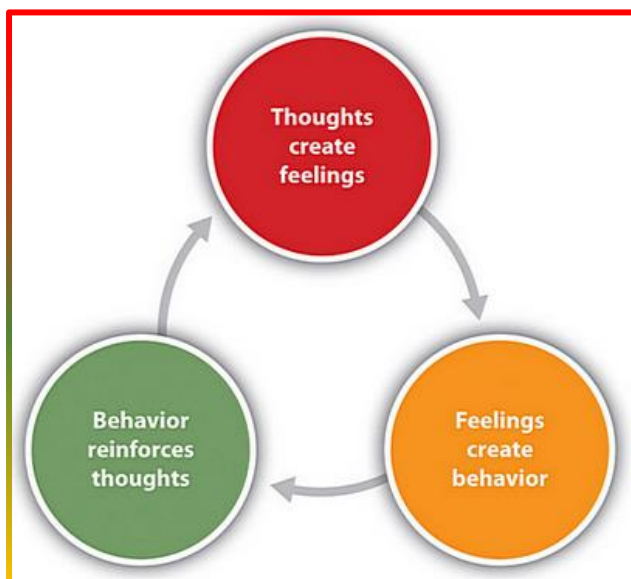
make the value judgments, and this is where the self-directed neuroplasticity comes in.

Employing our mind, we can veto the old toxic thought-feeling-action patterns and choose new thoughts, leading to new feelings, that allows us to choose new behaviour as a result.

The process of self-directed neuroplasticity

Schwartz and Gladding (2012) summarize the self-directed neuroplasticity process as follows:

- **Step 1: RELABEL**
Recognize that the intrusive intensely uncomfortable thoughts & urges are the result of FALSE MESSAGES.
- **Step 2: REATTRIBUTE**
Realize that the intensity and intrusiveness of the thoughts or urges are caused by these FALSE MESSAGES; it is probably related to a biochemical circuit in the brain.
- **Step 3: REFOCUS**
Work around the FALSE MESSAGE thoughts by focusing your attention on something else, at least for a few minutes: DO ANOTHER BEHAVIOUR.
- **Step 4: REVALUE**
Do not take the FALSE MESSAGE thought at face value. It is not significant in itself.



The process of self-directed neuroplasticity integrated with Scripture truths

Step 1 - Relabel

This is an extremely important step and might take quite a few sessions to master. First of all, a lot of psycho-education has to take place regarding the self-directed neuroplasticity process. Emphasis must be placed on the fact that our sense of self – the narrative part of who we are, develops in interaction with our broken caregivers even from before birth, as the amygdala – the initiator of the fight/flight response – is already mature eight months after conception.

Once the client understands this concept and is willing to accept it, the counsellor can move on to the next phase, namely the history of the client. (This step can be equated to Leaf's steps 1 through 4). The counsellor and client must do a thorough investigation into the background of the client to reveal the roots of the false messages wired into the brain area where the subjective sense of self is situated.

As Holy Spirit has been with the client from conception, He is the One who will reveal hidden hurts, lies, traumas and false beliefs about self, other people and the world and God as a Father.

These erroneous messages have been so deeply ingrained that they have become the ultimate truth for the client. This elicits enormous anxiety which in turn confirms to client that what she – wrongly – believes, is the absolute truth. The client must understand that the brain scans the environment for those clues that will confirm what she already believes and not for new information.

Part of step 1 is also checking the client's theology. What does the client believe about God as a Father and Jesus and what does the client know about the work of Holy Spirit and how He influences our lives.

However, if the incorrect sense of self is not addressed, the client will most probably not be able to appropriate the love of God the Father and accept that Holy Spirit also wants to work in her. This is where prayers for revelation from God about the lies or false messages as well as for a direct intervention from God, is of critical importance.

No amount of Scripture quoting without a direct intervention from God, will change the client's convictions and beliefs about herself, others, the world, and God. Only referring the client to Scripture and verses and encouraging her to pray, reduces the counselling process to preaching.

Step 2 - Reattribute

Now the client must start attributing every single thought that is not in line with what God says about her

as a Name-bearer and Image-bearer, to the false messages and false sense of self (1 Cor. 2:10-16). **In other words, she must take every thought captive in obedience to what God says she is!** Leaf indicates that the intensity of the anxiety is not an indication of how wrong the person is, but how far she is from what God says she is. It is thus an urgent call to return to God's opinion about her.

Step 3 - Refocus

Where one focuses one's attention, there the brain wiring will go! (Quantum Zeno Effect).

For Christians, it is such a miracle that we need not and should not focus on our failures, sins, and weaknesses to be renewed. We may and should focus on God's Character and his love and His desires for our transformation – 2 Cor. 3:16-18; Rom. 12:2; Joh. 3:8.

This emphasises the importance of a direct interaction between God and the client. During the refocusing process, the client must learn to celebrate every small success – this will ensure that the action of Holy Spirit in the

person's life will be integrated in the thought-feeling-behaviour cycle and God will not remain an abstract concept.

The client must do something practical with visible concrete results (like a piece of mosaic, a piece of woodwork, or organising a drawer). All the while she reminds herself that she is doing this to rewire her brain. If one understands why one is doing what one is doing, it strengthens hope and reinforces perseverance. (This step can be equated with Leaf's step 5 – active reach).

Step 4 - Revalue

Every time the client experiences anxiety, she must revisit the thought processes and recognise that her old convictions and thought-feeling-behaviour cycle are in action again.

Summary

The role of the counsellor's sensitivity towards Holy Spirit and towards the client, is critical. It is in the loving and safe relationship with the counsellor that the client will be willing to open up and explore new avenues.

As God has patience and forbearance with us, we need to have the same with the broken world. ■

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Counsellor burnout and self-care: Practicing what we preach

By Dr Mercy Manyema, as presented at the CPSC Conference on 1 September 2023.

The unique risk of Christian and pastoral counsellors to burnout

Although people-helping is often a calling, it is hard work, and can be psychologically, physically, mentally, and even spiritually draining (Collins, 2007).

Christian and pastoral counsellors serve as the first line of support for both Christian and non-Christian community members in times of crisis (Bethany Bray, 2018). They are trusted by the community and are also more accessible than other mental health practitioners.

As first line helpers, they often witness and experience clients' trauma in its most "raw" state, before referrals are made, which may lead to vicarious trauma. There are often no "office hours" as they are called upon just as things happen at all hours of the night or day. All these factors may lead to burnout in pastoral counsellors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the mental health burden worldwide, therefore increasing the need for mental health services. Locally, the South African Anxiety and Depression Group (SADAG), received about 600 calls a



day before the pandemic, a number which more than doubled during the lockdown period. Three years post the COVID-19 pandemic, this figure has gone up 5 times to 3000 calls a day (Sashin Naidoo, 2023). These effects are likely to be long-lasting and affect counsellors both directly and indirectly (Darling Downs Health, 2021).

In addition, counsellors cannot share the details of their jobs in as much de-

tail as other professions, which can lead to a sense of loneliness. Some counsellors have additional pastoral duties to attend to. Finally, counsellors also have their own personal lives and stresses to deal with.

All these factors may place considerable pressure on a counsellor's time and capability. In this article we will talk about what burnout is, some of the causes of burnout, how to identify if you have burnout, and most importantly, what we as Christian and pastoral counsellors can do about it.

What is BURNOUT ?

The academic definition of burnout is: **"a psychological syndrome experienced when feeling emotionally exhausted by work and disengaged from patients."** (Jeremy Sutton, 2023). Another definition is: **"a state of mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion resulting from accumulated stress."**

Burnout has been included in the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an "occupational phenomenon resulting from unmanaged, chronic workplace stress" (Michelle Risser, 2022).



Counsellors face chronic stresses with no chance for rest and resetting and when they don't recover from these stressors, they can end up shutting down emotionally and mentally. Burnout results in a mix of physical and psychological symptoms that lead to decreased effectiveness and job satisfaction. You may experience a constant feeling of being at the end of your rope.

Causes of counsellor burnout

There are several factors that may lead to counsellor burnout. This article will highlight some of the more salient ones.

- **Vicarious trauma** – counsellors get to witness their clients' disturbing and often horrific stories, and this may lead to some cognitive changes. They may also be triggered by some of the stories (Jeremy Sutton, 2023).
- **Compassion fatigue** – Counsellors need to empathise with their clients and walk alongside them in their distressing experiences. This intense empathic involvement can lead to emotional depletion.
- **Increased workload** – pastoral and Christian counsellors often carry a heavy workload with no distinct working hours.
- **Sense of isolation/limited supervision** – a lack of interaction with peers in the field can lead to a sense of "career loneliness". Counsellors end up having no one to share their work stress.
- **Unrealistic expectations and lack of boundaries** – counsellors may expect themselves to be their clients' rescuer and take responsibility for steps that the client should take. Sometimes counsellors may also expect clients to follow a certain trajectory of healing and become disappointed and stressed when they don't.
- **Forgetting the role of the Holy Spirit/relying on own competence** – Ron Hawkins and Tim Clinton describe Christian counselling as providing counselling and helping services from a Christian worldview (Clinton & Hawkins, 2011). It is a "triadic" type of counselling that honours Christ and believes that the Holy Spirit is always present in the counselling process. Christian counsellors need to be deeply committed Christians, who use their God-given abilities and training to help others to "move to personal wholeness, interpersonal competence, mental stability and spiritual maturity". Sometimes we lose focus of Christ and Holy Spirit and

It is indeed a privilege to witness God at work in the lives of His children, and to be able to walk alongside them in the process.

focus solely on our own competence, and this can lead to stress. When we involve the Holy Spirit in our work, we believe that He is in control, and we entrust the outcome of the counselling process to Him.

- **Inexperience and lack of skills** – novice counsellors can be more prone to stress and burnout because of lack of experience and doubting their own competence.

How do you know if you are experiencing burnout?

The onset of burnout can be gradual and is different for different people, therefore self-awareness is very important (Michelle Risser, 2022).

Psychosomatic symptoms may be present, (Darling Downs Health, 2021) including headaches, backaches, fatigue, gastric issues, insomnia, and loss of appetite. These are symptoms that you will experience with no apparent cause. You may also experience frequent cold and flu symptoms.



Counsellors may withdraw and isolate from social situations. You may become more irritable and have frequent temper outbursts. It's also common to experience heightened emotional response to clients' stories as well as to other general stressors.

A counsellor may notice that they are less effective in their work, losing concentration often or even yawning in the middle of a session. If you feel the need to escape your reality through self-medicating with alcohol and substances, you may be experiencing burnout. A counsellor may experience a sense of failure and doubting yourself and your competence.

One of the symptoms I personally experience is a sort of dreading of the counselling sessions, and being glad when clients cancel appointments. One may also feel a decline in empathy for the client or feeling impatient with their process of healing (A Nortje, 2021).

There is a general decrease in your sense of satisfaction in your job – questioning your calling and purpose and being much more negative and cynical about it. If left unchecked, burnout can lead to depression.

How do we prevent burnout?

How do we prevent burnout?

(A Nortje, 2021; Darling Downs Health, 2021; Jeremy Sutton, 2023; Michelle Risser, 2022)

Burnout is **not** inevitable – it can be prevented. There are several practices that can help us to prevent burnout before it happens:

- **Spiritual disciplines** – remain rooted in Jesus through Bible study, prayer, and church attendance. These may seem so simple, but they are very effective in ensuring that we remain committed to Christ and have

a thriving relationship (Clinton & Hawkins, 2011). Remember the Holy Spirit is the ever-present Counselor— he begins the process, walks with you while you counsel the client, and continues with the client after you are done.

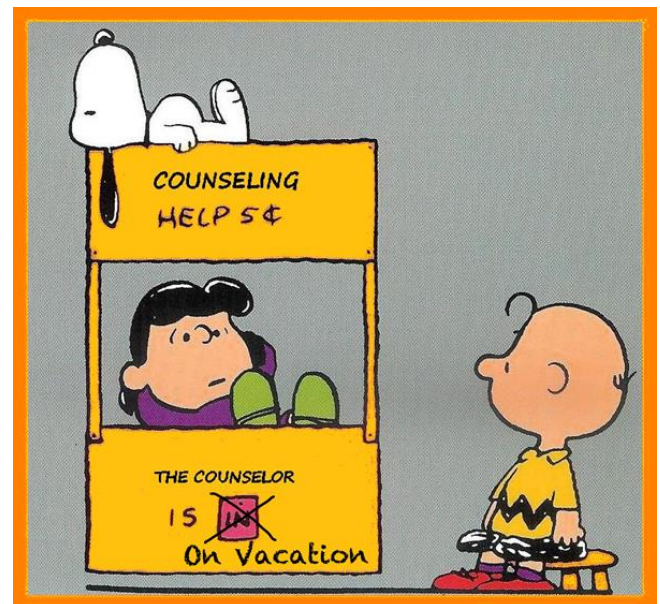
- **Self-awareness** – know your own body, your triggers, and emotional responses. Know the red flags that are specific to you and intervene when you see them appearing: e.g., feeling like going away alone; yawning or daydreaming during sessions.
- **Manage your client load and work hours** – it can be hard to “turn away” people who need help but its important to set and stick to boundaries. Ask yourself: How many clients can you attend to per day? What calls will you (not) take after hours?
- **Build professional and supervisor networks** – this will help you connected to other helpers in the field. Debriefing will help to alleviate effects of vicarious trauma. You can also share professional tips with colleagues. The CPSC has names of pastoral counsellors who are qualified to be supervisors.
- **Continuous professional development** - identify your gaps in knowledge and find appropriate courses and books to help develop your skills. We are always learning and should never stop. Conferences, such as the CPSC Spring Conference, or the Made Whole Conference by Edify - Building the Soul are also helpful for learning, as well as networking.
- **Invest in selfcare** - use acronym NEWSTART to cover the basics: **N**utrition, **E**xercise, **W**ater, **S**unshine, **T**emperance, **A**ir, **R**est/good sleep, **T**rust in God. You can then incorporate hobbies, massages, and treats after covering the basics. Incorporate intentional breaks and leave days in your schedule, as well as regular breaks during the day.

Recovering from burnout

It is important to be self-aware and acknowledge what has happened and that you need to rest. It is not a sign of weakness for the helper to need help as well.



Own the choices you have made and behaviour that have led you here. You cannot keep blaming everyone else and the situation.



Re-evaluate your priorities and values. Ask yourself where you are finding value and meaning?

Has counselling become a way to fulfil your own feelings of inadequacy or the need to be needed?

Ask yourself if some of your goals and objectives need to change – and have the courage to change.

Above all else, re-evaluate your standing with God. Have a meeting with yourself and ask yourself where your relationship with Jesus is. Are you still relying on the Spirit?

The work of helping is holy work. Siang-Yang Tan describes Christian counselling as “counselling conducted by a Christian who is Christ-centred, biblically based and Spirit-filled” (Clinton & Hawkins, 2011). In addition to all the tips above, we must keep connected to the Spirit to be effective Christian helpers, and to prevent experiencing burnout. ■

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No one needs to face tough times alone. Mercy also believes that mental health awareness is important to dispel the many myths and the stigma that society sometimes has towards mental illness.

In this regard, she is actively involved in the youth department of her local church, guiding young people to find their identity in Christ as well as teaching them to express their emotions in healthy ways. She also conducts mental health talks and seminars in various other churches.

With her background in public health, Mercy strongly believes in the integration of psychology and theology. She views her counselling room as a space where she meets with clients, in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who uses her skills and knowledge as a tool to bring healing and wholeness.

An Island of Identity – Building a safe place from which to reconcile self to self

By Dr Katherine Morse, who presented at the CPSC Conference on 1 September 2023.

I once worked for a family support service in Sydney. We were often puzzled by clients who were in violent relationships with their intimate partner but wouldn't leave. We were fortunate to visit the Dulwich Centre for a Narrative Therapy conference.

One lunch break we sat with Michael White and asked him about the women we were working with. Michael told us: women who stay with violent intimate partners still have something invested in the relationship. We were young therapists, and it was new idea that anyone would have something to gain from staying in such a life destroying relationship.

What would you do, if you were us, we asked him? He told us that he would **help the client build an "island of identity", a strong and safe place of self-understanding from which to explore the more vulnerable, and unwanted parts of self, the parts of self who were still invested in the violent relationship.**

Nearly twenty years have passed, and the concept of Island of Identity has seen several revisions and makeovers in my own work. There are still strong narrative threads to my understanding, though. Central to all narrative work is the idea that people have multiple stories about themselves. Some of these story lines might be privileged, spoken about, shared, illustrated, and thickened, above other thinner or lesser-known story lines.

If the dominant story line is about being weak, vulnerable, and dependent, then it is difficult to find the strength to leave a broken relationship.



If the client can develop or thicken an alternative self-story around a preferred identity, then she might have strength to be able to explore her investment in the violent relationship, and eventually strength to take action that is consistent with her island of identity.

This concept became important to me in doing trauma work with clients and in my own personal healing journey.

Trauma can lead to substantial internal fragmentation and alienation from God, others, and self. I have listened to people

struggling to hold a solid corner of their shredded faith together in the face of incredible suffering. I have found myself saying – find something about who God is or who you are in your relationship with him, something that you are still sure is true.

Even if it is only one thing, hold onto that one thing. Don't worry about the other things for now. There is already enough you are not sure of. You need to build an Island of Identity starting with what you still know is true. For example, if you are sure that God loves you, but not sure that you are worthy of His love, then only put the first part into the island structure – God loves me. Leave everything that is unsure to the side.

The Island then becomes a safe place of truth amongst the barrage of lies the enemy flings and the lies we speak over ourselves. It is a place of certainty amidst the uncertainties that surface during suffering. It is important to stay on the island and not move off until Jesus says to move. This is a time to *"let the word of God dwell in you richly"* (Col 3:16).

Add to the Island until it becomes a sure foundation beneath your feet. Jesus will then stretch you little by little towards the things you are not yet sure of. If you have deep soul work to do, then it is important to wait for Him to lead you and light up the path. Don't walk down mucky passages unless you are wearing island shoes, firmly rooted into your identity in Jesus.

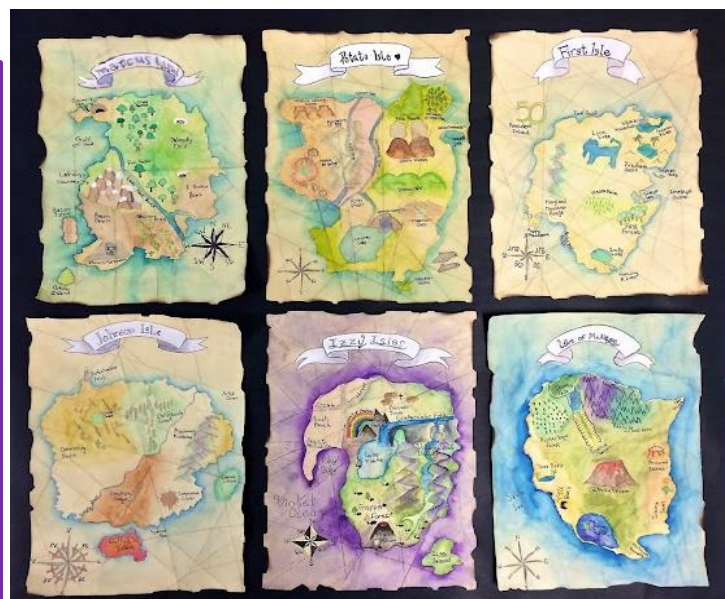
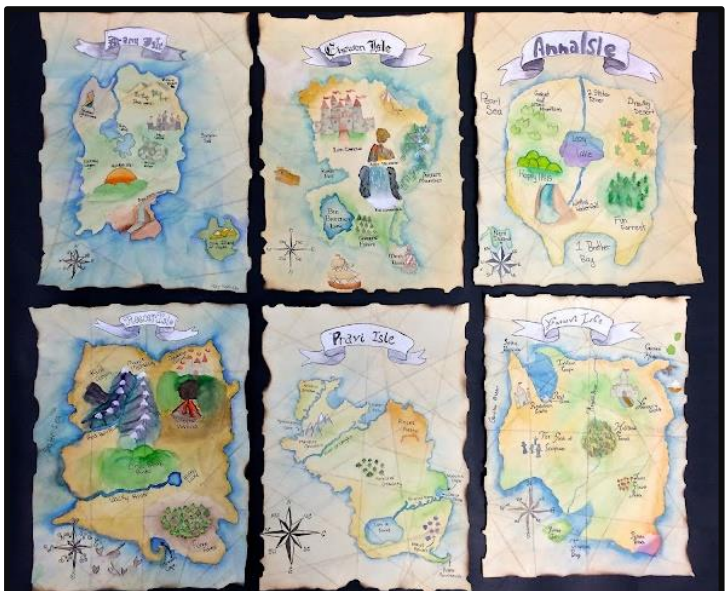
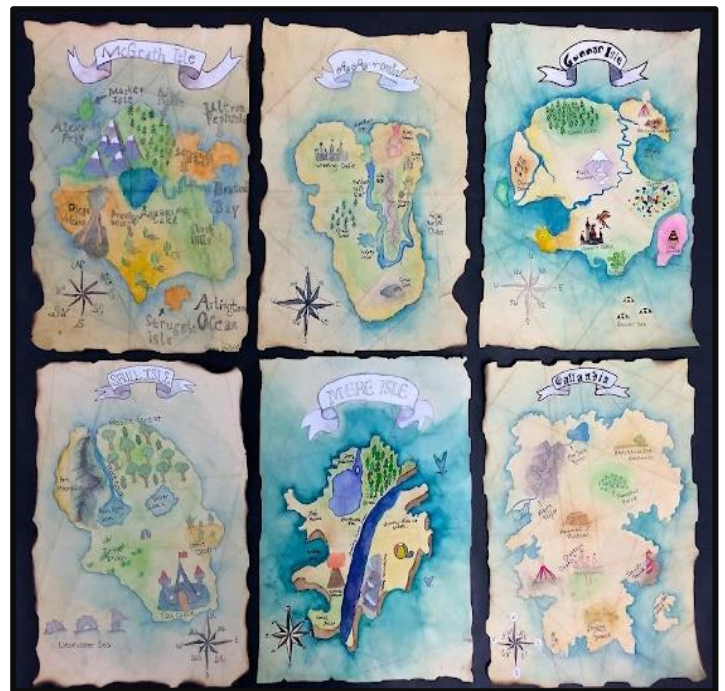
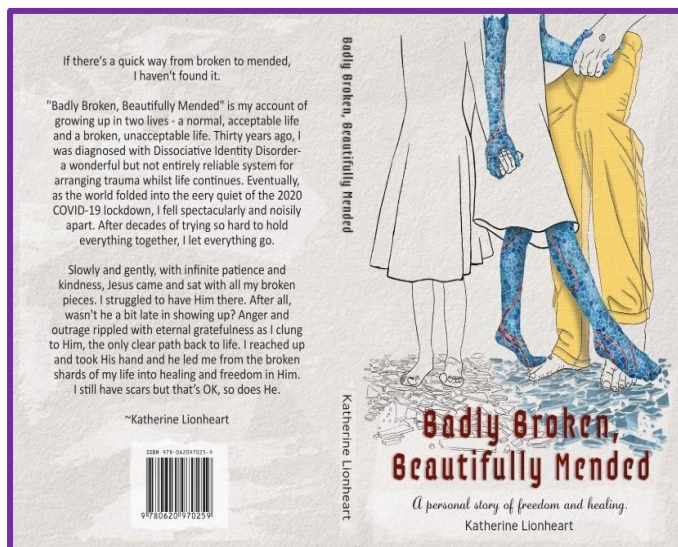
As therapists and pastoral counsellors, we often want to directly tackle the problem. I have learned the value of taking time to build the Island as a resource that enables the hard work to be done. ■



<http://eagleridgeart.blogspot.com/2015/12/identity-maps-watercolor.html>

Identity Island: 6th Grade Art with Mrs Baxter

Dr Katherine Morse is an Australian who has been living in South Africa for the past 16 years. She has studied Sociology, Theology and holds her doctorate in Psychology from the University of Cape Town where she currently works as a researcher. Kath leads Freedom Prayer ministry Mercy Vineyard Church and is author of the book "Badly Broken, Beautifully Mended" published under the pen name Katherine Lionheart.



Pastoral counselling of those affected by dementia

By James Wetton, as presented at the CPSC Conference on 1 September 2023.

Dementia seems to be more visible today. I am sure that you have become much more aware of it, either through your ministry in Pastoral Care or Pastoral Counselling.

Perhaps you know someone who has Dementia. You may even have a family member who has Dementia.

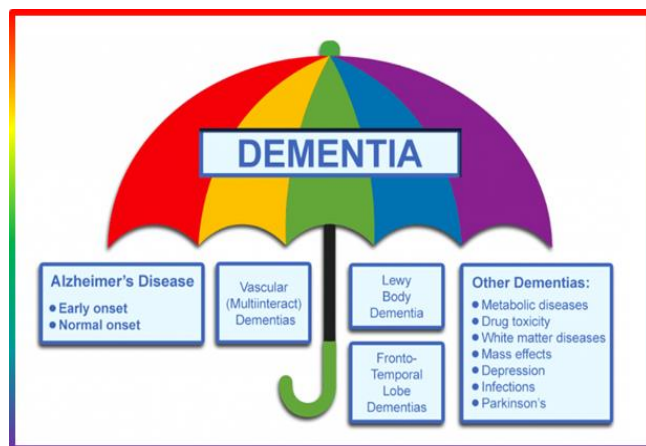
So, what is dementia?

They used to say that a person was senile or spoke of early senility. Today we recognise it as Dementia.

The World Health Organisation defines Dementia as *"a syndrome — usually of a chronic or progressive nature — in which there is deterioration in cognitive function (i.e., the ability to process thought) beyond what might be expected from normal ageing. It affects memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, calculation, learning capacity, language, and judgement."*²

So, it affects more than just memory.

Dementia is an umbrella term for describing various types of cognitive impairment, though not all cognitive impairment is dementia.



This includes:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Vascular dementia
- Lewy body dementia
- Frontotemporal dementia (Pick's disease)
- Alcoholic dementia
- Huntington's disease
- Dementia from diabetes
- Dementia from Parkinsonism
- Hydrocephalus
- Neurosyphilis

Dementia is a space where you will use all of your skills and gifts in the areas of Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counselling.



In the West, and certainly in South Africa, the two most common types of dementia are Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia.

There are other types too, but less common, Frontotemporal (Pick's Disease), Lewy Body dementia, Alcoholic dementia (which is self-inflicted), dementia from Hydrocephalus, Parkinson's, Diabetes, Neurosyphilis, Huntington's Disease, and others.

Who does dementia affect?

Dementia doesn't just affect the person with dementia – it affects the whole family. It affects the family in terms of emotions, time, energy, finances, and family conflict.

The other group of people that it affects, and who are often overlooked, are the nursing and care staff that look after the person with dementia.

In the context of Pastoral Care, and Pastoral Counselling, you will be engaging with one of these three groups.



You will begin to engage with the person with dementia predominantly in one of four places: your office, the Frail Care facility where they are being cared for, their own house, or at their bed.

You are likely going to be engaging them when they are in the mid or late stages of dementia.

It is possible to counsel the person with dementia though your time frame will be different. The "Future scenario" that you consider may not be in a few months – it may be in a few days, or hours.

The cognition doesn't go all at once. It reduces. As the cognition reduces, the emotions increase until their engagement with the world is totally emotional, without cognition.

Regardless, the most significant emotion that someone with dementia will be experiencing is insecurity. Yes, there may be fear, confusion, anger, frustration, irritation, and anxiety, but the root cause of all of these is insecurity. I think that as humans, one of, if not *the* most important emotional need that we have, is to feel safe, to feel secure.

² <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dementia>;

Last accessed 13/07/2020

They will trust you very deeply. I once heard a beautiful term for someone counselling a person with dementia.

You become the “Keeper of the Memories”. This is both beautiful but also carries with it a huge responsibility.

Part of that responsibility is confidentiality. They may tell you things that their family don't know. They may tell you secrets. This sounds obvious, but you must be prepared for this.

The next thing to expect is the shift between counselling and care. There are many situations which may require you to move between counselling and care, but I can't think of an area of counselling where this happens more than when you work in the space of dementia.

Be very aware of transference and counter transference. This is especially important, even when just visiting the person with dementia in their room at the care home. They will pick up on your emotions very quickly, and this will have a profound affect on them.

Often when you see someone with dementia in care, the nurses may tell you, “They are only speaking gibberish”. Sometimes you might hear from the nurses or members of the family that they are telling stories that have no basis in reality. It is *never* gibberish; the stories *always* matter, but you need to listen to them in a different way. You need to listen to the emotional meaning of what they are saying and not the literal meaning.

You may find yourself caring for the person with dementia as they die. This is an immense privilege – to walk with someone, to counsel them, to care for them, to disciple them, to be the keeper of their memories, right to the end. If you are a pastor, you may be the one conducting their memorial service. You will experience hurt and grief, but you won't have time to relax, because counselling and caring in this space is not only about the person with dementia. You are more than likely going to have to be counselling and caring for their family too.

Counselling the family of the person with dementia

The family of the person with dementia are going to be in a complicated space.

You will most likely be engaging with children or a spouse, though sometimes, especially if it is a larger family, others as well.

The family of someone with dementia will be in a very insecure space as well, and very emotional.

Living with dementia is an increasingly common 21st century challenge. Counselling can enable people to make sense of their life with dementia, grieve their losses and continue to find new opportunities and meaning.

Caring for an individual with dementia can be a long journey. Caregivers often become physically and emotionally overwhelmed and exhausted by the toll of their responsibilities. They need guidance and support but often won't ask for it until they are completely depleted. Counselling for the caregiver/s is an area where good pastoral counsellors can have an enormous impact.

They will be experiencing anticipatory grief, and their dominant emotions will be anxiety, as well as fear combined with stress.

When it comes to the family, you will need to hold their pain, and be patient, even when they are being unreasonable. Be present, available to answer questions, and give advice. A lot of the questions will be very practical, e.g., when the right time would be to move the person into a facility.

Encourage the family to join a dementia support group. That makes a huge difference to the family. If nothing else, it shows them that they are not alone, that other families are going through what they are.

Help the family prepare for the death. Encourage them to make plans way before they will be needed. This is true for a move to a facility but also for the death, to choose a funeral home, for example.

However, so often when talking about dementia, we and the families can spend so much time focusing on the end stages. While we prepare for “that” time, it is very important to spend time with the person in the time we have, because there is time – time to love and be loved, and time to make memories. We need to appreciate the time we have, and you need to help the families to see that.

Do not forget about spiritual care. Pray with the family. One of the most important images that we have of God in the Bible is of Him as Father. Keep pointing to God's fatherhood, God's love, God's understanding, and God's compassion. Remind them that, however crazy life seems, God is still on His throne.

Counselling the professionals

The final group that you are likely to counsel and care for in the space of dementia are the nurses, the caregivers, the social workers, the physio therapists – the professionals.

Your role there may be to debrief, as well as to provide grief and trauma counselling.

They will experience institutional grief or disenfranchised grief – the grief experienced by those who incur a loss that is not, or cannot be, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported.

Many will bury these emotions and soon start to experience

Compassion Fatigue, which goes hand in hand with Adrenal Fatigue.

Nurses often work 12-hour shifts and

are expected to be 100% present and 100% perfect 100% of the time. They may also have issues at home, and struggles that the person with dementia, or their families, know nothing about.

They have to feel the brunt of the family's emotions, fear, anxiety, and anger that come from their pain and insecurity.

The staff often feel undervalued and unappreciated, especially in the face of big challenges. It makes such a big difference to simply greet them and pray for them.

Conclusion

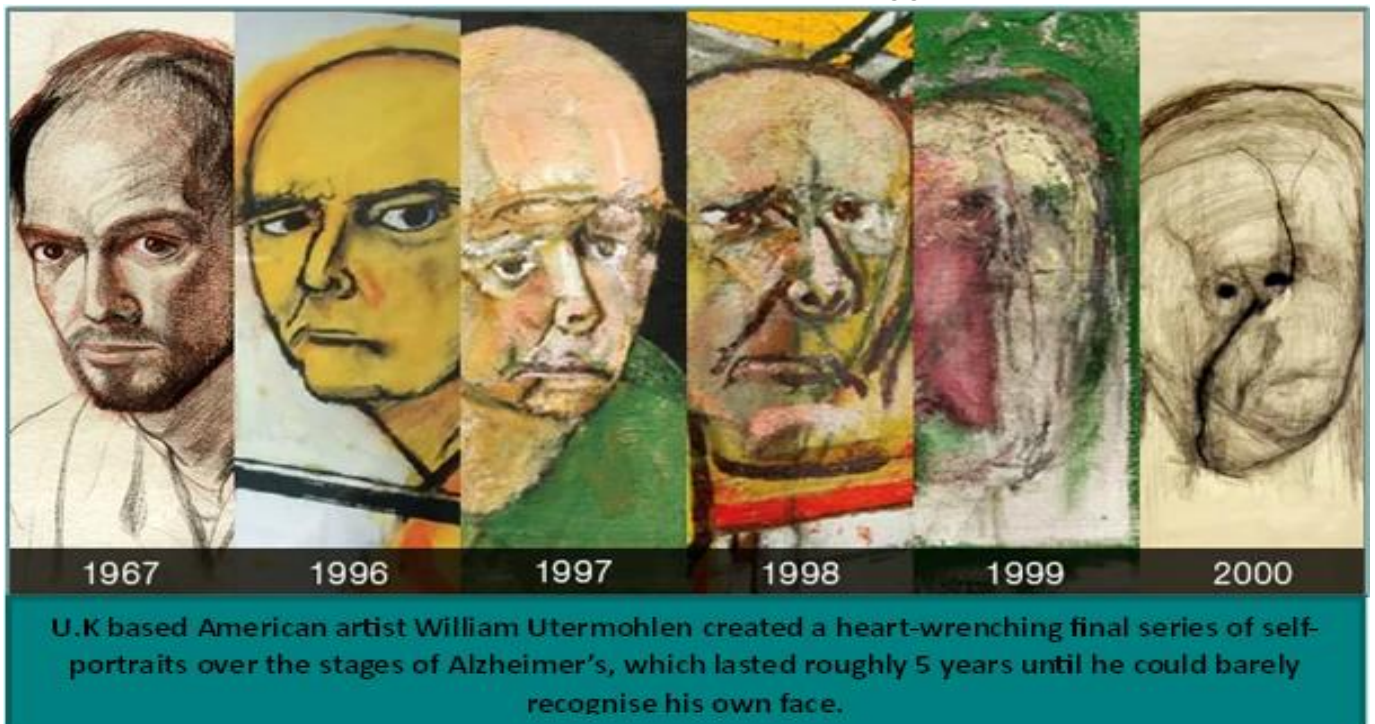
Dementia is a space where you will use all of your skills and gifting in the areas of Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counselling.

Although it is a very fulfilling part of ministry, it can be exhausting. You need to be very intentional about caring for yourself.

Essentially, it's about love. It's about reflecting God's love, not only to those who have dementia but to everyone in this space. It's about loving those that a lot of people in this world don't care about and don't want to know about, but who are known by and loved by God.



It's about holding the hands of emotional pain, messiness, despair, and suffering and, like God our Father, not letting go.



Do Not Ask Me to Remember

Do not ask me to remember,
Don't try to make me understand,
Let me rest and know you're with me,
Kiss my cheek and hold my hand.
I'm confused beyond your concept,
I am sad and sick and lost.
All I know is that I need you
To be with me at all cost.
Do not lose your patience with me,
Do not scold or curse or cry.
I can't help the way I'm acting,
Can't be different though I try.
Just remember that I need you,
That the best of me is gone,
Please don't fail to stand beside me,
Love me 'til my life is done.
- Owen Darnell

James Wetton is the Pastor of Kingsmead Christian Fellowship located in Rosebank, Johannesburg. He worked in the Travel Industry for 12 years before studying for his Bachelor of Theology.

James has a particular interest in working with people living with dementia, as they navigate some of the complexities relating to ageing and Cognitive Decline.

Under the auspices of Alzheimer's SA, James facilitates a monthly Support Group for the loved ones of people living with Dementia.

James cares for and counsels the residents, their families, and the relevant professional personnel.

Sink or Surf: What makes working with adolescents different? (Part 1)

By Dr Heidi Human, as presented at the CPSC Conference on 1 September 2023.

Part 1:

The waves: The adolescent phase of development

Understanding how to work with adolescents begins with understanding how their brains are developing and what this means for their behaviour and needs.

As counsellors, we can meet some of these needs, as well as help them to learn how to meet their own needs in ways that are helpful and generative. In other words, we can learn to surf the waves of the adolescent storm and help them to do the same.

We already know that adolescents are in a stormy phase

TEENAGER

noun 1. Someone who is ready for the zombie apocalypse but not ready for the math test tomorrow.

of development in which we see them move from dependence on their parents to independence, while we also hope that they will learn how to function interdependently. In other words, they move from feeling as though their parents are everything to them, to feeling that they want to rely more on themselves and their peers.

This is a necessary shift, that will lead to them leaving the parental home; something we all hope that they will do when the time is right. These waves of change happen because of dramatic changes in the brain, particularly in the midbrain section (emotional brain) and prefrontal cortex (thinking brain), that create a set of needs that, once met, will aid adolescents in moving out into the world. However, what we need to understand is that during the time when these changes are happening, the brain is still developing, and not fully developed. As such, there will be times when adolescents still behave and think like children, and times when they might surprise us with their maturity. They are dancing between childhood and adulthood.

Adolescent development

This dance is what we refer to as adolescence. During childhood, the brain collects vast amounts of knowledge, but children depend on adults to interpret the world for them, because the knowledge they are collecting is too complex and overwhelming for their underdeveloped prefrontal cortex. During adolescence, however, the



brain begins to specialise (form its own identity) and mature (make its own decisions about the world), by way of two processes, known as pruning and myelination, or differentiation and connection.

Differentiation and Connection

During childhood, the brain is growing and making millions of connections. During adolescence, the brain prunes away the less used connections and keeps only the ones that are used often. For example, if a child learns to

play an instrument but stops practising during adolescence, they will forget how to play, as those connections that were formed in childhood will be seen as redundant and pruned away by the brain.

Adolescent brain development can be divided into three processes:

- **Proliferation** (rapid growth of brain matter and the formation of new connections within the brain)
- **Pruning** (cutting away of unused or unimportant connections)
- **Myelination** (insulating of brain pathways to make them faster and more stable)

(Sowell et al., 1999; Sowell et al., 2001)

Should they continue to work on it, though, the connections will be strengthened. This strengthening of connections is known as myelination, as those neural connections literally grow fatter with an accumulation of myelin (a form of fat found in the brain) that strengthens the connections. Dr Daniel Siegel explains, "Where attention goes, neural firing flows, and neural connection grows" (Siegel 2017).

Brain development and maturation

While the process of pruning and myelination is ongoing, there are also two major areas of the brain that are maturing, the midbrain and limbic system, and the cortical region. The midbrain and limbic system (emotional brain) are developing at a very rapid rate, and, in keeping with the need to move away from the parental home, are tuned in to peer approval and excitement. The cortical region, and specifically the prefrontal cortex (thinking brain) is also developing, but at a slower rate. This is the reason why adolescents have poor impulse control. Although their reasoning abilities are maturing, their limbic

system will react faster to stimuli, especially approval from their peers (Albert, Chein and Steinberg 2013), causing them to behave recklessly.



What do they need?

Knowing what is happening in the adolescent brain helps us to see more clearly what they will need from the adults in their lives.

Firstly, they must learn to understand and regulate their emotions; to pause and think.

Secondly, they must learn to understand others, develop empathy and communication skills.

Lastly, they need to learn to make wise decisions, based on a moral code and strong set of values.

At the same time, their developing brains respond well in certain circumstances, which are summarised very well by Dr Siegel, when he explains the “essence” of adolescence as follows:

ES – Emotional Spark

SE – Social Engagement

N – Novelty

CE – Creative Exploration. (Siegel 2014b)

In Part 2 of this article, we will have a closer look at adolescents' needs and how we can meet those needs in a manner to which they will respond. How can we surf these waves, like champions?

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* * *

Dr Heidi Human has lived most of her life in and around the Magaliesberg Mountains, having been born and raised on the West Rand, studying, and working in Pretoria and finally moving to Rustenburg, where she currently resides.

Having studied in Pretoria, she stayed on in 2003 to teach English at a high school in the centre of the city, while completing her postgraduate qualification in Pastoral Narrative Family Therapy at the University of Pretoria.

After attaining her master's degree, she moved to Rustenburg, to take the position at Lebone II – College of the Royal Bafokeng as the founding Director of Girls' Boarding in 2010, while still teaching English.

In 2013, she moved out of the boarding space, into a counselling position at the same school, combining this role with the teaching of Life Orientation.

In 2015, she attained her PhD in Pastoral Narrative Family Therapy at the University of Pretoria.

In the beginning of 2020, the principal moved her out of the classroom and into full-time counselling, just in time for the Covid-19 pandemic, where she would be most needed.

It is in this space where she still serves the high school students at the College with counselling, academic skills training, subject choice guidance, and career guidance.



A cure for people pleasers

By Dr Dina Janse van Rensburg

Every so often I find myself sitting opposite a client struggling with feelings like feeling burnt-out, without value, unloved and over-stressed, anxiety, depression, rejection, and mood problems. **In many cases my client is suffering with the symptoms of the “disease to please”.** I understand it all too well! Who of us did not struggle with the disease to please and the feeling of being burnt-out? And some of us are still struggling with exactly that.



How do we consolidate the assignment to love one's neighbour as yourself with Galatians 1:10 that warns: *“Am I now trying to win the favour and approval of men, or of God? If I were still trying to be popular with men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ”*. Are these two verses opposite in their meaning and intention, or is it us who struggle to love our neighbour and also love ourselves in the way God has intended?

Harriet Braiker, author of **The Disease to Please**, argues that while **people-pleasers may think they excel at making others happy, their real talent lies in making themselves feel miserable and inadequate.**

Why would that be?

- You push yourself around with commanding others
- You burden yourself with a strict, rigid code of personal rules
- You measure yourself against unrealistic, judgmental standards

ALL THIS TO BE NICE TO OTHERS WHILE NOT BEING NICE TO YOURSELF!

According to Caileen Kehayas Holden of *Career Contessas*, your client might be a people pleaser if some of the following symptoms are displayed:

- You agree even if you disagree (self-deception)
- You apologize too much
- You want someone to double check your work, but maybe you are just looking for approval?
- Constantly burdened by other people's feelings: You are too engaged with other people's emotions, while minimalizing your own feelings
- You rarely accept credit or praise, which is rooted in poor self-esteem
- You take blame that is not yours, for the sake of peace or to avoid conflict

We must overcome our intense fear of disapproval by learning to handle conflict constructively and learn to express anger appropriately and effectively.

- You tend to act like the people around you - looking for approval
- You always say “yes”
- You want everyone to like you, even the ones you don't like
- You always avoid conflict.

In an unhealthy relationship, the feeling is “I love you because I need you”.

In a healthy relationship, the feeling is “I need you because I love you”.

It is easy to diagnose the problem, but we need to explore the reasons why we fall into this mindset and how to cure it. For instance, a controlling man who keeps the woman off-centre and feeling anxious, continuously chips away at her identity.

According to BRAIKER we must distinguish between:

- **The people pleasing mindset:**
This is a fixed mindset of being controlled by our thoughts to gain approval that ensnares us in self-defeating mindsets. You believe being nice will protect you from rejection and hurtful treatment from others. Healing requires understanding and correcting the mindset.
- **The people pleasing habits:**
This is where we give up control over time and energy. This need for approval stems from childhood where children is often praised for things they do. There is nothing wrong about valuing the approval of loved ones, but the need to be liked must not become mandatory and an imperative like oxygen. People pleasing are a learnt behaviour and can be unlearned.
- **The people pleasing feelings:**
This is where we avoid emotions and emotional experiences that are uncomfortable, difficult, or frightening. Although there are positive feelings, we are concerned about the negative ones. We must overcome our intense fear of disapproval by learning to handle conflict constructively and learn to express anger appropriately and effectively.

Some suggestions on changing the habit of being a people pleaser:

1. Learn to set healthy boundaries. Your time and emotions are also important and must be prioritized.
2. Set your own goals and priorities.

You matter – your dreams and goals matter.

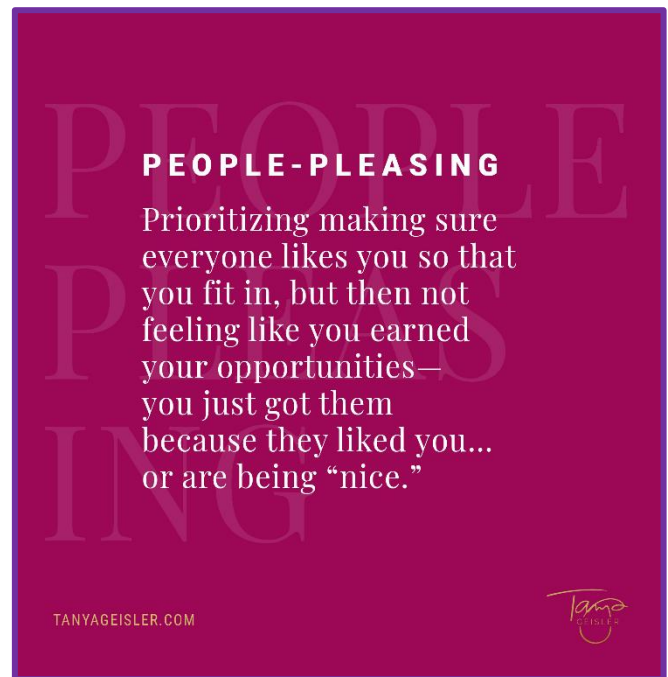
3. Focus on your progress and not your failures. Try to change your behavior one day at a time. Review your progress and failures daily and work towards bettering your progress.
4. Set positive routines. Do things for yourself and get a caring support group.
5. Pause before you say YES, buy yourself time, e.g., by saying "I will have a look at my diary and give you an answer before the end of the day."
6. Filter requests through your priorities. Did you plan something that you will have to leave in order to help? If so, you are still in the wrong habit. Learn to say NO in a firm but nice way.
7. Get comfortable with saying NO – it is a valid answer. Think of nice phrases to use in order to say NO firmly, but without making it sound like a war declaration.

As pastoral counsellors, we want to go beyond the guidelines set out above and we want to get to a place of inner healing of low self-esteem, of knowing who you are and what your purpose is, according to the Word of God.

With inner healing and new habits, the client should be on the road to recovery, being able to love their neighbour as the self, while setting healthy boundaries, and being rooted in true Biblical truths regarding value. We must learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, coaching us with inside whispering – learn to listen carefully. ■



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Dr Janse van Rensburg has a practice in Rayton. Her post-graduate studies centered around leadership and rejection. She has many years of experience in pastoral counselling and helping the broken is her passion.
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Pastoral narrative therapy practices and grief counselling, Part 1

By Natasha Bonow

Grief is something that affects us all. Whether you work in a church or in private practice, pastoral counsellors are no strangers to grief counselling.

In this three-part series, I would like to explore some ways that Pastoral Narrative Therapy Practices could help us in grief-centred counselling sessions.

Firstly, I will begin with a brief overview of Pastoral Narrative Therapy and state my motivation for a narrative therapy approach to grief. Secondly, I will explore what the practice of this would look like in a counselling conversation and how we can help those we counsel find deeper levels of meaning through their experiences. Lastly, I will offer some practices for individual, group, or family work as we journey with those who come seeking help.

It is my hope that this series will be informative as you have conversations with people who are on the journey of grief.

Motivation towards using a Narrative approach in Pastoral Counselling

Narrative therapy, as opposed to modernistic counselling methods and models, offers a refreshing approach to the topic of grief. Grief journeys are like fingerprints – experiences differ from one person to the next. I believe a narrative approach is most fitting to accompany people along this road. Narrative therapy holds to the view that meaning is socially constructed and processed through experiences; thus, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to helping people deal with problems and coping with feelings of grief.

How did Narrative Therapy come about?

Postmodernism, social construction, and power

Narrative therapy was developed during the postmodern era. This period came after modern times – an era of organising knowledge, researching, reasoning, and categorizing the world in rational, empirical, and objective terms (Freedman & Combs 1996) (Du Preez & Eskell-Blokland 2012).

While the modern period brought great advancements to scientific studies – thinking of people like Emil Krepelin, whose ideas formed the basics of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM); Isabel Myers and Katharine Briggs, who devised personality tests, and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and her model of grief, there was a sense of disillusionment that gave way to an expected lineal healing process (GoodTherapy



Narrative therapy is a respectful, non-blaming approach that “centres people as the experts in their own lives”.

2015)(The Myers-Briggs Company n. D) (Biography.com Editors, 2014) (Du Preez & Eskell-Blokland 2012).

Postmodernists began searching for meaning as they challenged the conventional boundaries that were set during modernist times. Proponents of this theory became aware of differing interpretations of local knowledge – they did not discount previous methods of epistemology, but rather, this movement understood that previous ways of knowing

and understanding were seen as just one of the possible reasons or ways of doing things, versus the only reason or way of doing something (Du Preez & Eskell-Blokland 2012).

Social construction, a fundamental concept within postmodernism, highlights that individuals and societies create and understand reality through shared experiences. These shared experiences become part of a community’s beliefs, behaviour, language, prejudices, etc. and they are reinforced through educational systems, media, politics, economic ideologies, and the like (Freedman & Combs 1996) (Du Preez & Eskell-Blokland 2012) (Burr 1998) (Gaventa 2003).

Some of these discourses may be helpful, while others could be seen as “oppressive or constraining” (Gaventa 2003) (Brown 2007). Philosopher, Michel Foucault offered groundbreaking ways of viewing this oppression. He explained that often a power struggle

is involved in laying down these “taken-for-granted” ways, resulting in one party being marginalised over the other (Gaventa 2003). This was a “point of resistance” as mainstream discourses were questioned and externalized (Brown 2007:5) (Gaventa 2003:2).

It is from this backdrop that narrative therapy enters.

Narrative Therapy

Narrative Therapist, Alice Morgan, defines narrative therapy as “a respectful, non-blaming approach” that “centres people as the experts in their own lives” (2000:2). **Narrative therapy views people and the problems they experience as separate entities.** Thus, holding to the view that “people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist the person seeking help to reduce the influence of problems in their lives” (Morgan 2000:2).

In narrative therapy, there is not one particular way a conversation should go (Morgan 2000). The person seeking help, together with the counsellor, collaborate and discuss the situation at hand. Together they deconstruct

the relationship between knowledge and power, exploring the history, effects, strategies, tactics, etc. of the problem through externalisation (Brown 2007) (Morgan 2000).

The process leads to the counsellor and the person seeking help, co-creating and re-authoring their identity in a way that actively deconstructs oppressive and unhelpful discourses.

Narrative therapy is a non-directive way of counselling, and it is not a quick fix; it is an empowering approach that helps the person living with the problem, redefine their relationship to the problem they struggle with (Louw 2021).

Narrative therapy lends itself to pastoral care in that it is more conversational than modernistic theories of counselling. Dinkins highlights how narrative therapy invites us to leave “psychological jargon, theories, and techniques” behind and actively enter the story of the other person in a supportive way (2005:16). When this gentle and conversational approach is paired with helpful questions, it can lead to “sparkling moments” and thickened stories of meaning (Dinkins 2005) (Morgan 2000).



Although the modernistic approach was helpful for a certain period of time, there may still be instances where we would choose to follow some of the ideas that were birthed in that era. However, I believe the postmodern tweaks on therapy have opened up wider opportunities to us.

As pastoral counsellors, our calling, I believe, is to gently come alongside those we journey with. Modern counselling methods have the potential to offer labels and solutions, often without taking time to listen to the individual story; thus providing “thin healing spaces”.

In contrast, the postmodern narrative approach allows for “thickened healing spaces”, as there is no rush or specific time frame needed to work through a person’s loss (Freedman & Combs 1996). Narrative therapy allows the person seeking help to move at their own pace and explore meaning in their particular experiences. From a pastoral context, this also allows us as counsellors to help unpack the God-story in their life.³

In part two of this series, I will continue exploring how we can ‘thicken’ the healing space through narrative practices. In conclusion, my hope is that through this brief overview, you were able to gain a better understanding of what narrative therapy is and how it came

about. I believe there is great benefit to taking a curious approach to the problems people face, rather than a modernistic one-size-fits-all way of working.

Pastoral narrative practices can help ‘thicken’ the ministry we have to those in our care. ■



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³ The narrative therapist is a collaborator with the client in the process of discovering “thicker” or “richer” narratives that

emerge from disparate descriptions of experience, weakening the hold of negative (“thin”) narratives upon the client.

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Her training includes a Bachelor of Theology (Honours), training in biblical counselling, advanced certificate in Christian counselling, certificate in introduction and advanced

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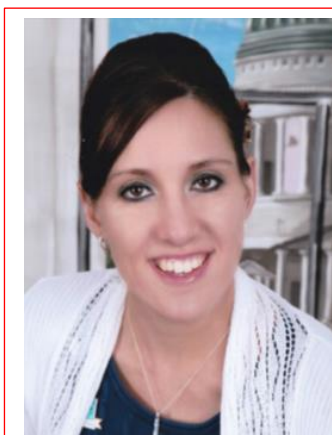
Turmoil faced in life

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

Scripture

Isaiah 40:31: "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (KJV).

John 16: 33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (KJV).



Each therapist, counsellor or social worker needs to be able to address a person's crisis when faced with an individual's distress or impairment to operate or function in a logical or orderly way.

In conceptualizing the process of crisis intervention, Roberts (1991, 2000, 2005) has identified seven critical stages through which clients typically pass on the road to crisis stabilization, resolution, and mastery. These stages, listed below, are essential, sequential,

and sometimes overlapping in the process of crisis intervention:

Introduction

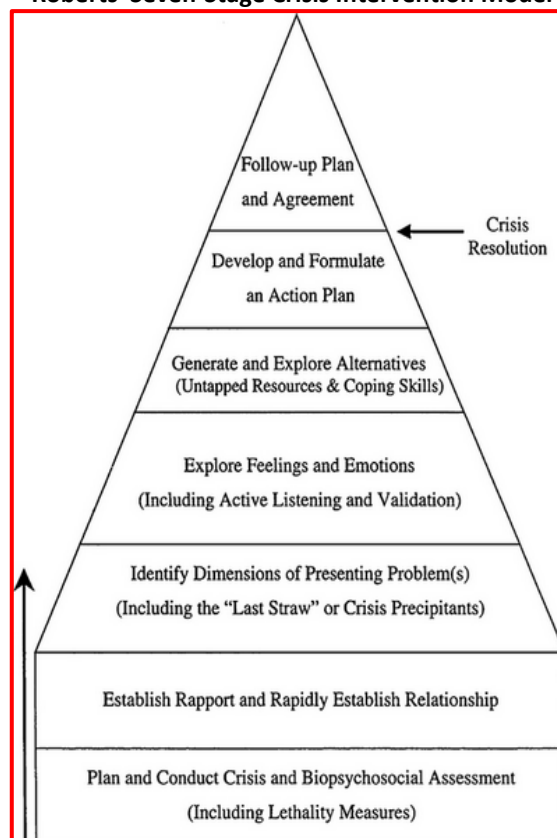
"The roots of Crisis Theory can be traced to the Coconut Grove nightclub fire of 1942. Eric Lindemann, Alexandra Adler, and Gerald Caplan were psychiatrists who worked with and studied survivors of the fire and their families. Lindemann (1944) observed the differences in reactions and recoveries of those affected by the fire and reported that members of the community might be able to ameliorate or prevent crisis of bereavement through helping people learn how to mourn appropriately and adequately (Caplan, 1964).

Alexandra Adler's study (1943) of 500 survivors of the fire laid the foundation for post-traumatic stress as a psychological construct. Caplan described the etiology and progression of the crisis state (S. Tedrick & C. A. Wachter Morris, 2011)".

Crisis, according to James and Gilliard (2005), is defined as "a perception or experiencing of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person's current resources and coping mechanisms" (H.B. Smith, 2006).

P. Poal (1990) states that the term crisis derives from the Greek word 'krisis' which means decision or turning point. He denotes that the definition of the word has a decisive stage, with important consequences in the future of an individual or a system.

Roberts' Seven-Stage Crisis Intervention Model



1. Plan and conduct a thorough biopsychosocial and lethality/imminent danger assessment.
2. Make psychological contact and rapidly establish the collaborative relationship.
3. Identify the major problems, including crisis precipitants.
4. Encourage an exploration of feelings and emotions.
5. Generate and explore alternatives and new coping strategies.
6. Restore functioning through implementation of an action plan.
7. Plan follow-up and booster sessions.

S. Bordow (1975) indicated the following five elements of a crisis as seen by Parad and Caplan (1960):

(1) the stressful event poses a problem which is, by definition, insoluble in the immediate future.

(2) the problem overtaxes the psychological resources of the family since it is beyond their traditional problem-solving methods.

(3) the situation is perceived as a threat or danger to the life goals of the family members.

(4) the crisis period is characterized by tension which mounts to a peak, then falls; and

(5) the crisis situation awakens unresolved key problems for both the near and distant past.

What might be seen as a trauma which enters a state of crisis or turmoil: the sudden loss of a spouse, finding out about a life-threatening disease, living with diabetes or osteoarthritis.

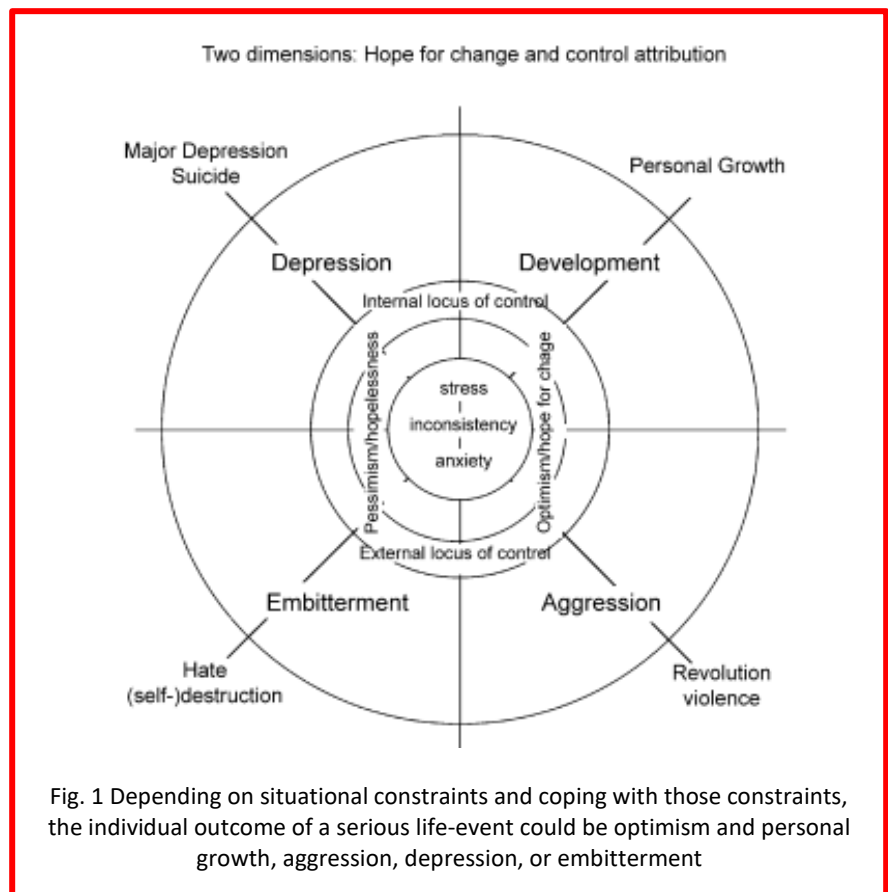
Psalm 46:1-3 - *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging."*

During all the hardships one might face, God is ever present and will not fail to guide us through His unfailing Grace.

The shimmering light like that of the prism of light shone upon us from above. We sometimes only tend to see the one colour: that of the problem faced, yet seldom see how the angle of the light reflects. *"The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"* - Exodus 14:14. Just like the Lord spoke to Moses and His people; where he opened up the Red Sea and let

them enter new ground. So, God will protect us during distress and hardship. Yet, it is the nature of individuals to become bitter, complain, become impatient and to fear, when things become clouded by too many uncertainties and inner hopelessness.

According to A.M. Darcy (2023), the German professor and psychiatrist Michael Linden proposed that bitterness should be seen as its own psychological disorder, which he called "post-traumatic embitterment disorder" (PTED). This is described in the following diagram provided by M. Linden and A. Maercker (2011).



According to M. Linden and A. Maercker (2011) embittered as described by the ancient Greeks is: "Embittered are those who cannot be reconciled, who keep their rancour, they hold their arousal in themselves, not coming to rest unless revenge has come. Revenge reduces arousal and changes pain into contentment. Does this not happen, then the pressure grows. As the internal turmoil does not open itself to others, nobody can counsel and help. It needs time to overcome internal arousal. Those persons are a burden to themselves and their dearest friends." (Aristoteles, Nicomachian Ethics).

One needs to heal; it is thus very important to become content and let go of rage and revenge, yet one can provide guidance through counsel, but the client would want to heal and find inner peace.

One saw this embitterment with the sons of Adam and Eve, when they had to bring a sacrifice to God, and *"the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and*

his offering he had no regard. So, Cain was very angry, and his face fell ... and Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” (Gen 4:1–16).

Cain experienced this deep revenge and bitterness when God took favour of Abel’s offering, setting back as offensive and even more as in just. Cain’s reaction was rancour and the resulting behaviour highly dysfunctional. The inner turmoil felt after a sudden loss or unexpected diagnosis can result in overwhelming uncontrollable feelings if not assisted.

Although counselling could be beneficial, without the inner healing through faith and acknowledging that one needs guidance... the healing might not be attainable.

CONCLUSION

Seltzer, L.F. (2015) exclaims in his blog in the Psychology Today that if we continue with defaulting to bitterness that it may carry the following holistic well-being price tag. It can:

- Prolong your mental and emotional pain—and may even exacerbate it
- Lead to long-lasting anxiety and/or depression
- Precipitate vengeful acts that put you at further risk of being hurt or victimized—and possibly engulf you in a never-ending, self-defeating cycle of getting even
- Prevent you from experiencing the potential joys of living fully in the present—vs. dwelling self-righteously on the past wrongs inflicted on you
- Create or deepen an attitude of distrust and cynicism—qualities that contribute to hostility and paranoid thinking, as well as an overall sense of pessimism. Such a bleak perspective prompts others to turn away from you
- Interfere with your cultivating healthy, satisfying relationships, and lead you to doubt, or disparage, your connection to others
- Compromise or weaken your higher ideals, and adversely impact your personal search for purpose and meaning in life
- Rob you of vital energy far better employed to help you realize your desires, or achieve goals that you coveted earlier
- Undermine your physical health. The chronic anger that is bitterness can raise your stress baseline, thereby taxing your immune system
- Blind you from recognizing your own role, or responsibility, in possibly having been *vindictively* harmed by another
- By keeping you in a paradoxical state of “vengeful bondage”, erode your sense of well-being.

If a client consults his or her mentor or therapist for assistance a self-rating scale may be used. One of the self-

rating scale examples (only few items are shown) that may only be used by registered and trained professionals in their relative fields: **PTED Scale Post-Traumatic Embitterment Disorder Self-Rating Scale** by Linden, M., Bauermann, K., Lieberei, B. & Rotter, M. (2013), asks for prolonged and disabling embitterment reactions in the aftermath of negative life events (*see the table below*).

The PTED Self-Rating Scale.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please read the following statements and indicate to what degree they apply to you.
Please do not miss a line:

I agree with this statement

	not true at all	hardly true	partially true	very much true	extremely true
During the last years there was a severe and negative life event					
1. that hurt my feelings and caused considerable embitterment	0	1	2	3	4
2. that led to a noticeable and persistent negative change in my mental well-being	0	1	2	3	4
3. that I see as very unjust and unfair	0	1	2	3	4
4. about which I have to think over and over again	0	1	2	3	4
5. that causes me to be extremely upset when I am reminded of it	0	1	2	3	4
6. that triggers me to harbour thoughts of revenge	0	1	2	3	4
7. for which I blame and am angry with myself	0	1	2	3	4
8. that led to the feeling that there is no sense to strive or to make an effort	0	1	2	3	4
9. that makes me to frequently feel sullen and unhappy	0	1	2	3	4
10. that impaired my overall physical well being	0	1	2	3	4
11. that causes me to avoid certain places or persons so as to not be reminded of them	0	1	2	3	4
12. that makes me feel helpless and disempowered	0	1	2	3	4
13. that triggers feelings of satisfaction when I think that	0	1	2	3	4

When faced with trauma (thus tremendous pain), it is not always easy to find the means to cope with the immense turmoil. It takes time; almost like a tree that loses its leaves and is left unembellished (thus bare)-time, support, resilience, and most of all faith are the beginning steps.

Yet, forgiveness of the self will let a new leave shoot from the bare branches of the soul. Ephesians 4: 31-32 – “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*”.

None of us are free from enduring turmoil here on earth: the type and way we endure it will differ, yet one omnipotent presence is the constant and that is God’s Grace for us.

2 Corinthians 12:9 - “*And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.** Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*”.

We will endure suffering, but God states that amidst our infirmities that His love for us will provide the strength needed during these weaknesses and time of need. ■

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Book Review: Facing the storm: Using CBT, mindfulness and acceptance to build resilience when your world's falling apart (Part 2)

By Arianna Wartmann

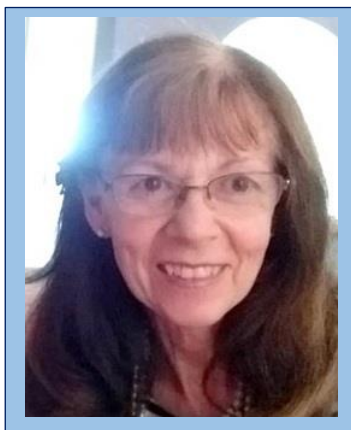
AUTHOR: DR. RAY OWEN

PUBLISHER: ROUTLEDGE – 1ST ED (2011)

ISBN: 978-0-415-67659-5

Preparing for afterwards

One can concentrate only on the Storm itself and neglect to give enough thought to what comes afterwards. Because one can't always prevent a disaster it doesn't mean that there's nothing one can do to prepare for the crisis and aftermath.



- We are less likely to be caught unawares at a stage when our energy may be low
- We are less likely to end up feeling helpless
- We can 'anticipate regrets'

We can assist the client by: -

- Discussing the cancellation or delay of any planned activities (example – a holiday overseas when you are undergoing chemotherapy)
- Putting one's affairs in order (e.g., drafting of a will)

Riding the storm – dealing with the emotions

When the Storm finally hits, the emotions rise up! Sadness, anger, disappointment, and many others are

Ride the storm by dealing with the emotions of fear, sadness, anger, guilt, shame, hope and happiness.

accompanied by physical changes (example of change in

heart rate) and often a change in behaviour (example of anger leading to aggression).

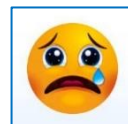
When emotions aren't addressed, they can create more problems (example – depression and phobias). Many theorists feel that we need to experience these emotions, as suppressing them may cause psychological difficulties in the future. However, there is a fine line between ignoring the emotion versus remaining stuck in the emotion.

It is important to be aware of the impact they have on one's behaviour. Dr Owen refers to these emotions as flavours of fear. For some, the emotion can be expressed as anger, while for others, as sadness.

Each client experiences and displays his/her reaction differently. Once the emotion has been acknowledged it is important to unpack the event that has caused this.

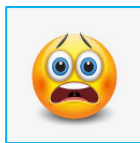
Emotions: Flavours of fear

1. Sadness, for example, could be provoked by a loss and often people manage this emotion by:



- Distracting themselves (suppressing the emotion)
- By becoming completely inactive
- They stop doing positive things which after a while makes them feel more sad
- They stop exercising which once again will affect their mood as well as health
- Negative thoughts (example – everything I do fails)

2. Fear – when we are facing a Storm it is normal to anticipate that something bad is going to happen and we move from a feeling of worry to panic.



Once again, it's important to understand what the event means to them. Fear is linked to our fight or flight reaction.

We can help the client by asking the following questions:

- Do you have to go back there?
- If not, stay away.
- If yes, how can you prepare yourself?
- Strive for a survival action versus a fear action.

Fear is a natural instinct to alert us that something is not OK. However, managing the emotion (example – anxiety, panic, etc.) in the presence of the threat helps one to acknowledge that the anxiety is there for a reason but that we can manage the impact thereof (i.e., in our behaviour).

So, we choose our actions to be as positive as possible. Therefore our 'worries' before the Storm (thoughts, feelings, etc.) are not the bad event itself. We can practise *Defusion* i.e., noticing that it's the thought that's occupying my mind, not the actual event.

Here are some helpful ways to address worry:

- Notice that we have started worrying, and what we are worrying about
- Choose not to get involved in the thought
- Remind ourselves that, at this precise moment, it is a thought that is troubling us, not the actual Storm
- Redirect the attention somewhere else and this could be an Internal distraction (example of a happy memory) or External distraction (example of reading a book)
- If redirecting your thoughts is difficult allocate 15 minutes or so to 'worry time'. Write down the thoughts and try to look for options i.e., transfer the thoughts onto paper
- Relaxation is a positive action to try and unwind but it's important to identify what relaxes you otherwise it could become another 'worry'. Watching TV or going for a walk can take your mind off the Storm, as your mind is involved in the activity itself.

3. Anger – from mild to irritability to murderous rage! Anger can be felt after a perceived threat or challenge, perceived unfairness, or frustration.



Unfortunately, at times, we erupt at the wrong person or thing after suppressing our emotions for a while.

Here are some helpful ways to address anger:

- Spot when you are getting angry (example – feel a tension across the back of your neck)
- Identify what you are actually angry about. You may need to calm down to do this
- Learn some simple calming down procedures (example - counting up to 10)
- If you need to (and can) walk away from the situation
- Try and do something physical (example - walking to redirect the negative energy)

4. Guilt – Sometimes the person feels an emotion due to their self talk around guilt.



It would be advisable to help the client understand the difference between Rational guilt and Irrational guilt. I often make the distinction between False guilt and True guilt i.e., what we are actually responsible for.

5. Shame is close to Guilt. Shame often takes place in the company of others.



One often has to deal with the reactions of our team members (e.g., in a sports club) versus our own. Time and one's attitude towards the criticism help diffuse the situation and our emotions.

6. Hope can give a person strength and energy, but unrealistic Hope can have devastating results.



Once again one can redirect that Hope to a more realistic outcome.

7. Happiness – "Happiness is not a goal; it is a by-product" (Eleanor Roosevelt).

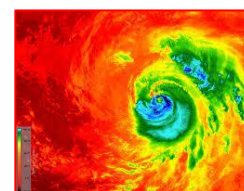


Happiness is more intense, euphoric, and often short lived. However, contentment is calmer, less obvious, but seems more stable. In dealing with a crisis, there may sometimes be happy moments amid the stressful, when something goes right for once.

What we can look to experience longer is contentment. And the word 'look' is important as it requires 'looking for' things that are good or pleasant and recognising their value.

The eye of the storm: Finding a quiet place in the middle of it all

To return to our image of a life crisis being like a Storm, we've seen that there's no way of preventing or stopping that Storm, and we try to learn how to best ride it.



We could approach the Storm from a calmer (quieter) place (as in the 'Eye of the hurricane') and look at options available to us before the winds pick up again.

The quieter place doesn't have to be a location but rather taking a different approach to the crisis. We have looked at:

- Sorting out the confusion
- Reducing troubling thoughts
- Calming unpleasant emotions

The most popular approach is to try and learn to accept the crisis, thoughts, and feelings around this, and to learn instead to be in the present moment – a skill known as Mindfulness.

1. Mindfulness – being in the present

Mindfulness is being in the present - not avoiding the thoughts, simply practising awareness and acceptance.

To develop this skill, one can recognise and accept the thought and then gently move to one's chosen focus of either Internal or External distraction.

We are not avoiding the thoughts, simply practising awareness and acceptance.

It is important to note that this skill takes practise. It doesn't necessary result in feeling calmer as the objective is to limit the mind wandering to negative thoughts and to becoming anxious. Mindfulness aims to give clarity to your mental state so that it makes it easier to take the next positive action.

2. ACT – Adding Value: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Whilst going through a crisis it takes effort getting through each day and one can lose sense of purpose or direction. One's Values can act as a compass to redirect us onto the right path.

Dr Russ Harris, therapist and trainer of ACT, describes the Values as: -

- What we stand for in life
- How we want to behave
- What sort of person we want to be
- What sort of strengths and qualities we want to develop

This approach helps a person identify what matters to them (their Values), to find how far they are managing to live by their Values and help them start taking committed action towards living more fully according to those Values they have lost contact with.

Rebuilding from driftwood – after the event

After the Storm we might have to grieve our losses and we need to discern whether it's a Bereavement (when someone has died) or Grief (when we address the reactions of a major loss, example of divorce). As a result of these losses there are inevitable changes in our lives.



1. Emotional impact

One's emotions during a loss are compared to a roller coaster ride as they swing from being calm to anger. The person is encouraged to be patient as the emotions do get shorter, less frequent, and less intense.

2. Practical implications

Memories (good or bad) cannot always be suppressed. One can try and find a balance between accepting the reality of the loss and remembering that the previous existence was a big part of your life and can play a positive part in building a new life (a new normal), around the circumstances and limitations you find yourself with now.

3. Facing major decisions

The problem is that at times major decisions can't wait. In terms of advice, perhaps one can try to work out which big decisions can safely be deferred, and for those that cannot, seek and listen to the advice of those we trust most. As the ultimate decision is our own, we need to remember that it was the 'best' decision at that time.

4. Our support network

We might be lucky and have a strong support network around us but at times we might be disappointed as each person has a different approach to dealing with a crisis. As there are limitations in how we can support one another it is advisable to be specific e.g., asking for either emotional, informational, practical, or social support.

Making sense of the bad things in life

Dr Owen concludes with the quote:

"Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" Leo Tolstoy.

The truth is that alongside the good things in life, there will some really bad things and there is nothing we can do to stop this. However, we can try and make sense of our loss "Storm" and find ways of dealing with it. ■

Dr Owen is a great believer that when we are faced with adversity to pray and practise the Serenity Prayer:

"God, Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference"

(Reinhold Niebuhr 1892–1971)

Spiritual counsellor at your service!

A contemplation by Dr Arnold Smith

Perhaps these are familiar words for you: “I was looking for a Christian - or spiritual – counsellor, and somebody referred me to you”.

Then the scary words: “I was diagnosed as being bipolar. When do you have an opening for me?” Other familiar phrases: “I have such high levels of anxiety and sometimes feel so depressed. I have these suicidal thoughts and have already made attempts to bring an end to my misery”.

Sometimes turning up to conduct a funeral and afterwards at the tea other familiar words: “Are you a pastoral counsellor? Can I or family members get an appointment? Where are you situated? From which denomination are you?” The other familiar question, among many others, is: “I need counselling. What is your fee? Will the medical scheme pay for the consultation?”

As pastoral counsellors we have the wonderful opportunity to see many clients. People tend to scan the internet to find Christian, Spiritual, or Biblical counsellors.

Why do people in need of counselling sometimes prefer to see Christian or spiritual counsellors – contrary to what their medical professionals recommend?

The purpose is not to take a stand against psychotherapy or visits to psychiatrists. Patients do need them and many of these professionals also work with a strong Christian view and also act as Christian therapists.

We as pastoral counsellors, if not registered as psychologists, are not supposed to diagnose people. We receive clients with sometimes a history of psychiatric treatment, therapy and medication and often refer our clients there.

Driven by hope

To touch his cloak

Luke 8: 40 Jesus Raises a Dead Girl; Heals a Sick Woman

⁴⁰Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴²because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. ⁴³And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal



her. (ESV) ⁴³And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone). ⁴⁴She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵“Who touched me?” Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.”

⁴⁶But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.”

⁴⁷Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.

⁴⁸Then he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

A woman dared to touch Jesus’ cloak while she had a discharge of blood for twelve years with the result of being impure according to the law in Leviticus 15:25-27 (ESV): ²⁵ “If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the

days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean.

²⁶Every bed on which she lies, all the days of her discharge, shall be to her as the bed of her impurity. And everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her menstrual impurity. ²⁷And whoever touches these things shall be unclean and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.”

This means that she could not come near her next of kin. She could not marry and have children. She was basically banned from society. Nobody would befriend her. On top of it all, this lady spent all her money paying doctors without being healed. All she had left was the hope in Jesus, in just touching Jesus’ cloak, even from behind. We can’t imagine the fear! She was healed, felt accepted by Jesus as He spoke to her.

Spiritual counselling is a mode of healing that looks at an individual’s beliefs and values, and in which there typically is a longing for meaning larger than the individual self.

Christian counsellors personify hope by accepting people despite who they are and what their circumstances are. Acts 10:25-29: ²⁵“When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” ²⁷And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. ²⁸And he said

to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. ²⁹So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

In many cases Spiritual counsellors are a last resort for people after journeying with many doctors, therapists, and medication.

Being bipolar, having anxiety, depression and other disorders and challenges in life sometimes push people to the edge of society.

Sometimes they have the feeling of not being accepted for who they are with their challenges.

Christian counsellors offer acceptance and hope in continuously referring people to Jesus and also form the bridge for people to accept clinical help and therapy as necessary.

What people say

Karin Bleecher, Program Director at New Life in Portugal (<https://www.newlifeportugal.com>) says: **"Spiritual counselling is a mode of healing that looks at an individual's beliefs and values, and in which there is typically a long-term for meaning larger than the individual self."**

In an oral and informal study of my clients, I asked them why they considered spiritual counselling. Here's what they said:

- **It's about trust.** They feel that as Christian counsellors they can be trusted with their narratives.
- **It's about specific needs.** As somebody said: "I had the need to speak to a counsellor about my feelings of anxiety and depression, to try to find meaning, solutions and to heal. It was important to find a spiritual counsellor because my faith is an important aspect in the healing process."
- **It's about inner healing.** Elderly people and people living with dementia as well as people with poor health having a need for peace. The challenge to give forgiveness, being forgiven by God, others, and yourself.
- **It's about listening.** They feel that they are being listened to. In counselling and especially narrative therapy they have the feeling of being thoroughly listened to.
- **It's about personal connection.** It is about not being a "file" on the shelf.



- **It's about the questions they ask and the answers they are looking for:** e.g. Why am I bipolar? Why did my people die? Why am I alone? Where do my people go after death?
- **It's about being spiritual.** It lies in the connection with spiritual people.
- **It's about acceptance.** Whatever has happened, they feel accepted.
- **It's about the immediate problem or challenge.** People want a solution and are not always ready to go back to the roots of a problem in a clinical situation.
- **It's about time spent and money paid.** Funds for psychiatric hospitals, visits to doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists and medication run out very fast. People are also afraid of the use of medication and being judged by families and friends who say they must just pull themselves together, pray, believe and everything will be okay. Stigmatization is a reality.
- **It's available and sometimes for free.** Churches and congregations often have trained counsellors and spiritual leaders available and also have groups available where people can link in. Especially in small towns and villages, there's an availability for marriage counselling, personal- and interpersonal challenges as well community- and individual traumatic events.
- **It's about faith, hope and love.** To overcome, we need hope and hope lies in our faith in Jesus Christ who is present in our iniquities through his everlasting love and acceptance. Christian- and spiritual counsellors personify it.

Conclusion

There are many more reasons for people to seek counselling with a Christian and Spiritual counsellor. As the community and circumstances in everyday life intensify, people need love, hope, acceptance, being healed and being heard. It's a blessing to receive the calling and a huge God-given responsibility. ■

Dr Arnold Smith is Pastoral Counsellor with his own business, registered at CPSC and ACRP. PhD (Pastoral) North-West University. Research associate at UP at Systematic and Historical Theology with Prof. Johan van der Merwe, gathering oral stories of hope. He regularly preaches in different congregations.



Breaking Through Truths: When the Desert Blooms

By Charmaine L. Daniels

A true story

Charmaine L. Daniels, Tshienda Publications, 2021, 208 pages.

Where do I start? This is the thought that comes to my mind over and over again. Then underlying emotions grip my heart: what are people going to say. Fear, shame, rejection, unworthiness, low-self-esteem, and you name it. These are all the emotions that started to surface, which took me back to my desert days.

I thought, no! I cannot let the world know this. How are they going to look at me, what are they going to say? Is this book not going to cause me to relive the experience of my desert in a more intensive and painful way as previously? Except this time around, it will be through the judgmental eyes of the world, whispering: "Can any good thing come from a desert?" or "Is she really done with all these horrible things?"

The fear I experienced, I had to admit, was also my attempt to fight evidence about reality, but the truth is that we all have our own personal reality. My experience I learned, lead to my reality, and your experience would lead you to yours. It is then that my own conviction convinces me that it is not about me, maybe there is someone out there that needs to hear my story.

Maybe there is someone out there, thinking that they are too destructive to make a change, even in their nothingness. I realise that if I am not going to write my story and expose it to the world, someone out there, can die in their desert, thinking that change is impossible. And this, just here, was enough to convince me to go ahead and help those who are living in the hell of "I am not good enough".

Natural resources provided by nature are not conveniently located, but nature decides, and you are at the mercy of it. **When I refer to a desert, I have this type of desert in mind: A place with no hope and little to survive on. A bleak, forsaken place; a place of little water and grass; a place of sand and heat and drought; a place unfit for people and sheep and cattle.**

It is a case of either live on carrion or become carrion. You survive by instinct and fate, and fate, as I have learned, is man's terms of understanding. Today, being wiser, change fate to destiny. While circumstances may play a



role in one's destiny, it is not fate, but a divine plan by God our Creator to ordain our footsteps.

Breaking Through: Truths of When the Desert blooms was born out of my experiences, taste, and lessons out of my life. I have learned through my desert experiences; that indeed, God is the one who knows the plans He has towards me, as Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord..."

Where did this flower start to bloom? There were many dark places - personally, emotionally, psychologically, socially, each having a desert experience of its own.

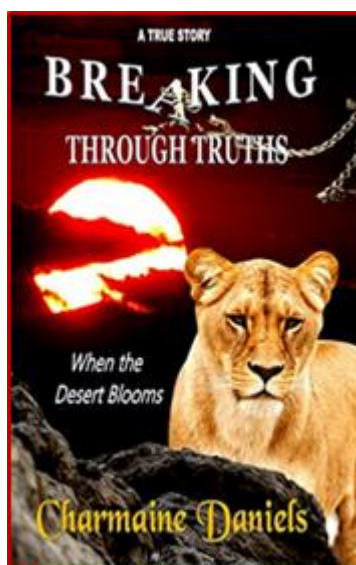
The intention of this book is to awake, to assist, to guide those who may not know how to survive their desert, and my motivation is my personal experiences. I had no person to assist me, no one to guide me. I was on my own to fight and to get meaning in my life. I trust that this book will also enlighten people that they are not alone out

there. Many people find themselves in dark places, many are in a bottomless pit, but the question is, how did some survive?

And how did I survive? It was something inside of me, a deep yearning to get out of my situation. It was unknown to me at the time. No one to help me, the sun was dry, it was a bleak place – it was about survival, and the natural instinct to survive, and I had to do something to break through in the desert. It is then that I realised that the most important and powerful work one can do if you want to improve your self-esteem, is to heal the wounds, and activating self-love and internal power.

In this journey, I attempt to assist you to dissolve your fears so that you can stand in love and in power and go for what you want. By expressing your nature in its unique way, which really just wants to shine in the world. Unadulterated and joyful, just like a baby. I pray that this book will help you to not second-guess yourself, but that it will dissolve your fears, and shame, rejection, and failures, so that you come into love and power to return to your original Self-Esteem.

Finally, this book is birthed not because of what I want, but what God wants. He is my inspiration as well as the author and finisher of my faith. He is the one who can make an impact to bring a change in people's life. We all know either frequently or occasionally the strange feelings and bizarre behaviours to our miseries.



In Breaking Through Truths, I am sharing my own stories to help you identify and process these feelings so you can live the life God has planned for you since the beginning. ■

Charmaine served in the South African Police Service for 28 years with the latter years as Police Captain. In 2012 she started studying for a Bachelor's in Ministry. She did a 6-month focused internship program in the

USA, New Jersey, where she also launched a Women's Ministry.

Charmaine has completed in-depth Missionary training; she furthered her studies in Advanced Clinical Pastoral Counselling through the University of Pretoria and in 2021 established a church "Vineyard of God Ministries". Her desire is to please God, to be where God is working, to be open to God's leading, and to strive to make God the orchestrator of her life and to walk in His vineyard.

Power in response

By Dr Heinrich Lottering

There is an awesome power we all carry around within us – the power to respond to life experiences with a positive and hopeful faith-based strength!

The majority of therapists have had an experience as related below.

During the course of the same day two different clients will attend their therapy sessions. The first client is going through mild emotional challenges (objectively spoken), yet the client will be devastated emotionally and experiencing complete hopelessness and despair.

The second client's life would be in complete upheaval and in chaos, yet to one's utter surprise - although traumatised and very hurt, the client is resourcefully hopeful and, against all odds, resiliently positive that life will become better.

What makes this incredible difference? Simply the choice each client makes to either respond positively hopeful or miserably negative!!

The key in living with a positive-response worldview is the habit of approaching and analysing every experience in a responsible and positive light.

This client's mindset is reflected in "What can I learn from this?" and "How can I grow through this?" and "Being on the road of life in relationship with God, how can He use this to my benefit?"

Rom 8:28 "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose."

Let us look at the steps of cultivating a positive life response habit:

STEP ONE: Be alert and conscious of negative thoughts and reactions

So many individuals that live in a pessimistic and negative mindset, flowing forth in discontent and chronic misery, are completely ignorant of the fact that their reference



framework is steeped in hopelessness. Always seeing the glass as half empty is so entrenched in their subconscious that even when opportunities and blessings enter their lives, they purposefully look for the potential complications and negative end-result.

Hence step one is to teach the client to become aware of the dark and melancholic nature of their way of thinking, immediately picking up an unwarranted defeatist and gloom-ridden attitude. Long-term negativity not only robs the individual of joy and contentment, it also causes

anxiety, depression and high blood pressure. Some scholars believe that a pessimistic mindset also contributes to inflammation, irritable bowel syndrome and degenerative neurological conditions.

STEP TWO: Introspection and analysis

Going deeper and becoming even more effective in abrogating the constant negativity is to **do introspection and dissect the cause and motivation for the constant stream of pessimistic thoughts and attitude.** Only in understanding and identifying the cause of illness can an effective antidote be taken. The same with a dejected attitude, comprehending the causes and methodology of the long-standing gloomy thought pattern and response.

STEP THREE: Turn it around in self-counselling

As it is very unlikely for most clients to have daily counselling sessions, it is very advantageous to acquire the ability and skill to address unwanted emotions that arise with inner argument and debate. **I refer to it as self-counselling.** Instead of simply succumbing to waves of negative emotions, it can be very effective to oppose it with logical facts and reasons to oppose the gloom and rationally replace it by inner discussion with hope filled alternatives in faith.



STEP FOUR: Implement the positivity in thoughts into words

Once a client has mastered the ability to halt the engulfing negative emotional surge, debate and argue it down by logical facts and hopeful plans – it becomes more concrete when one speaks it. There is undoubtedly much more power in words spoken than mere thoughts.

Hence, **coming into the habit of verbalising one's new hope and motivation out loud to yourself but also those around you, will reinforce the genuineness and resolve of the positive mindset.**

Proverbs 12:14a *"A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth."*

STEP FIVE: Act on the positive mindset

Now the key is to **follow through in actions**. If the client was able to change his thought pattern, speak positivity over his/her life and future, it is crucial to then act and live this positive attitude by:

- Eating healthily
- Getting enough sleep
- Exercising regularly
- Keeping company with edifying and positively focussed friends
- Finding humour in life
- Doing at least one meaningful and helpful act every day

STEP SIX: Be thankful

Gratitude is one of the most powerful and uplifting emotions a person can experience. It is very beneficial to regularly reflect on recent positive aspects and experiences and be thankful to God for the grace found in it.

Gratitude can best be described as an emotional and cognitive tonic. Acquiring a grateful worldview is a steel armour against destabilising and hurt-filled experiences and emotions.

STEP SEVEN: Share and encourage others to do the same

The final step in locking in the new lifestyle and thought pattern is to share your experience with others and helping them to also apply these positive steps. In the process of instructing and teaching others, the client will fine-tune and perfect his/her own new positive attitude to ensure a positive and hopeful response to life, regardless of what they encounter, rather than being defeatist.

THERE IS POWER IN POSITIVE, FAITHFILLED RESPONSE!!

**"The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude."
(Oprah Winfrey)**

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Dr Lottering is a tertiary trained theologian, ordained minister and pastoral counsellor.

He focuses on relationship counselling and provides his services in Gauteng.

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Why does rejection hurt so much? Part 2

By Pastor Gawie J le Roux, CEO PGM Ministry Foundation and CPSC associate

The first article defined the hurt experienced from rejection, that affects everyone differently, causing emotional turmoil. This second part addresses the healing from the emotional turmoil.

Scripture reveals the importance for inner healing:

1 Cor 12:5-11 and especially v. 9: *"...to another faith by the same spirit, to another gift of healing by the same spirit..."*

Jeremiah 30:17: *"But I restore you to health and heal your wounds, declare the Lord..."*

What is inner healing

Many of us have been hurt emotionally and many of us are still suffering due to the trauma associated with the



emotional damage. Many developed chronic illnesses like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other illnesses caused by not dealing with past traumatic events.

A person subjected to a traumatic event responds by either fight, flight or freezing. The person has no control on how the brain will respond to the trauma event.

People may be struggling with the following:

- Divorce of parents
- Loss of loved ones
- Fear for the unknown
- Defective belief systems

The purpose of inner healing is:

- To restore happiness

**IT
HURTS
BECAUSE
IT
MATTERED.**

- To rediscover your power and dynamism
- To become your loveable self again.

When to get help

The inner healing (or emotional healing) ministry is guided by the Holy Spirit.

Some people delay their healing because of the fear for the unknown or experiencing harmful practices.

Counselling is typically considered when any of the following symptoms become unbearable:

- Feeling that you have lost control of your life
- Always feeling lonely
- Constantly being in the “fight or flight” mode
- Sleeplessness
- Weak self-image
- Constant arguments or disagreements between couples
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling empty, depressed, insecure, or jealous
- Sabotaging your own relationships
- Struggling to understand your own emotions
- Isolating yourself
- Trying to control everything
- Constantly crying
- Being easily angered.

The healing processes

Rejection results from the consequence of sin of other people, with mild to severe consequences in the life of the victim. The person suffering from the consequences of rejection needs to be guided in the importance of forgiveness for their emotional turmoil, as well as the consequences of resisting forgiveness.

Acts 3:19 is clear: *“Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out...”* The Lord wants us to live without sin.

Col. 3:13: *“Bear with others and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another, forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*

Intercessory prayers

The counsellor or pastor should live a committed Christian life, serving the Lord.

The theological innovation of intercessory work and personal prayer is important in the healing of emotional turmoil and rejection. The intercessor working under the guidance of the Holy spirit has an integral part in the healing process.

The Spirit may bring important things to light that the person may have forgotten or is repressing. Many issues can be dealt with by the work of intercessory prayer.

Physical pain and the intense experience of feeling rejected hurt the same.

Intercessors need to deal with the person in need through the following:

- Torment rooms caused by certain behaviour (Psalm 18:43 and Acts 10:38).
- Inherited spirits and bloodline curses (Galatians 6:8 and Romans 5:12).

- Sins caused by humans: *“Because of your wrath there is no health in my body, there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. My gut has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.”* (Psalm 38:3-4).

Inherited (or original) sin refers to the impact on a person of someone else’s sin, sometimes from within the person’s family. Inherited sin should be traced back to the original source.

Sin affects your whole life, including your relationship with the Lord. Sin is always destructive, but repentance is always constructive.

When we allow, through the Holy Spirit, the work that Jesus has completed to work in our lives, we will experience healing in a way we never thought possible.

Tormenting spirits

“...and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” (Acts 10:38)

“You have delivered me from the attacks of the people; you have made me the head of the nations; people I did not know me are subjected to me.” (Psalm 18:43)

Tormenting spirits often target Christians, attempting to vex and annoy them by tormenting their minds with negative thoughts and words that can have various consequences on a person’s overall well-being.

They can cause distress, disorientation, and lead to negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, and a lowered sense of well-being.

We have the guidance of the Holy Spirit to combat evil spirits. The more time you spend with God, meditating on His Word and accepting his strategies in your life, the more you will experience the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of inner healing is to restore happiness, to rediscover your power and dynamism and to become your loveable self again.

Praying in the name of Jesus and practicing Godly principles will help you live a Christian life. Effective prayers help us to overcome the negative effects of tormenting spirits and how they are affecting us.

The gifts of the Holy spirit and fellow Christians praying for us help us to overcome and stand up against the negative consequences caused by evil spirits.

We need to understand that these spiritual struggles are a natural part of our lives. We are, however, equipped to deal with abnormal spiritual attacks, to have peace and to regain a sense of well-being.

Inherited sins – bloodline curses

Galatians 6:8 *“A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”*

Romans 5:12 *“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all men, because all sinned.”*

Ancestral sins

Genesis 3:6-7 *“...when the women saw that the fruit of the tree are good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were open and they realised that they are naked; so, they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”*

Original sins, or ancestral sins, in a Christian view, come from the time where Adam and Eve had sinned in the Garden of Eden. The consequence is that we are born with a sinful nature. On the other hand, actual sin is when we actively sin from the day we are born.

Bloodline (generational) curses

The concept is that someone in an earlier generation had sinned and failed to ask God for forgiveness. When that person dies, that sin becomes a generational sin which is then passed through future generations.

As an example, your grandfather was addicted to pornography, but had never confessed that he had sinned, and

it passed on to the new generations following him. These generational sins include physical and spiritual attributes as a consequence of sinful behaviour.

Conclusion

Many of us have been subjected to emotional turmoil following rejection. To affect the inner healing process, the pastor, counsellor, or intercessor needs to evaluate, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to what extent the client's life and well-being has been influenced by the aforementioned sins.

Proper preparation of the client is key to a successful inner healing process. The rejection that a client experiences can have many different causes in the person's past. The healing process must focus on the real cause in order to be effective. ■

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When your treasure is under pressure

By Leon Van Assenderp

As we enter the final quarter of the year, we feel increasing pressure. As the final months of 2023 are ticking by, the Russia-Ukraine war, and now also the Israel-Hamas war, are adding pressure to our daily life.

Human suffering, political opinions, military statements, unfair treatment of the human race by the human race, is splashed all over the media. In fact, we cannot escape seeing these atrocities as we are reminded of via radio, TV, newspapers and social media.

Following the stresses of the Covid-19 pandemic and being restricted to home, were general shortages and

supply line problems, runaway inflation rates and now very high interest rates.



Our situation in South Africa regarding service delivery, interest rates, political statements, issues in water and electricity supply, poverty, suffering, etc. only adds to the pressure.

Personal challenges, like family relational problems, illness, the death of a loved one, negative situations with neighbours, finances, etc. only contribute to the year-end stress.

Work space challenges? No need to elaborate on this topic! As we as counsellors guide people through the racecourse called life, we now need indemnity insurance to cover us...

Our treasure is truly under pressure.

What is our treasure?

Well, I see the fruit of the Spirit as per the scripture in Galatians 5:22 & 23 as one part of our treasure. *“Love, joy, peace, forbearance, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”*.



The second part of our treasure is the armour of God as per Ephesians 6:11-13: *"Put on the whole armour of God..."*

As we treasure these spiritual truths and as we practise it as a way of life, the Hebrew greeting of "Shalom" becomes a reality in our lives.

I might be preaching to the converted, but we all experience a level of stress, anxiety, even rejection in our personal and professional lives.

I have found that the only way to remain relevant in my community of clients, friends and family is to deliberately protect my treasure against life's pressure.

We in ACRP and CPSC are a special community – let's tend to the flock, caring for each other and run the race that is set before us.

Please, allow yourself to take care of yourself.

Blessings

Leon van Assenderp

Leon lives on the Kwazulu-Natal South Coast.

He is involved in urban and rural mission work on the coastal area, currently equipping 22 rural church leaders, ministering to, and counselling people in need.

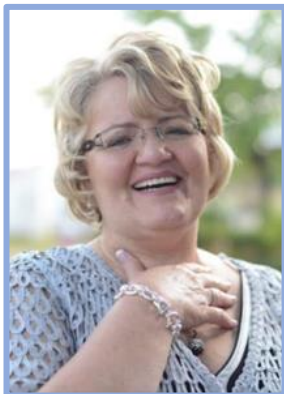
Leon and his wife, Berdine, are also involved with children's outreach work - currently around 200 children.

Notes from the Admin Office

Dear CPSC Affiliate

It is such a pleasure to introduce you to the 3rd member of the CPSC Musketeers!

Mrs Maria Jansen has been an invaluable part of the CPSC administrative and financial offices for a couple of years, but she has always done her work in the shadows. It is wonderful to finally introduce her as a full-fledged member of our team!



Maria Jansen has in the past assisted us with many of the administrative and financial duties. She has also been very involved with the ACRP and CPSC conferences. She has proven herself an invaluable asset to both CPSC and ACRP.

Her position within ACRP and CPSC has now been formalised as a permanent ACRP position. As of the 1st of October 2023, Maria's official title is that of **CPD Solutions and Databases Administrator**. She will also continue to be responsible for the administrative duties within CPSC and ACRP as performed before.

Maria and her Simon have been married for 42 years and have been blessed with 3 sons – Simon Jr., Christo, and Eugene. The couple have since also been blessed with 3 amazing daughters-



in-law whom they absolutely adore. The children have produced 3 grandsons and 3 granddaughters! The offspring are all living abroad, and the Jansen elders miss them terribly!

Maria has many years of experience in administration, finances, accounts, and taxes. Whenever she gets a chance for herself, she loves gardening, needlework, and creating home-made items.

She is also one of the warmest and kindest individuals you will ever meet. We are truly blessed to have her as a formal addition to the ACRP family!

Happiness

200 people attended a seminar on mental and physical health:

During the seminar, a presenter gave each attendee a balloon. He told the attendees to inflate the balloon and to write their name on it. The inflated balloons were then collected and moved into a small room.

The seminar attendees were instructed: *"All of you now need to enter the small room. You have two minutes to find your own balloon."*

Chaos ensued!

People were searching frantically for their balloons, pushing, and shoving each other while grabbing balloons and tossing them aside.

The presenter instructed the participants to pick up any balloon, look at the name, and return it to its owner. Within minutes, everyone had been reunited with their own original balloon.

The speaker then told the group: *"This is what it's like when people are frantically searching for their own happiness in life. People push others aside to get the things they believe*



will bring them happiness. However, our happiness actually lies in helping other people and working together as a community.”

The act of helping others brings happiness because it gives us a sense of purpose. You will get your personal dose of happiness if you help other people find theirs.

A study conducted at the London School of Economics found that the more you help other people, the happier you will be. The researchers compared the variance in happiness levels of people who don't help others on a regular basis to the happiness of those who were weekly volunteers. They found that the volunteers had the same variance in happiness as those who make \$75,000–\$100,000 annually vs \$20,000.⁴

Helping others brings us happiness for three reasons:

► **Diversion**

When you worry less about your own needs – in this case, finding your own balloon – the stress of that hunt decreases. Taking your focus away from the fact that you can't find your own balloon lets you divert your attention away from your own problems.

The feeling of compassion replaces the feeling of need.

► **Perspective**

Having concern for other people helps us to remember that we are all facing similar problems in life – no matter what the individual severity of the issue is.

Sometimes, when we are too focused on our own issues, they get put into perspective when we encounter the true suffering of others (for example, bereavement or a severe disability).⁵ It's easy to then realize the excess amount of attention we've been giving our own problems.

Having compassion helps us put our problems into perspective.

► **Connection**

Connecting with others by helping them can bring happiness into your life. Humans are social beings that need to have positive connections with other people in order to be happy.⁶

Connecting with other people enriches our lives and gives us a sense of fulfilment.

► **Finale**

It is difficult to believe that another year has already passed and that I am writing my third Christmas message to you!

It is such an honour working for an association such as ACRP and a council like CPSC. I am blessed to work with remarkable leaders and my colleagues are beloved friends.

It also is a privilege being able to connect to and communicate with all of you. I **have truly found happiness in your fold.**

May you all enjoy a wonderfully blessed Festive Season and may 2024 bring nothing but happiness to your door!

Blessings to you and yours
Ilse ■



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⁴ <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-living/volunteering-and-its-surprising-benefits.htm>
⁵ <https://www.developgoodhabits.com/famous-people-disabilities>

disabilities
⁶ <https://www.developgoodhabits.com/random-acts-of-kindness-ideas>

Notes from the Finance Office

Dear CPSC Affiliate

Thank you to you for yet another year during which you helped me to keep my light shining. This brings me to the word light, which is such a powerful word.

We attended an evening Christmas song service a few years ago and the auditorium was darkened at the end of the service. Each of us had an unlit candle in hand in the darkness, but an unlit candle didn't mean anything in the overwhelming darkness. The minister then lit her candle and a single small flame started flickering.

She invited a few people to light their candles using her burning candle and to then light someone else's candle as well. Everyone with a burning candle had to share the light with another parishioner. Imagine how this looked, we literally saw the darkness disappearing as light overtook the darkness. The whole auditorium was lit within a very short time, and we could experience that the most powerful darkness can't exist where there is light.

The miracle of light is that the smallest light cannot be engulfed by the biggest darkness imaginable. One single light brings a 100% change where it shines in darkness, but all the darkness in the world can't stop that one single light from shining.



Being a shining light bears testimony to Jesus' words "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life".

God wants to use us in small and humble ways, to bring a little light to someone's darkness and this is exactly what you as pastoral counsellors do every day.

The message of light and what light can do was emphasised in October when my husband and I attended the Matric service at our Alma Mater in Pietermaritzburg. When we attended the Grade 7 service in Bronkhorstspuit in November, this was also the message.

I want to wish you all the best for 2024. We know that He will keep us in His loving hand in 2024 and protect us against all evil. We know He will be with us in good times and in bad and will be there to catch us if or when we fall.

He will always be the guiding light in front of us to lead the way. I pray to God in the name of Jesus to let his eternal light shine through us. May we all experience His mercy and grace and walk into 2024 with our hands held firmly in His.

Best wishes and Christmas blessings!
Anita

