



# CPSC Notes

COUNCIL FOR PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL COUNSELLORS

No 34 – November 2025

## ***Ethical Leadership and Conduct in Ministry and Counselling***

Dear Affiliates,

*“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful”* (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

**I**n these days that we find ourselves in, we need to be reminded that the Church is called, not only to proclaim the truth of the Gospel, but also to reflect integrity, compassion, and righteousness in every sphere of life. In a world plagued by increasing moral ambiguity, social pressures, spiritual and moral decadence, the church and those who are called to serve as pastors, counsellors, and ministry workers often face public scrutiny as they stand as both spiritual guides and ethical beacons in a world that desperately needs trustworthy leadership and guidance.

Ethics, although a subject that is hardly appealing to be at the centre of our daily business of the church, it is at its heart, a reflection of the character of Christ within us. **Ethics govern how we relate to others, how we serve, and how we handle the sacred trust placed upon us by God and His people.** Another Scripture reminds us that *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men”* (Colossians 3:23). This scripture covers the essence of Christian ethics in that we are accountable not merely to human institutions or people that we interact with but ultimately to God, who sees and judges the intentions of the heart.

The Church is meant to be a place of refuge, healing, and truth. The Church is meant to be the first place that the hurting, oppressed, troubled and dejected of this world should run to for help. Yet it can only remain so if its leaders act ethically with humility, honesty, and accountability. Ethical lapses, whether in financial management, leadership decisions, or interpersonal relationships, can deeply wound the Body of Christ and undermine the credibility of our witness.

Pastors and church leaders must therefore model integrity in all aspects of ministry. This means being transparent in handling church resources, respecting confidentiali-



ality, upholding sexual purity, and avoiding conflicts of interest. Leadership is not about status or control; it is about service. Jesus reminded His disciples, *“The greatest among you will be your servant”* (Matthew 23:11). Servant leadership is the foundation of ethical ministry that requires selflessness, compassion, and a commitment to righteousness even when no one is watching.

**For pastoral and Christian counsellors, the call to ethical practice is even more**

**profound. Counselling is sacred work;** it involves entering into the private and often painful spaces of people’s lives. The Christian counsellor is entrusted with sensitive information, raw emotions, and deep vulnerabilities. It is therefore essential that every counsellor upholds strict boundaries, confidentiality, and respect for human dignity.

Ethical counselling is not about personal power or authority; it is about facilitating healing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Counsellors must avoid dual relationships that could blur professional boundaries, refrain from exploiting the trust of counselees, and ensure that their advice and interventions align with both biblical truth and psychological soundness.

Furthermore, Pastoral and Christian counsellors should pursue continuous personal and spiritual growth recognizing that ethical maturity, just like spiritual maturity, is not a once-off achievement, but a lifelong process in which all of us continue to *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”* (Philippians 2:12). In this context, **self-reflection, supervision, and accountability are vital safeguards against burnout, pride, or moral compromise that may constitute unethical practice and defeat the duty of care and prevention of harm that we are called for.**

As ministers and representatives of Christ, we are also called to demonstrate ethical living beyond the church walls. I always maintain that the true test of discipleship is not when we gather on Sundays in our respective congregations but when the doors and we venture into the world, mindful of what the Apostle Paul hinted when he

addressed Timothy, saying *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come”* (2 Timothy 3:1).

It is in these perilous times that are characterised by corruption, hypocrisy, apostasy, deception and spiritual instability that we are called to ethical and responsible conduct. The world is watching how Christians conduct themselves in business, community engagements, and public service.

When ministers, pastors, counsellors and the church act with integrity in society and in the marketplace, they reflect the transforming power of the Gospel in real and tangible ways. When we live and practice ethics, we are acting in Christ-likeness, bearers of the cross, displaying the goodness of God to those who come in our spaces as the apostle Peter urges us as believers to *“having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”* (1 Peter 2:12).

Ethical conduct in public life is not about perfection but about consistency of living in a way that brings honour to Christ even when faced with difficult choices or pressures.

True ethical conduct flows from a heart that is surrendered to God. It is not merely a code of rules or professional guidelines as ministry practitioners, but it must be

embedded from the fact that we see ourselves as the disciples of Christ, those whom He has called and mandated to a service. Ethical conduct is to us a reflection of our relationship with Christ.

The Holy Spirit convicts us, guides us, and empowers us to act justly and walk humbly with our God. In every counselling session, sermon, or act of service in the church or our communities, our motivation must be love, the love for God and love for His people. **When the love for God and love for the people governs our actions and practices, ethics becomes more than duty; it becomes a spiritual act of worship.**

This is an encouragement to uphold and return to the heart of ethical ministry. Let us recommit ourselves to living and serving with purity of heart, clarity of purpose, and steadfast integrity. Let us hold one another accountable in grace and truth, remembering that our ultimate audience is God Himself. As pastoral and Christian counsellors, we carry the sacred responsibility of being channels of healing and hope. May we therefore conduct ourselves in ways that are worthy of this high calling. I pray that the Lord may strengthen us to serve ethically, minister faithfully, act justly, and reflect His holiness in all that we do within the church, in counselling, and in society. ■

– Dr Jack Mashiapata, CPSC Chairperson

## **Christmas Message 2025: Counsellors of Hope**

Dear Affiliates,

**Isaiah 9:6 — “And His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”**

As we celebrate Christmas in 2025, the world around us still bears the marks of uncertainty, conflict, and emotional exhaustion. In South Africa, many continue to wrestle with social unrest, economic struggle, and the invisible wounds of trauma. Amid this reality, the calling of the Christian counsellor shines ever more brightly.

Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming Messiah reminds us that Jesus Himself came as the Wonderful Counsellor. In Him we find the perfect model of empathy, wisdom, and truth. His ministry was not detached or theoretical – He walked among the broken, touched the unclean, and restored the outcast. The “Wonderful Counsellor” did not only speak comfort; He embodied it.

For every Christian counsellor, this season renews our identity: we are not merely professionals offering Biblical insight, but spiritual companions pointing people to the



One who heals the soul. As you sit with those burdened by despair, grief, or fear, remember that you are continuing the ministry of Christ Himself – a ministry of incarnation and compassion.

This Christmas, let us draw fresh strength from the Counsellor who understands us completely. Let His peace dwell within you as you extend it to others. May your listening become a vessel of grace, your words a channel of wisdom, and your presence a quiet reflection of Emmanuel – God with us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Wonderful Counsellor, renew our hearts this Christmas. May Your peace rule our words and actions as we comfort the weary and guide the broken. Use us as instruments of Your love in South Africa and beyond. Amen.

Blessed Christmas to every Christian counsellor – bearers of light, compassion, and hope in a hurting world.

Dr Gerhard Botha  
CEO: ACRP

## The newly elected CPSC Executive

### Dr Jack Mashiapata

- CPSC Chairperson
- Convener: CPSC CPD Evaluation Committee



### Dr Michiel van der Merwe

- Co-convener: CPSC Ethics & Disciplinary Committee



### Prof Elijah Baloyi

- CPSC Vice-Chairperson
- Convener: CPSC Publications Committee



### Dr Yolinda Steyn

- Co-convener: CPSC CPD Evaluation Committee



### Dr Nadine Dunn

- CPSC Standing Member
- Convener: CPSC Conference Committee



### Dr Retha Kruidenier



### Dr Tertius Erasmus

- Convener: CPSC Evaluation & Registration Committee
- Convener: CPSC Financial Committee
- Convener: CPSC Supervision Committee



### Dr Siphon Mahlangu



### Mrs Karen Tewson

- Convener: CPSC Ethics & Disciplinary Committee



### Dr Mercy Manyema



# Impact of abuse on faith and perspectives of God: A theology of trauma

By Mthunzi Pani, a CPSC affiliate

**M**thunzi Pani presented at the 2025 CPSC Conference on 4 September 2025.

## Introduction

**Abuse incidence of different kinds make headlines in the media.** The South African Police Services' (SAPS) quarterly crime statistics often paint a grim picture where physical and sexual abuse against women and children are concerned. More than 9 057 counts of rape were recorded in the 3rd quarter of 2024/25 (SAPS, 2025). Abuse is not only painful when it occurs leaving its survivors wounded, but it also has lasting effects. Abuse survivors sometimes turn to religious communities for support. Some reach out to pastoral and spiritual counsellors for care and counselling. It is therefore important for faith communities to understand the spiritual impact of abuse and for their support and counsel to also speak to the impacted faith and perspectives of God.

## Impact of abuse

When abuse occurs, its impact can be short term and long term, it can also be multifaceted. Abuse occurrence can adversely influence the survivors' physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing.

## How abuse can impact faith and spirituality

Abuse it can challenge and contradict the survivors' religious views, values and beliefs. Such theological convictions happen over time and are shaped by:

- Narratives about God that are promulgated during religious gatherings
- The Scriptures or Bible
- The traditions of faith, and the rituals and practices of the church
- Lived experiences
- Media and interaction with the society

## Embedded and deliberative

According to Sheib (2016), *"our understanding of how a person's or community's life relates to God is reflected in embedded theology. This embedded theology shapes our theological narratives and influences our religious and spiritual practices. It informs our moral decisions and interactions, such as loving adversaries, as we*

*embody this religious narrative in daily life, learned through church teachings and activities like hymn singing"*. Embedded theology refers to beliefs and values instilled in childhood. They are often unconscious and unresearched.



Embedded theology is the first order and pre-critical expression of religion. It can surface under stress when it is challenged and contradicted by experience.

Deliberative theology is the "second order" of theological reflection.

- Deliberative theology is the process of examining the embedded theology.

- It is applied when we question beliefs (embedded theology) that we have taken for granted.

- When experience contradicts embedded theology, deliberative theology is activated.

## Abuse trauma and spiritual views

When someone experiences abuse, embedded theology comes on the surface. Survivors tend to question their embedded theology, their spiritual views. Their values and beliefs are sometimes thrown into whirlwind of confusion, with some survivors walking away from the faith.

"Traumatic events can be likened to **earthquakes** that sometimes open up crevasses deep down into those core beliefs, values, and ways of coping that formed us as children." (Doehring 2018).

## Contested God's attributes during the trauma

- God's presence – for a survivor who has always believed that God is omnipresent,
- God's might,
- God's protection,
- God's love,
- God's justness,
- God's fatherhood,
- God's answers to prayer, and
- God's word.

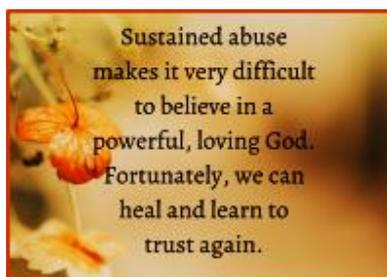
Abuse survivors whose embedded belief is that God is omnipresent, He is a God of justice, He is a loving, protective, and a faithful father, can struggle to reconcile these attributes with their experi-

ence of the pain of abuse.

## Meaning making

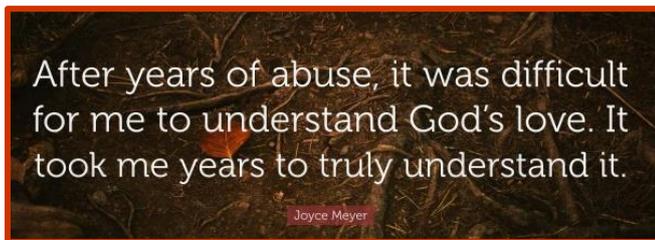
Meaning making is about making sense of our experiences.

- Meaning is derived from the attributions and the interpretations of daily events.
- Stressful events are not inherently stressful or traumatic in themselves (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).
- The impact of events is largely determined by the meanings we assign to them, either immediately or over time.



## Meaning making and faith

- Abuse survivors can make sense of their painful experiences, through the lenses of their entrenched beliefs and religious views.
- Their meaning making can be derived from the contestation of God's attributes.
- They can attribute their abuse to God's abandonment or divine punishment. Research shows that such attribution tend to bring worse psychological effects on survivors of traumatic experiences.



## Religious risks for distress

There are religious practices and experiences from the faith communities that can contribute to the distress of abuse survivors. They include:

- Rejection and judgment from the faith community.
- Praying for forgiveness for having caused the abuse. Some survivors blame themselves for the abuse. They can blame themselves for being where the abuse occurred or their appearance which is presumed to have "invited" the abuse incident.
- Faith gatherings where forgiveness is encouraged. Abuse survivors can sometimes associate the forgiveness of perpetrators with withdrawing the pursuit of justice and the to take its course
- There are occasions where harmful or "trauma insensitive" pronouncements and/or languaging can occur during faith gatherings. Sometimes faith practitioners can make use of harsh or contemptuous words, misapplying scripture to minimise abuse.

## What is trauma theology

Trauma theology does not focus on constructing theodicies or theological explanations for why people experience evil or trauma (O'Donnell, 2025). Trauma theology acknowledges that theodical explanations are insufficient for trauma survivors. Trauma theology is concerned with a mystery-centered understanding of God, focusing on theological truths that are meaningful to trauma survivors. Trauma theology emphasizes that God is ultimately beyond incomprehensible.

**When they believe that Jesus can relate to them, abuse survivors may find solace in the thought that Jesus was betrayed, mistreated, and felt abandoned by God.**

## Theological reorientation

There are ways that abuse survivors can reorient their perspectives of God following the contradiction of their embedded theology to their abuse experience. They include:

- The idea that God remains within the trauma experience such as abuse can be very meaningful.
- A loving faith community can be an indication and expression of God's love for the abuse survivors.
- The church community can foster safe and trustworthy relationships, helping individuals who have experienced abuse to regain or regain a deeper connection with God.
- When they believe that Jesus can relate to them, abuse survivors may find solace in the thought that Jesus was betrayed, mistreated, and felt abandoned by God.
- Adopting faith in a loving and just God can help abuse survivors maintain their belief in a just world by providing them with a confidant and supportive partner.
- Another helpful idea is that God's love for justice stems from his love for those who are abused, and those who are impacted by abuse must understand that the abuser will be held accountable.

## Conclusion

**Pastoral care theologians from trauma theory emphasize accompaniment, truth telling and wound tending, focusing on relational journeys rather than simplistic proclamations of God's victory over suffering.**

## References

- Doehring, C., 2019. Searching for wholeness amidst traumatic grief: The role of spiritual practices that reveal compassion in embodied, relational, and transcendent ways. *Pastoral Psychology*, 68(3), pp.241-259.
- Lazarus, R.S. and Folkman, S., 1984. *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer publishing company.
- O'Donnell, K., 2025. Trauma Theology. *Modern Believing*, 66(2), 94-102.
- Scheib, K.D., 2016. *Pastoral care: Telling the stories of our lives*. Abingdon Press.

## BIOGRAPHY

Mthunzi was born and raised in Tembisa (Gauteng Province). After a 20-year detour in market research, Mthunzi is currently employed as a pastor of the Trans Orange Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His interest in counselling was inspired by the suffering he experienced and witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

He studied pastoral narrative counselling and graduated from the University of Pretoria in 2021. Mthunzi has a burden to co-facilitate healing from adverse childhood experiences. Accordingly, his University of Pretoria's Master of Theology dissertation investigated and demonstrated how a pastoral counselling approach can be applied to people have experienced childhood emotional neglect.

Mthunzi is married to Lebohang Pani and they have three children. ■

## Ethics and court cases: Supporting the integrity of witness testimony in court proceedings: Therapeutic implications

By Karen Tewson, who presented at the 2025 CPSC Conference on 4 September 2025

**T**he purpose of this article is to stimulate dialogue and provide guidance as to the application of counselling methodologies provided by practitioners with a specific focus on preventing testimony contamination in court proceedings. In addition, it is to encourage practitioners to engage with relevant information to prevent potential contamination of evidence in matters that may go to trial.

Judith Louis Herman aptly states *“Trauma isolates and destroys the sustaining bonds between individuals and the community. Those who have survived learn that their sense of self, of worth, of humanity, depends on a feeling of connection to others”*.<sup>1</sup>

During the extensive years of working with victims of crime within the Criminal Justice System, assisting adults, adolescents and children during the trial process, I learnt many important lessons. The types of victimisation I engaged with ranged from incest, sexual offences, ukuthwala, child abuse, and domestic violence to murder, mutualisation, kidnapping, human trafficking, armed robbery and farm attacks, amongst others. The development of the National Court Preparation program and Victim Impact Statements achieved this. The National Prosecuting Authority’s Ke Bona Lesedi Program based at courts throughout the country provided by Court Preparation Officials assisted thousands of state witnesses.

According to Herman those who experienced some form of victimisation to one degree or another, cried out for their voice to be heard and for some relief. The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness since they are unspeakable, too terrible to utter aloud. She argues that *“remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.”*<sup>2</sup> Expression of their pain is thus imperative for their healing journey as well as the need to obtain justice.

For justice to be served, the courts need credible and reliable witnesses, the premise being “no witness – no justice”.<sup>3</sup> Memory serves as evidence, thus knowledge of



memory and how it is encoded, integrated (consolidated) and retrieved is important. The various factors which may influence its veracity play a critical role when the court adjudicates evidence.

The practitioner is asked by the client to share their pain and their real fears, such as stigmatisation, shame, guilt and self-blame. However, the person who has experienced such a trauma may be required to make a statement which will be heard in court if the matter goes to trial. With this in mind, practitioners struggle with a credible way both to assist their client and to serve the ends of justice.

### Issues at hand

It became evident that practitioners in the field rightfully respond promptly to a client’s need or presenting problem when called upon to do so. Unfortunately, some counselling methodologies have resulted in the altering of a client’s perception and memory of the event. Accordingly, when the client is required to testify, they relate a different version to their original statement and as a result they are found to be an unreliable witness. This jeopardises the outcome of the case in a court of law.

Exposure to criminal offending, in particular sexual violence, can lead to significant psychological and emotional difficulties, and victims will often be assisted in their recovery by receiving therapy.

receiving therapy.

Practitioners have a critical role in restoring social order, in bringing healing to victims of crime and in the removal of criminal actors from society thus contributing towards a sense of safety in communities. A well-intentioned practitioner may only consider the immediate need of the client in terms of providing crisis intervention and

**Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.**

**South African law emphasizes the importance of evidence integrity, relevance, and reliability. Courts carefully evaluate the admissibility of evidence, considering potential contamination and prejudice.**

<sup>1</sup>Herman, J.L. (1994). Trauma and Recovery. From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror. MD. Harper Collins Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Herman, J.L. (1994). Trauma and Recovery. From Domestic

Abuse to Political Terror. MD. Harper Collins Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Tewson, K.G. et al. 2021. Ke Bona Lesedi Court Preparation Manual. (National Prosecuting Authority). Unpublished.

containment and other therapeutic methodologies, often without consideration of the collateral and consequent events and end result. Normally it takes extensive time for the matter to go to trial and the client needs continuous support.

The practitioner must take cognisance of the fact that every word or suggestion can be leading, coaching or influencing the client's memory and recall. This may result in the client re-framing their perception of the event (s) or the practitioner eliciting recovered memories. Memory credibility has been debated for decades (Howe & Knott<sup>4</sup>) and research findings have been published.

**Ensure therapy is based on scientifically evaluated methodologies.**

The ethical dilemma is: What type of support will the practitioner's client require and at which stage of the criminal justice process should it be provided? The approach for the practitioner is sensitive and needs proper planning to avoid the possibility of interfering with the merits of the case and negatively influencing the court case. Children, like adults, can be influenced by interview session(s), practitioner techniques, questioning, and suggestions, amongst others.

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the aforementioned dilemma and to make informed decisions regarding one's therapeutic approach, the practitioner needs to pay particular attention to the available empirical research and South African legal fundamentals.

***The science of memory is as central to the law as biology is to medicine.***<sup>5</sup>

## South African law and evidence

In South African law, the admissibility of evidence is governed by the Constitution and various statutes, including the Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977. When it comes to suggestibility in therapy before testifying, the law prioritizes the reliability and integrity of evidence.

### 3.1 Key Considerations

- **Contamination of Evidence:** Courts consider the potential for evidence contamination via memory enhancement techniques, suggestive questioning, interviewer bias or false memory, when assessing its reliability and admissibility.

<sup>4</sup> Howe, M. L. and Knott, L. M. (2015). Invited Review: *The fallibility of memory in judicial processes: Lessons from the past and their modern consequences*. *Memory* 2015 Vol 23, No5, 633-656.

<sup>5</sup> Brainerd CJ. *Murder must memorise*. *Memory*. 2013 Jul;21(5):547-555. doi: 10.1080/09658211.2013.791322. Epub 2013 May 3. PMID: 23638648; PMCID: PMC3883810.

- **Unconstitutionally Obtained Evidence:** Section 35(5) of the Constitution excludes evidence obtained through rights violations if its admission would render the trial unfair.
- **Relevance and Admissibility:** Evidence must be relevant and logically connected to the case. Irrelevant or prejudicial evidence may be excluded.

### 3.2 Protecting Evidence Integrity

- **Section 210 of the Criminal Procedure Act:** Evidence must be evaluated based on its probative value and potential prejudice.
- **Courts' Discretion:** Judges and Magistrates have discretion to exclude evidence if its admission would be unfair or prejudicial.

### 3.3. Therapeutic Suggestibility

- While specific legislation on suggestibility in therapy before testifying may not be explicitly stated, courts consider the potential impact of therapeutic interventions on witness testimony and evidence reliability. The focus is on ensuring that evidence presented is reliable, relevant, and not tainted by external influences. Memory is, by definition, fallible at best and unreliable at worst. (Howe & Knott<sup>6</sup>).
- In the context of mental health treatment, suggestibility refers to a client's vulnerability to accepting information provided by a third party as true, regardless of its veracity. This can result in the client providing inaccurate guesses or statements in a verbal or nonverbal manner. Influenced by a range of factors, the client may be convinced that events unfolded differently than they actually did, or that events that never took place actually occurred.

In summary, South African law emphasizes the importance of evidence integrity, relevance, and reliability. Courts carefully evaluate the admissibility of evidence, considering potential contamination and prejudice.

### 3.4. Recovered memories

- Recovered memories are not automatically treated as factual in court—they are considered allegations or evidence that requires corroboration, not facts on their own.
- Research has shown that recovered memories can be influenced by various factors, including suggestion and therapeutic techniques<sup>7</sup>. These are memories of events (often traumatic like abuse) that a person

<sup>6</sup> Howe, M. L. and Knott, L. M. (2015). Invited Review: *The fallibility of memory in judicial processes: Lessons from the past and their modern consequences*. *Memory* 2015 Vol 23, No5, 633-656.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth F. Loftus, 1993 *The reality of repressed memories*. *American Psychologist*, 48, p 518-537. University of Washington.



- Ensure therapy is based on scientific empirically evaluated methodologies and avoid extensive memory recovery work with no supporting evidence.
- Inform clients about the possibility of testimony. Let clients know that their testimony may be impacted by counselling discussions.
- Establish clear boundaries. Unpack the practitioner's role and the purpose of counselling sessions to avoid influencing the client's testimony.

#### 4.1.2. Therapy Approach

- Non-leading questioning should be used as well as open-ended questions to minimize suggestibility. Avoid influencing the client's account of events.
- Avoid detailed discussions and refrain from discussing specific details of the incident.
- Focus on providing emotional support. Emphasize emotional support and coping strategies rather than fact-gathering. The practitioners therapeutic approach post testimony may be re-evaluated utilising peer review or supervision structures.

#### 4.1.3. Evidence Preservation

Document therapy sessions in detail. Keep accurate records of sessions but ensure they are confidential and protected from disclosure to unauthorised parties. Avoid contaminating evidence. See notes on Record Keeping as discussed in paragraph 4.1.6.

#### 4.1.4. Collaboration with Legal or Multidisciplinary Team

Work with relevant professionals. Practitioners should collaborate with legal and mental health experts to understand implications of counselling /therapy and memory on testimony. Develop a joint strategy to minimize potential contamination. Understand that evidence obtained through improper means may be inadmissible in court.

#### 4.1.5. Pitfalls

Avoid the use of closed-ended questions; giving an impression that implies the client is providing the wrong answer; implying that a certain answer is needed or required; misleading questions; misplaced memory enhancement techniques (Discussed in section 3.4 on Recovered Memories) and lack of evidence-based approaches for working with memories. Avoid holding untested controversial views as fully discussed in "Memory in Judicial Processes" by Howe & Knott.

#### 4.1.6. Good practice

**The primary purpose of therapy is healing and not investigative.**

Ask more general questions about an incident; establish routine procedures to better identify clients who are at an increased risk to suggestibility. Be acquainted with the phenomenon of suggestibility. Have an understanding of how memory works. Attend continuous professional development including training related to the detection and screening of suggestibility among clients. Be aware of the various personality, social and cognitive factors that may influence some clients to be suggestible.

It is important to remember that the primary purpose of therapy is healing and not investigative. One of the key principles is that a client's medical needs, health, wellbeing and safety are the first and foremost considerations in establishing critical care interventions. This informs the decision whether to engage in therapy before, during, or after a trial.

## 4.2 Professional standards and guidelines

The practitioner should adhere, *inter alia*, to the following professional standards and guidelines to ensure the best interest of the client as well as enhancing practitioner protection.

### 4.2.1 Transparency

Always be clear about what types of therapy may be right for your client, discuss the implications of each option in detail, allowing you and the client to make an informed decision.

### 4.2.2 Pre-Therapy Agreement

Before therapy begins, take the time to complete a pre-therapy agreement. A written informed consent to therapy should be in concise language. This outlines what the client can expect from therapy and sets clear boundaries and clearly indicate limitations to confidentiality that may affect the relationship so there are no surprises along the way.

*Confidentiality may only be breached in specific circumstances, such as when there is a risk of harm to the client or others, or when required by law (e.g., mandatory reporting of abuse or neglect).<sup>14</sup>*

Agreements are also ongoing and not a once off process and assist especially when minors are a client as well when referral or reporting is required.

### 4.2.3 Consent form

Ensure proformas of various types of consent forms are on hand. The content of informed consent may vary depending upon the client and treatment plan; such as permission for the practitioner to conduct therapy / counselling for a minor from both parents (or legally authorised person) even if they are divorced or separated. Consent forms for referral, inclusion of other team members or other family members should be available or drafted

<sup>14</sup> [https://socialwork.institute/counselling-basics/counselling-](https://socialwork.institute/counselling-basics/counselling-client-records-legal-ethical/)

[client-records-legal-ethical/](https://socialwork.institute/counselling-basics/counselling-client-records-legal-ethical/)

as required. The signed written agreement should include all parties.

#### 4.2.4 Record Keeping

According to the Social Work Institute in the realm of counselling, maintaining thorough and accurate client records is crucial, not only for effective treatment but also for legal and ethical compliance. The Institute affirms that *“These documents serve multiple purposes: they help practitioners track progress, ensure continuity of care, comply with legal requirements, and safeguard both the client and the counsellor. The different categories of client records vary in content and function, but all are crucial for maintaining a high standard of care.”*<sup>15</sup> In addition ensure your client is fully informed about how their records may be used if needed if a case is opened and the matter goes to trial.

With the aforementioned in mind experienced professionals in the field provide their personal insight with the

*depending on how it was recovered, but the circumstances of the evidence, corroborating evidence etc. can play a role to support the recovered evidence”.*<sup>17</sup>

#### 5. Practitioner legal obligations: Failure to report is an offence

In addition, thereto the practitioner must remember there is an obligation to report as outlined in the various pieces of legislation such as the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007 (SORMA) and The Children's Act 38 of 2005.

There are legal provisions which also protect the elderly and those with disabilities. E.g. legal duty to report knowledge that sexual offence has been committed against a child / mentally disabled person (section 54 of SORMAA).

Therefore, the understanding of legal requirements in certain types of cases which the practitioner encounters is important. This includes “Duty of Care”<sup>18</sup>, “Do No Harm” principles and “First Report” requirement amongst others.

While there are obligations on the practitioner there are also rights afforded to the client as a victim. Victims’ rights are articulated in various international and national legislations and policies which are designed to counterbalance the rights of the offender. The Victims’ Charter, is the main source of rights for victims in the Criminal Justice System and dictates the obligations of various service providers.

Victim’s rights are outlined in the Service Charter for Victims

of Crime also known as the Victims Charter, which the South African Government has developed and adopted.<sup>19</sup>

Clients as victims of crime have the right to be treated with fairness, and respect for their dignity and privacy, to offer information, to receive information, to protection from further harm, to assistance, to compensation and to restitution.

**Practitioners working with their clients must navigate complex ethical, legal, and professional obligations to provide effective support and care.**



aim to assist practitioners in their endeavours.

*“The practitioner should focus on emotions and post-traumatic stress before giving evidence, especially with children. They may not recall the event but rather focus on her emotions. Thus, the therapist can say they did not work on events but on emotions.”*<sup>16</sup>

*“The law does allow for witnesses to testify about recovered memories. Memory is not always reliable. In my opinion the court may add less weight however to memory that was recovered by suggestive techniques,*

<sup>15</sup> Social Work Institute: Client Records

<sup>16</sup> Roelien Wiesner (Social Worker)

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous.

<sup>18</sup> Law district legal dictionary: duty of care

<sup>19</sup> The Victims Charter sourced on

<https://www.justice.gov.za/vc/docs/vc/vc-eng.pdf>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, practitioners working with their clients must navigate complex ethical, legal, and professional obligations to provide effective support and care.

By adopting the aforementioned strategies, practitioners can help minimize suggestibility and prevent contamination of evidence in the South African legal system. Information and awareness sharing is an important practice for uniformity in the best interest of clients.

Practitioners are encouraged to utilise already available international and national protocols on interviewing techniques and customise them for their practice where one is not already in use. Sharing of developed practice protocols is encouraged as an advantage for the professional enhancement of this complex field.

This is an extensive subject matter and should be explored in more detail

*Open your mouth for those with no voice, for the cause of all the dispossessed.* (Proverbs 31:8, NIV). Practitioners are encouraged to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. ■

### REFERENCES

*Accessing-therapy-pre-trial* (2024) <https://www.condition-management.co.uk/news/accessing-therapy-pre-trial-hope-for-victims-seeking-therapeutic-support> . Accessed 25 June 2025.

*Admissibility of Evidence in South Law: A Balancing Act.* <https://medium.com/@OnthatileSelebano/admissibility-of-evidence-in-south-african-law-a-balancing-act-e1b8744eaf9f>. accessed 25 June 2025.

Brown, J. 2019. *Client suggestibility: A Beginner's Guide for Mental Health Professionals.* Counselling Today Archive. <https://ctarchive.counseling.org/2019/08/client-suggestibility>

Bruck, M. and Ceci, S. *The Suggestibility of Children's Memory.* February 1999 -Annual Review of Psychology 50(1):419-39.

Crown Prosecution Service. (2022) *Pre-trial-therapy* <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/pre-trial-therapy>. Accessed 25 June 2025.

Herman, J.L. (1994). *Trauma and Recovery. From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror.* MD. Harper Collins Publishers.

Howe, M. L. and Knott, L. M. (2015). *Invited Review: The fallibility of memory in judicial processes: Lessons from the past and their modern consequences.* Memory 2015 Vol 23, No5, 633-656.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09658211.2015.1010709> Published by Taylor& Francis.

<https://criminal-justice.iresearchnet.com/correlates-of-crime/victimization> accessed 25 June 2025.

Legal Brief. *The Suggestibility of Children: Evaluation by Social Scientists* (From the Amicus Brief for the Case of State of New Jersey v. Michaels (1994), Presented by Committee of Concerned Social Scientists)

Milne, R. and Bull, R. (2004). *Investigative Interviewing: Psychology and Practice.* Wiley Publishers.

Peacock, R. (2013) *Victimology in South Africa Second Edition.* Van Schaik publishers.

Robyn M. White, Juan Bornman, Ensa Johnson, Karen Tewson, Joan van Niekerk. African Journal of Disability | Vol 9 | a651 | DOI: *Transformative equality: Court accommodations for South African citizens with severe communication disabilities.*

Ross, A. (2023). *The Effect of False Memories on the Legal System.* Litigator's Handbook of Forensic Medicine, Psychiatry, and Psychology, 2024-2025 ed. Publisher: Thomson West.

SACSSP: *Policy for Course of Conduct, Code of Ethics and the Rules for Social Workers.*

Sorensen, P. and Snow, B. (2000) *How Children Tell: The process of disclosure in sexual abuse.* Journal of the South African Society on the Abuse of Children. Vol 1 No 2 October 2000.

Tewson, K.G. 2021 *Ke Bona Lesedi Court Preparation Manual.* (National Prosecuting Authority). Unpublished.

Today Archive. Client suggestibility: A Beginner's Guide for Mental Health Professionals Counselling.

The Criminal Procedure Act of 1977.

*The Law of Evidence in South Africa 2.* <https://www.scribd.com/doc/125277255/The-Law-of-Evidence-in-South-Africa-2> accessed 26 July 2025.

*The Victims Charter* sourced on <https://www.justice.gov.za/vc/docs/vc/vc-eng.pdf>

Van der Westhuizen, D. (2015) *Assessment of Child Maltreatment Guidelines.* Weskoppies Hospital. Unpublished.

### BIOGRAPHY

Karen Tewson is the founder and director of Kukhanye Consulting Services and previously the Deputy Director Court Preparation of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) as well a qualified OD-ETDP Practitioner, registered nurse, Pastoral Care Practitioner and trauma-informed coach with over 40 years in health, justice, and human development.

man development.

Karen has trained professionals across South Africa and helped shape the national approach to court preparation and victim impact statements for victims of crime. She is a recipient of numerous awards and international recognition for her pioneering work.



## Beyond survival: Toward a healing-informed pastoral counselling praxis in South Africa

By Dr Siphon Mahlangu, University of South Africa. Siphon presented at the 2025 CPSC Conference on 4 September 2025.

**South Africa is a country where suffering and resilience walk side-by-side. Many of our communities carry wounds that are both old and painfully fresh.**

Even thirty years after the democratic transition, the effects of apartheid live on in memory, identity, and the socio-economic inequalities shaping daily life.



**The Bible does not silence pain. The Bible gives pain a voice. A healing-informed pastoral approach does the same.**

Theology must therefore move closer to lived experience; to the places where faith meets fear, and where prayer sounds more like weeping than certainty. When counsellors learn to listen to stories, bodies, and rituals, we begin to recognize that healing is also a sacred conversation.

**Ongoing gender-based violence, unemployment, family fragmentation, crime, and substance abuse form the emotional and spiritual background against which pastoral counsellors serve.**

These wounds are not only psychological. They are theological wounds. They shape how people understand God, themselves, others, and the meaning of life. For many who suffer, faith becomes an ongoing struggle to reconcile the God of love with the reality of pain. The cries of our communities echo the Psalmist:

*“My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’” — Psalm 42:3*

**The calling of pastoral counselling, therefore, is not merely to comfort, advise, or encourage. It is to accompany people as they walk through the valley, to help communities rediscover voice, dignity, hope, and belonging.**

### When trauma becomes a theological crisis

Trauma is not only a psychological wound; it is also a theological disruption. It challenges our sense of meaning, safety, and even our understanding of God. Survivors often ask, “Where was God when this happened?”

The late Prof. Vuyani Vellem described trauma as “a wound in the soul that demands testimony.”

Trauma speaks. It has memory. It revisits. It unsettles sleep and prayer. It interrupts scripture reading. It can even make the presence of God feel dim or distant.

Many believers say softly:  
“I believe — but I am hurting.”  
“I pray — but I feel alone.”

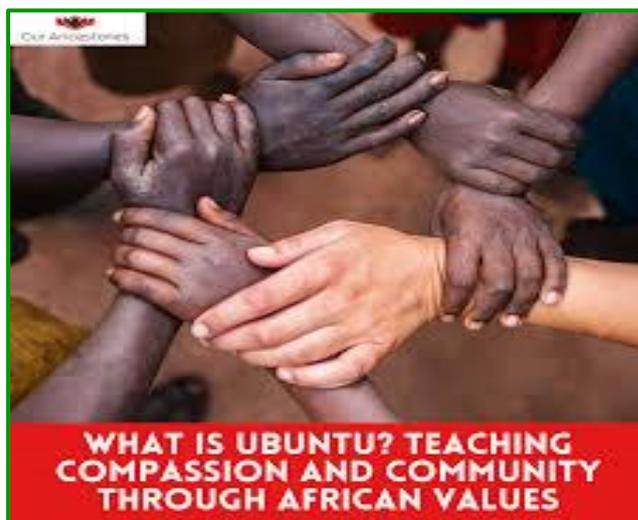
This is not evidence of weak faith. It is faith in struggle, which is deeply biblical:

Job questioned God with raw honesty.

David lamented openly in the Psalms.

Jesus Himself cried out on the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46)

### Ubuntu, memory, and communal healing



African thought has always understood that healing is never an individual project. The “I am because we are” is not only a philosophical statement, but also a theological truth rooted in shared humanity. Wounds are carried not by isolated individuals but within the body of the community itself.

Prof. Tinyiko Maluleke reminds us that African healing is deeply connected to memory – the remembering of what was broken, what was lost, and what remains sacred despite the wound. Healing takes place when stories are allowed to surface, when grief is given voice, when pain is sung and prayed through, and when the community gathers to witness the truth of one another’s suffering.

**Similarly, Emmanuel Lartey emphasises that African pastoral care is always holistic. It embraces the mind, body, spirit, family, and community as inseparable. It recognises ancestors, history, and the communal fabric that holds identity together. It makes space for lament – the deep, collective cry that does not seek to resolve pain quickly but allows it to be honoured. And it draws on the rich resources of ritual, song, touch, rhythmic movement, silence, and harmony as the languages through which meaning is restored.**

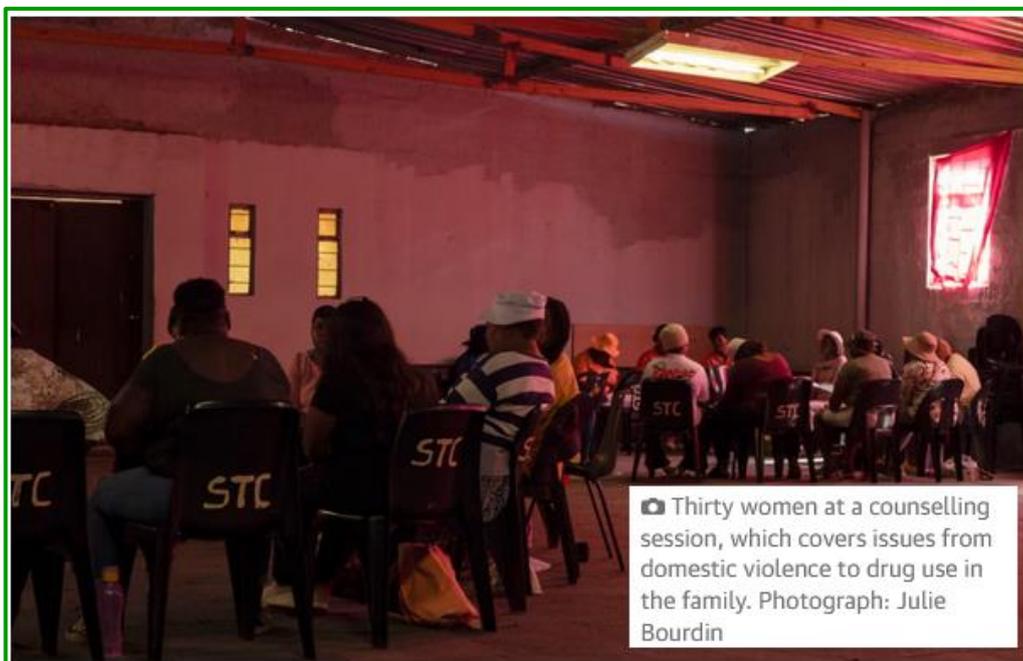
This healing is not abstract theory; it is embodied life. It is there in the way we hold one another's hands, in the way we sit together in the quiet after a funeral, and in the way women ululate in joy and wail in sorrow. It is present when church choirs blend grief and hope into a single harmony, when tea is shared after a burial to say: "you are not alone," and when grandmothers speak courage and identity back into the hearts of grandchildren.

These are not simply cultural gestures. They are sacred acts of survival that become sacred acts of restoration, the slow rebuilding of the soul in the company of others.

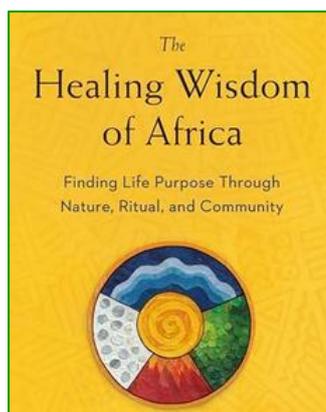
### The church as a house of lament and hope

For the church to become a site of healing, it must take seriously both the cry and the song of its people. Lament and hope are not opposites; they are companions. Lament is the courage to name pain truthfully. Hope is the courage to believe that the story is not over.

In our African contexts, lament is communal – never a solitary mourning. When a family suffers loss, the community gathers, not merely to offer comfort, but to carry the grief



together. This shared lament prevents the heart from collapsing under the weight of sorrow. The late Prof. Vuyani Vellem described such gatherings as "the community breathing on behalf of the one who cannot breathe." To lament together is to insist that no one suffers alone.



Yet lament does not end in despair. Within the same breath, our worship holds seeds of hope. The psalmist teaches:

*"Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning."* — Psalm 30:5

Hope, however, is not a cheap promise or a rushed celebration. It is a patient

waiting, a holding on, a remembering that God remains present even when restoration is not yet visible. As Allan Boesak writes, hope is the refusal to surrender to despair. Hope says: even here, in brokenness, God is not absent. Even now, new life is possible.

A healing church, therefore, is one that creates room for tears and for expectation, for silence and for song, for doubt and for testimony. It is a place where grief is not rushed away and where hope is not preached as avoidance, but as journey. Such a church becomes a sanctuary, not just a gathering place, but a sacred ground where lives can be held in trust until they are able to rise again.

### A healing-informed pastoral counselling praxis

To accompany wounded individuals and communities meaningfully, pastoral counsellors require a way of being that is not merely technical, but deeply human and spiritually attentive.

**Healing-informed pastoral praxis emphasises presence, dignity, and community as the primary movements toward restoration.**

- **Presence** is the first act of healing. Trauma isolates. It convinces the wounded that they are alone, unseen, or burdensome.

When we sit with another person, without rushing to speak or solve, we offer a counter-testimony to the loneliness of pain. The ministry of presence says, "You do not have to face this night alone." In that space, silence becomes prayer, and companionship becomes a sacrament.

- **Dignity** is the second movement. Trauma often leaves people feeling stripped of power, value, voice, and identity. Before we offer guidance, instruction, or scripture, we must offer honour. Jesus demonstrates this throughout the Gospels. With the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years (Mark 5), He did not begin with command or teaching. He first saw her. He called her "Daughter." He restored her dignity before restoring her body. Without dignity, advice is violence.
- **Community** is the third movement. Healing must lead us back into belonging. The early Christian community

embodied this truth by breaking bread, praying together, sharing resources, and holding one another in mutual care (Acts 2:42–47). Isolation keeps wounds alive. Belonging brings breath back to the soul. The task of pastoral counselling is therefore not only to support individuals, but also to reweave the communal fabric that trauma has torn apart.

This praxis is not about offering answers. It is about walking slowly enough for the wounded to discover that God has been walking with them all along. It is not about removing pain but about ensuring that pain does not have the final word.

**Beyond survival: Toward resurrection life**

Too often, we celebrate survival as if endurance is the goal. But the Christian narrative does not end at endurance, it moves toward resurrection. Survival says, I have lived through the pain. Healing says, I am becoming whole again. Resurrection says, Life can bloom where death once stood.

Our work as pastoral counsellors is to help our communities journey beyond mere survival into the possibility of renewed joy, restored identity, and reclaimed purpose.

South Africa knows suffering, yet it also knows courage, communal strength, and spiritual imagination. The Spirit moves in this interplay of wound and witness, pain and praise, loss and rising. This is our calling:

- To walk with the broken.*
- To honour their tears.*
- To help them remember who they are.*
- And to trust deeply, that God is not finished with us yet.*

This reflection invites every pastoral counsellor to see trauma not as a barrier, but as the very place where wounded hearts learn to breathe again. ■

**Trauma isolates.**

**It convinces the wounded that they are alone, unseen, or burdensome.**

**When we sit with another person, without rushing to speak or solve, we offer a counter-testimony to the loneliness of pain. The ministry of presence says, “You do not have to face this night alone.”**

**In that space, silence becomes prayer, and companionship becomes a sacrament.**

**Biographical Note**

*Dr Sipho Mahlangu PhD (Practical Theology), MBA, PGDipAPM, DipTh is a Practical Theologian, Senior Lecturer, and Pastoral Counsellor in the Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). His research and teaching are rooted in the intersection of African pastoral care, trauma healing, community restoration, and the role of the church in spaces of woundedness and hope.*

*Shaped by both township community life and academic formation, Dr Mahlangu’s work affirms that theology must be lived, and that healing emerges where faith meets the realities of everyday struggle. He is deeply committed to forming ministers, counsellors, and church leaders who embody pastoral presence with compassion, courage, and cultural humility. His ministry and scholarship continue to speak into the spiritual, emotional, and communal recovery of South African communities.*



**Our work as pastoral counsellors is to help our communities journey beyond mere survival into the possibility of renewed joy, restored identity, and reclaimed purpose:**

- To walk with the broken.*
- To honour their tears.*
- To help them remember who they are.*
- And to trust deeply, that God is not finished with us yet.*

# Play the harp: The understanding of the journey towards healing for the victim of domestic violence

By Dr Michiel van der Merwe, who presented at the 2025 CPSC Conference on 4 September 2025



*“Your body is the harp of your soul, and it is yours to bring forth sweet music from it or confused sounds” (Khalil Gibran).*



- Stalking (following)
- Damaging property

According to Gandhi, poverty is the worst form of violence.

## What about violence in religious context? Can spiritual violence also be recognised as a form of domestic violence?

Unfortunately, the answer is YES! For example: A person may be not allowed to attend a support group in church because

**I**t is especially in situations of domestic violence where we struggle to bring forth sweet music. The purpose of this article is to provide some pastoral guidelines towards healing for the victim of domestic violence.

### Introduction

- South Africa has one of the highest incidences of domestic violence in the world.
- It is hard to gather accurate statistical data in South Africa, because domestic violence is not always reported.
- Domestic violence is regulated by the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998.
- Both the victim and perpetrator can be male or female.

### Context: Types of domestic violence

The following are the most common types of violence which can be related to domestic violence:

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Emotional or psychological violence
- Gaslighting (misleading)
- Verbal violence
- Financial violence
- Intimidation
- Harassment

the risk is too high that info regarding violent circumstances at home may be disclosed. Or a person may be forced to join an event with the partner to give the impression that everything is fine at home.

### What says the Bible?

There are several examples of rape in the Bible. The most well-known examples are Amnon and Tamar (2 Samuel 13) and Shechem and Dinah (Genesis 34).

We find an example of domestic violence in the relationship between king Saul and David. (1 Samuel 16:14-23; 18:6-12 and 19:9-10). The pattern of domestic violence is very clear in this relationship. First there was love, followed by jealousy, ending in violence.

**The journey towards healing is to get out of the vicious circle into a victorious circle.**

### The profile of the perpetrator

It is not a homogeneous

group of persons. There are three groups:

- The “family-only” person. Usually, it is a person who was not involved in domestic violence as a child. But now as an adult the person becomes more outspoken — and only in the house.
- The “generally violent” person. Usually, this person has a history of child abuse and can be outspoken in the community.
- The “emotionally volatile” person. Usually, this person has a history of psychological and/or psychiatric problems.

Power and control are the two aspects that give the indication that it may be a situation of domestic violence.

### Why does these incidents of domestic violence occur? What are the contributing factors?

The following are indicators of possible domestic violence:



- Substance abuse. Statistics in South Africa shows that substance abuse is present in at least 61% cases of domestic violence. The tendency is that where substance use may have initially a calming effect, it can become violent when cravings occur. The so called “Prozac defence” emphasizes the responsible use of medication because some medication can have a lot of negative impacts as well, which can lead to domestic violence. Co-dependent family-members also can play a huge role in domestic violence.
- Religion: Spiritual values and the will of God. For example, the victim may believe that he/she is not allowed to divorce and must just love the other person.
- Psychology (and covid): Any psychological issue can contribute to domestic violence.
- “Battered woman”: Women may have a feeling of powerless.
- Community: Community values in a specific area may support certain forms of domestic violence.
- Trauma: The initial binding factor can become the trigger for domestic violence.



### Identification of domestic violence and pastoral guidelines

Any change of the victim’s behaviour when the perpetrator is present, may be an indication of domestic violence. This can be a change of emotion, acts and/or way of thinking.

You reflect this change of behaviour with an open statement to show the victim you noticed it! Hopefully the victim will respond (later) on this.

It is also important to listen what the victim is saying or is not saying. Does the perpetrator alone decide about issues like household, children, money and lifestyle?

In this situation reflect the emotion of the victim (with the cause and effect).

The journey towards healing is to get out of the vicious circle into a victorious circle.

### Guidelines for counselling

#### A. Some DON'Ts:

- Empty promises
- Talking negative about the perpetrator
- Underestimate the danger of the victim
- Provide conditional support only
- Doing something that may provoke the perpetrator
- Put pressure on the victim
- You yourself giving up
- Worsen the situation for the victim
- NB: Do not blame the victim for the behaviour of the perpetrator.

#### B. Some DO's:

- Spend lots of time with the victim
- Listen unconditionally
- Believe the victim!
- Start sessions, emphasizing you care for the victim
- Be aware of warning signs (physical or emotional)
- Reflect emotions (it is normal for contradictory emotions!)
- Try to understand and summarize reasons why person stays
- Offer practical support (suggestions) in certain scenarios
- Create a safety plan with emergency numbers/ - signs
- Protection order (court order or interdict) may sometimes be necessary

**NB: Listen to the person without saying what the person must do!**

### The role of the counsellor

- Relationship with the perpetrator. Focus on the perpetrator and do not refer to any information received from the victim.
- Relationship with the victim. It is normal that the victim may not trust you always. It is also important to set clear boundaries what you will do or will not do.
- The seriousness of the situation. Disagreements in a relationship may occur without any fear for domestic violence. Making use of “Danger assessment”-instruments can be very helpful.

Your role in the situation maybe the answer to the victim’s prayer.

*“The scars you cannot see are the hardest to heal”* (Unknown).



Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.

PSALM 147:7 KJV

### Conclusion

The continuation of playing your harp (behaviour which is positive for the victim's own well-being) is non-negotiable. This is when healing takes place.

This takes place in one of the following scenarios:

Healing from domestic violence is to play the harp:

- In the presence of the perpetrator when it has a positive outcome: "From then on, whenever the evil spirit sent by God came on Saul, David would get his harp and play it. The evil spirit would leave, and Saul would feel better and be all right again." (1 Samuel 16:23)

OR

- Sometimes to first leave the situation when there is no restoration and then play the harp for your own well-being "Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear, but David dodged, and the spear stuck in the wall. David ran away and escaped." (1 Samuel 19:10)

**"Healing does not mean the pain never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives" (Unknown).**

Dr Michiel van der Merwe  
 (CPSC reg nr 2018O00176)  
 082 462 3529  
[mvd360@gmail.com](mailto:mvd360@gmail.com)

### BIOGRAPHY

I embarked on a career as a minister of religion for 25 years which gave me many opportunities serving God and thereafter as a manager of a substance rehabilitation centre for 11 years.

I am currently a part-time counsellor and minister of religion in a Dutch Reformed congregation in Pretoria.

I was raised in the Western Cape on a farm, being dependent on God and by my experience of human suffering while working as pastor in hospitals. This resulted in a master's degree in clinical counselling and a doctorate about prayer in counselling.

It is my endeavour to empower others through emphatic and visionary leadership.

My personal philosophy revolves around the understanding that it is not about the gifts you have, but about the effect they have on others (Philippians 4:17).

In pursuit of a balanced life, I enjoy cycling, mountaineering (summitted Kilimanjaro (2x) and Everest Basecamp) and dogs who are my "personal therapists"!

Looking to the future, I am dedicated in giving back:

I have published several books in the field of pastoral care. I also train dogs for the visually impaired and do dog therapy with sick and elderly persons. ■



<p>LIFT UP A SONG, STRIKE THE TAMBOURINE, PLAY THE SWEET-SOUNDING HARP AND LYRE.                  - PSALM 81:2</p>	<p>AND WHENEVER THE SPIRIT FROM GOD CAME UPON SAUL, DAVID WOULD PICK UP HIS HARP AND PLAY, AND SAUL WOULD BECOME WELL, AND THE SPIRIT OF DISTRESS WOULD DEPART FROM HIM.                  - 1 SAMUEL 16:23</p>	<p>BUT NOW, BRING ME A HARPIST." AND WHILE THE HARPIST PLAYED, THE HAND OF THE LORD CAME UPON ELISHA                  - 2 KINGS 3:15</p>
<p>ONE OF THE SERVANTS ANSWERED, "I HAVE SEEN A SON OF JESSE OF BETHLEHEM WHO KNOWS HOW TO PLAY THE HARP. HE IS A MIGHTY MAN OF VALOR, A WARRIOR, ELOQUENT AND HANDSOME, AND THE LORD IS WITH HIM."                  - 1 SAMUEL 16:18</p>	<p>LET OUR LORD COMMAND YOUR SERVANTS HERE TO SEEK OUT SOMEONE WHO CAN SKILLFULLY PLAY THE HARP. WHENEVER THE SPIRIT OF DISTRESS FROM GOD IS UPON YOU, HE IS TO PLAY IT, AND YOU WILL BE WELL."                  - 1 SAMUEL 16:16</p>	<p>PRAISE THE LORD WITH THE HARP; MAKE MUSIC TO HIM WITH TEN STRINGS.                  - PSALM 33:2</p>

## Boundaries (Part 32)

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

We have reached one of the last boundary principles described by Cloud and Townsend (2002).

### The Law of Activity

Let us first explore the law of activity (2002, p. 121). What is meant by this law and what does this have to do with boundaries?

According to the authors, teaching our children to become seekers and growers, is linked to this law:

**A seeker will understand that the solution to her problems and the answer to her needs, start with her and not with someone else.** To activate this realization in our children, we need to encourage and help them build a tendency toward activity. This will ask of parents to set and keep firm boundaries with their children. By nature, all systems tend to return to a lower level of activity! This also applies to mankind and demands active efforts and perseverance to overcome.

**Cloud and Townsend (2002, p. 134) describe six typical symptoms of passivity in children:**

- **Procrastination:** the child only responds to the parent at the last moment, often only responding when threatened with punishment. Even then she will take ages to complete the task and put as little effort as possible into it in as little time as possible.
- **Ignoring:** the child just shuts out your voice pretending not to hear you or simply disregards you.
- **Lack of initiative:** the child avoids new experiences and sticks to familiar activities and behaviour patterns.
- **Living in a fantasy world:** the child seems happiest when he is lost in a world in his own head instead of showing interest in the real world.
- **Passive defiance:** the child resists your requests by looking blankly or sullenly at you, then simply doing nothing. She shows her anger and contempt of your authority without words.



**Isolation:** your child avoids contact with others, preferring to stay in her own room. She will rather walk away than confront or argue with you when you present a problem.

Although all these symptoms indicate a system that wants to



perform at the lowest level of energy, parents need to be aware that the child may have an underlying mental health issue. The sooner parents acknowledge that their child is extra-ordinarily difficult, the less damage is done to their own feelings about their parenting skills and worthiness as well as less damage done to the child.

Let us now consider ways in which parents can train the young system to overcome the tendency to constantly fall back into passivity!

Activity does not merely indicate playing outside, although autonomous play, whether outside or with blocks, Lego, or puzzles, can encourage children to learn problem-solving. As they learn to persevere and parents do not intervene too soon, but encourage every effort and not only a positive outcome, they build confidence in their own ability to solve their problems.



Toddlers will very quickly moan: "I cannot do this!" or: "I cannot get it right!" and then would either fold their arms, sulking or throw the things they were using (blocks, Lego), or cry for the parent to intervene or comfort them. Busy parents, parents scrolling on their phones, tired and stressed parents are severely challenged by this behaviour. Parents sensitive to rejection, or anxious, depressed or with underlying frustration built up through a rough day, might react adversely to this.

**However, this is an opportune time to teach toddlers perseverance by praising their efforts – not the success.**

According to neuroscience, even mistakes are constructive and can lead to dopamine release, as it teaches the person which road not to follow again. It is wise for parents to point this out to the child while she is busy. Say to her: "My dear, you are

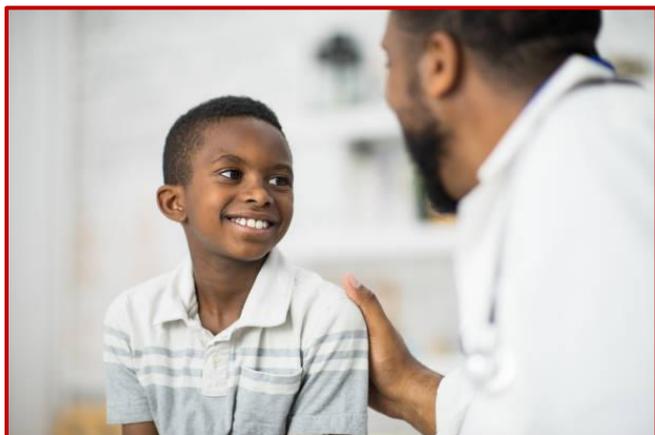


trying and not giving up. Having difficulty getting this right, shows us that you are learning! I will be here to guide you and support you but thank you for keeping on trying!" The success will come if the effort is consistent.

Often toddlers will try to build structures with the toys that are not indicated in the manual, which look stupid and lop-sided to the parent. Instead of immediately saying: "No, not that way", or let me show you how it is done", allow the child to try something on its own, even if it will not work out.

Again, the effort is to be praised. The parent can say to the child: "I am here and will help when you ask me". By doing this, parents can teach their children to be actively dependent on others instead of just passively waiting to be helped or having their problems solved for them. We need to learn that we need other people, but that we are capable to do much more than we think and can contribute to others, because we are capable.

**The early play and the ways in which parents deal with the successes and failures, lay the foundation for the child's believing in her own ability to solve her problems, but also create a learning opportunity to get comfortable asking help and support from other people.**



The typical two-year-old self-sufficient response: "I will do it myself!" and an aggressive refusal to receive help, should not immediately be rebuked. A more appropriate response might be: "Okay, I am with you and will help when you need it and ask for my help". Parents mostly know beforehand when the child will drop something which might break, or that is too heavy for the child. Instead of saying: "I told you that you cannot do it yourself", rather pre-empt that it will be too difficult and try to ensure that it is manageable, or allow the effort and praise the effort.

Even when the milk or cooldrink is spilled or the bowl is dropped, it is important not to shout and scream and belittle the child, but to encourage her to try again in future and involve her in the cleaning effort. If anything is involved that can harm the child, the child's safety is priority. To not shout and overreact in this situation, but to act as calmly as possible, pick the child up and do what is necessary to ensure her safety, is of the utmost importance.

Sometimes the accident can be very serious, like having pulled a container of hot fluids over onto herself or having cut herself with a sharp knife. Even in these circumstances, it is important for the parent to contain their own fear, anger or fright. This is a lot to ask of a parent, but parents, please be aware that our children mirror our actions and reactions. We want to raise children who are less prone to anxiety than we are.

How often do we hear about a toddler pushing a heavy chair to a cupboard where the cookies, sweets or medication is stored? Again, the initiative must be acknowledged before the warning or rebuke is given. "Wow, that was a very good idea to move the chair there! But when you want something that I normally give you, you can rather ask me for it, as it can be dangerous or I might not want you to have it. I understand that you want the cookies (or whatever the situation is), and you made a very good plan to get it, but you cannot have it. Consistency in the parent's response is important.

Children are not born with steps to problem-solving in their brains! They need to be encouraged when they do show planned action – as in the examples given above. They need to be encouraged to persevere, but the parents' responsibility is to ensure that there is a fair chance to succeed. The toys and tasks thus must be age appropriate.

Guiding questions, like: "What do you want to achieve?", or "What is your plan with this?" and then encouraging the child to use their words to express what they intend to do – the goal they have – can be a good start to guide them to think through their actions on the way to their goal. The planning and the steps taken, can be reviewed and iterations can be suggested, or the child can be encouraged to express what else they can do. We want to raise children who can make wise decisions that have been well-thought through, but who do not overthink everything because of fear.

**Fear is a debilitating emotion. According to Cloud and Townsend (2002, p. 122) there can be various forms of fear that leads to passivity, namely fear of closeness, of conflict, of failure and we can include rejection in the list.**

A child who constantly hears: "NO!", "You are going to fall", "You are going to get hurt!", "I am going to hit you", "You are hurting Jesus's heart", will eventually react negatively – either withdraw into passivity, or into passive defiance. When a child is always pushed away or belittled for their effort, fear of closeness or put differently, a fear of being visible or having a voice, slowly takes shape in her brain.

The way in which parents handle conflict in their marriage and with the children, can also cause fear to have an opinion or having a different view or way of doing things. Teachers and siblings can also contribute to this. If a teacher or sibling constantly shoots down a

child's way of solving a problem, making fun of the child or imply that the child is stupid, or fights to get the upper hand in an argument, using character damaging remarks, fear of having a different opinion or voicing it, will set in and lead to passivity.

Learning to ask for help instead of expecting parents to know what she needs, is an important step to teach the child active involvement in their own lives. To use their words to express their needs and wait patiently for them to do it, can help them on their way. There are countless married couples who expect one another to know their needs without having to ask and then feels angry and wounded if the spouse does not "see" the need.

Parents who are not themselves actively involved in their own lives and only sit around scrolling on their phones, too lazy to get up and get themselves a glass of water, or expect someone else to do everything for them, raise lazy kids, or kids who experience inner conflict about what is right and what is wrong.

It may also lead to passive aggression and anger in the child who feels that she does not have the right to refuse yet feels that the parent is abusing their authority or position as parent. However, children need to learn to serve and help others – but with firm boundaries in place.

Think through what you ask the child to do. Sometimes parents really do abuse their position of authority. Including a child in acts of service is more beneficial than just expecting the child to serve you because you are the parent.

Children can also be aggressive in some areas – like aggressively refusing to sit in the car chair – and then be nonresponsive in other areas – not responding when called by a parent. Some children are indeed more difficult than others!

Often a parent will tell me how difficult their child is and then add that her mother says she was the same when she was very young. It often turns out that this parent has a mood disorder (e.g., Bipolar Mood Disorder) or is neurodiverse (i.e., somewhere on the autism spectrum). Parents who deny any of these or AD(H)D in themselves, do not want to notice the warning signs in their child – often out of fear that the child will experience the same battle they had in life.

The way in which parents handle activities they do not like, can set an example of passivity or negativity to their children. We are prone to complain about house chores or about having to go to work on Mondays and are not cognizant of the fact that our child mirrors our attitude.

Children need to learn that there are a lot of tasks that we do not like but still have to do. To do these with a posi-

tive attitude and include the child in them, acknowledging that she does not like them, while insisting that they get done, can help the child overcome laziness or entitlement. It is not healthy to have too many helpers in the house so that neither the parent nor the child needs to perform house chores.

The stress and pressure people experience in their jobs, together with the time constraints caused by long and exhausting working hours, might make it more bearable for parents to do the chores themselves and get it over with, rather than teaching a lazy/entitled/nonresponsive/aggressive child to show up and become actively involved in their own lives as well as the family's lives.

Passive aggression can be caused by parents asking a child to do something for the parent, while it is a house chore or done for the child's own sake: "Please take this cup to the kitchen for mommy", or "Pick up your towel for mommy". These activities need to be done, but the child does not like them and sees the mother as being too lazy to do it herself.

She wants to please the mother but also senses that something is not right in the request. Please avoid this type of request. Turn it into a neutral instruction: "Pick up your towel and place it on the bath". Another pitfall to avoid, is stating the instruction as a question: "Will you please pick up your towel for mommy?" Do not be surprised if the child bluntly says "No!" and turns away.

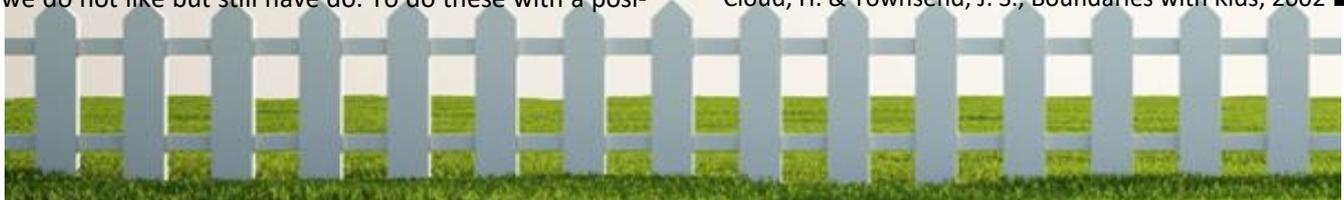
**Do not allow your child to be comfortable in the passive role. Make the passivity more painful than activity.** This can only be achieved if you are an active person with a growth mindset yourself. When you teach your child that something is her responsibility, do it in a relationally present way. Your child needs to learn that you will not leave her completely to her own devices but will guide and support her.

Dear parents, do not think that anybody underestimates the responsibility placed on you in raising children. You need not be perfect. In fact, perfection is not in Jesus' heart. Your loving presence must mirror Jesus' loving presence with you even when you fail. This of course means that as a parent you must constantly be renewed by the Holy Spirit regarding your perception of God in your life. You constantly must move towards relationship.

In the next article we will focus on this critical aspect, which Cloud and Townsend (2002, p. 130) define as The Law of Exposure – how to learn to live transparently in relationships.

#### REFERENCES

Cloud, H. & Townsend, J. S., *Boundaries with Kids*, 2002 ■



## Criticism - a moral compass

By Heinrich Lottering

**A**s I interact with most people who cross my path on some level of spirituality as a full time minister, I have made it a habit of regularly asking individuals to summarise our Christian faith in one word or sentence. Almost without fail the answer comes back as love, to which I usually just smile. Although our wonderful religion/faith has very prominent aspects of love, to me it is more about Christ, redemption and salvation. Nevertheless, for the vast majority of Christians the essence of the faith and Christian daily walk is about love. Sadly, in our post-modern world even with this specific worldview most believers do not draw the definition for their love concept they use as basis of their reference framework from Scripture but take the worldly definitions and superimpose it into their Biblical interpretation.

Hence, we are left with two practical applications from this love-above-all worldview. Firstly, that to love implies to accept people as they are and even celebrate them in



every aspect of their lives and behavioural choices. Secondly, to love in this way leaves no room for judgement and correction. Sadly, the result of this worldview is that many individuals are left without any moral compass both internally or externally from family and friends. Literally like a ship adrift on an ocean of bad choices and traumatic consequences.

Many therapists often see clients very unhappy and traumatised, with their lives in ruin due to repeated bad choices and behaviour – and even more sad, a support system of family and friends who only offer empathy and encouragement without any correction or guidance in fear of not being loving enough. The concept of judging in our post-modern Christian world has a very bad reputation. Yet practically, it is simple truly caring enough to be discerning about others' choices and behaviour and being brave enough to positively criticise them in an attempt to contribute to their moral compass.

There is an old saying which I am very fond of: "You cannot love without hate and you cannot support and encourage without critique." As a practical example one cannot love your spouse without hating that which will hurt him/her or will destroy your relationship/marriage. You cannot support another person in wise and beneficial life choices without critiquing bad choices and behaviour – hence providing a moral compass for yourself and others. Criticising bad choices and behaviour is essential

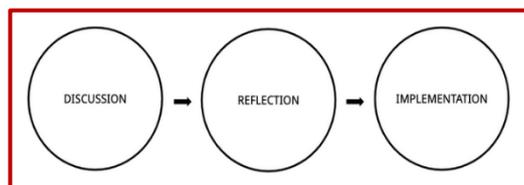


for personal growth, maintaining good standards and even promoting healthy relationships.

Someone that constructively criticises, care. We should appreciate when someone takes the intellectual and emotional energy to engage with us, to help and guide us.

It is often said that a person only learns from their own mistakes, yet if you are open to others who have more life experience, it is possible to learn from their mistakes and growth over the years that they want to share with you.

To receive correction is an indication that others believe your ability to do better. It is actually a vote of confidence that you have the potential to be wiser and more mature. Let us be honest: if you truly feel someone is beyond help or are incapable of any improvement,



you will not waste energy to critique and advise them.

Criticism forces us to stand back from our life's situation and path and objectively look at our choices and behaviour. It pressures us to see things in a new light and hopefully a better light and different angle.

It is important to remember that if critique comes from an experienced person with good intentions, it comes from a place of honesty and openness, which in itself is a good basis for any relationship. Criticism helps you improve your choices and quality of life and encourage emotional growth into maturity.

To reach a point where you can accept critique and instead of being offended, to learn from it, you are well on your way to personal maturity. Criticism teaches us about others and the rich variety of individual differences and worldviews. Finally, criticism often can be the jolt we need for better and wiser actions!!

To love fellow brothers and sisters are a uniquely balanced interaction of support, encouragement praise and appropriate criticism. We cannot see others on a path leading to a cliff of destruction, simply give them a hug and walk away while convincing ourselves that is Christian love.

### REFERENCES

- <https://www.sciencedirect.com> Reacting to Criticism
- <https://humans.io> What is Constructive Criticism?
- <https://www.alaska.edu> Understanding Criticism
- <https://thriveworks.com> Destructive versus Positive Criticism
- <https://www.asana.com> How to Take and Give Constructive Criticism ■

# The compassionate but accountable care of sexual violence perpetrators: A Pastoral Theological Response

By Nkosiyezwe Muzothule Makhanya (MTh)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2436-9318>

## 1. Introduction

The previous Article, named *“Caring for perpetrators of sexual violence: proclaiming freedom for the captives, and release from darkness”*: A pastoral theological imperative” interpreted the episode of sexual violence in our communities through the construction of ethical norms that guide good practice responses. It also interpreted the episodes of sexual violence with the help of guidelines from the scriptures, which share what God expects from the church in fighting the pandemic.

This article will determine the strategies of action that will influence the behaviour of sexual violence offenders to fight and stand against sexual violence in South African communities.

It will be carried out through navigating solutions and leadership forms that the church may implement in trying to curb sexual violence.

Osmer (2008) formulated the practical theological interpretation called the pragmatic task, which influenced the preparation of this paper. In simpler terms, the task gives direction on how the church might respond to the situation under concern. The task innovates responses to be taken to obtain desired goals (Osmer, 2008). Each problem has a person responsible; it might be in the organisation where leaders are accountable, it might be a person's (care-seeker) life, whereby the caregiver is positioned to lead the care-seeker to the desired end. Therefore, this article will recommend how the church leadership and its body can contribute to curbing sexual violence in their society. I am of the view that, once the church's body or the congregation has perceived the need to fight this pandemic, they will spread this gospel in their various societies, which will lead to their healing.

## 2. Church leadership contribution



According to Teo (2021), citing John Maxwell, leadership influences followers to accept and follow its vision and mission to achieve the purpose under observation.

It does not concentrate on the hierarchy (Seniority and Subordination). It is mainly the influence, regardless of the person's position in the organisation, and the ability to empower people to overcome their life limitations (Zamiri et al., 2020). Brown (2024) further claims that leadership is the ability to

identify and develop potential.

On the same breath, Osmer (2008) engages three types of leadership, which may be applied under the pragmatic task in responding to situations under the research. In fighting sexual violence, I recommend Osmer's first type of leadership, which is task competence.

This type of leadership is where the leader "leads by example." The leader performs outstandingly in the role they are engaged in (Osmer, 2008). I chose this type of leadership approach because the church, in this context, should lead the society's transformation process. It is supposed to lead by example because the message of empowerment and the transformation process begins in the church, as its role is to live the scripture, practice it, and then engage society (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 12:2; Isaiah 40:31; Ephesians 4:22-24).

Society and the church need to understand that a war has been declared by the sexual violence "pandemic," as indicated by the high statistics figures (Frost, 2023; Abor-isade, 2025). Implementing the researched and proposed preventive measures needs to be highly considered by the church and society.

The above explanation shows that our society needs to apply serious measures to contribute to stopping this behaviour of sexual violence. It is unhealthy because some victims are left with physical illnesses and psychological disturbances after the sexual violence encounter (Dos Reis et al, 2017). Further to that, sexual violence is harmful and dangerous because some victims are killed during the attack (Jina and Thomas, 2013). Based on the adverse effects that sexual violence causes, since it is an act done without the victim's consent, it makes it illegal, and perpetrators re-do these acts because some are not reported to state' justice by victims or society (Surrell and Johnson, 2020; Calkins et al, 2014).

Society should adopt an attitude of prevention to prevent this unfavourable act before it occurs. Since it is suggested that society leaders, like church leaders, must

lead the process, their members will follow their example. I conducted an interview to establish if church leadership understands their role before engaging them in the social violence curbing exercise.

The interviews with four of the Bloemfontein pastors on the main dissertation showed that churches understand the leadership concept. They showed that church leadership includes the role of the leader, training for the office, and the church position as displayed below: *NB: pseudonyms were used for the interviewees.*

Firstly, Rev Madela, from one of the Mainline churches stated that Church leadership is a position ordained by God to appoint and work with people, and his response corresponds with relevant literature on the subject, which says church leadership is God's commission for every Christian to fulfil the call of God (Rivkin et al, 2014, Du Plessis and Nkambule, 2020)

Secondly, Rev. Pleasure from one of the Pentecostal churches indicated that there are dictator leaders and servant leaders, which is in line with the thought that there are leaders who focus on their power to control the people they lead (Parmer & Dillard, 2019). Servant leadership allows a leader to coach and teach their followers in a Godly manner (Du Plessis and Nkambule, 2020). Servant leadership prescribes to Paul's formula on how the head of the family should develop their family (1 Timothy 3: 2-7, Du Plessis and Nkambule, 2020)

Thirdly, Rev Batho from one of the Pentecostal churches, said a church leader, is a person who serves the community in his capacity and then identifies people who can drive the vision forward based on the direction that they give to them. Rev Batho's contribution agrees with Rivkin et al. (2014), stating that a leader is a servant and a vision bearer.

**Sexual violence refers to any act, attempt or threat of a sexual nature that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, psychological and emotional harm.**

Lastly, Rev Thipa from one of the Mainline churches also explained that a leader is at the forefront and believes in the people they work with. The leader allows their followers to contribute ideas in implementing the vision. Rev Thipa agrees with the thought that the leader must have confidence in his followers and allow them to participate with their innovative ideas (Soleas, 2020).

One can conclude that since the church understands its leadership position in society, it can apply the leadership role by participating in sexual violence awareness and fighting it. We also notice from platforms like Television programs that victims do not report it when it takes place

because some perpetrators, who are their pastors, brainwash them by saying they are transferring blessings and deliverance through sex (Petersen, 2021).

I recommend that the church should emulate secular institutions, like tertiary institutions, and initiate awareness programs that bring the public's attention to sexual violence acts in their midst (ATSA, 2019; Ajayi, Mudefi, and Owolabi, 2021). Churches should also start with awareness programs against sexual violence behaviours. As a person involved in the church environment leadership, I notice that the church is not significantly involved in combating sexual violence through its prophetic activities (Makhanya, 2025b).

### 3. The visibility of the church

The church needs to be more visible in society on curbing sexual violence behaviours (Le Roux, 2013). Its visibility in the community in terms of its services will make it easier for victims of sexual violence to know where to run in times of need. It will also threaten the perpetrators of sexual violence because they will know that eyes are watching such undesired acts within the community, and that has the potential to discourage sexual violence behaviours.

The church, as one of the influential community organisations, must have a structure that fights sexual violence, but presently, it is not taking place, as the interviewees (Rev Madela, Rev Pleasure, and Rev Batho, 12 July 2023: Bloemfontein) and Rev Thipa (17 July 2023) responded as follows:

Rev Madela states that:

When we have such a situation, it is only when we have a question of adultery happening, or a young lady who is not yet married is getting pregnant, that we need to address that according to the ethical code of the church, and so forth.

Rev Madela says they have not dealt with issues of sexual behaviours directly, not only when a lady gets pregnant premaritally, for instance. They only get involved in sexually related issues when discussing the church's ethical codes. Rev Pleasure says that they have elderly ladies in the church who are placed to deal with such matters, only if they arise and have not experienced such in the past.

The exception is with Rev Batho, who narrated that they have had one case of sexual violence, whereby the man in question exposed himself to him. He took this action because his wife left him because of sexual violence, which erupted from substance abuse. On limiting the sexual abuse behaviour, Rev Batho has encouraged him to book himself into a drug abuse rehabilitation centre, which the gentleman initiated.

Rev Thipa says they have never experienced sexual violence cases. However, they use church uniforms as a preventive measure. Ladies and Gentlemen dress in a way to

cover their bodies to prevent such activities from taking place in church premises. Such a dress code teaches the worshipers to dress in a way that covers their bodies, even if they are not on the church premises, but the church has not followed up on whether the dress pattern is followed in their private lives.

The above interviewees' responses show that they do not possess skills in limiting sexual violence acts, except for Rev Batho, who has acted through his innovative means. The church itself does not have policies on handling issues of sexual violence.

Lastly, Pastors suspect that sexual violence perpetrators are part of their congregations since it is a common type of crime. The church needs to be equipped to help perpetrators of sexual violence, as they are skilled in assisting caretakers of other types of unfavourable behaviours like substance abuse.

#### 4. Conclusion

Our country, South Africa, is in the "Intensive Care Unit" concerning the sexual violence attacks. It is about time that the churches have an influence on the community and take advantage of their positions by bringing awareness to their community of this "pandemic." Churches are the instruments that play the role of intergenerational faith formation. The time to avoid such topics because of perceiving them as unholy has passed.

The church must involve issues such as these in its faith formation sermons to establish a generation that fears engaging in such acts. If this type of gospel is preached in churches, people will go to their society and transplant such information to their various communities. This type of church mission will assist the community in causing perpetrators to be responsible for their actions. There will be a loud voice in the community emphasising the intolerance of sexual violence, which will lead to the establishment of restoration programs for perpetrators. Such societal responses encouraged by the church will fight the increasing sexual violence observed in our communities.

**Sexual violence is a form of gender-based violence.**

**Sexual violence is one of the most destructive and yet least-recognised human rights abuses in the world.**

#### 5. References

Aborisade, R.A., 2025. COVID-19 and gender-based violence: investigating the "shadow pandemic" of sexual violence during crisis lockdown in Nigeria. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, 69(6-7), pp.659-681.

Ajayi, A.I., Modafi, E., Owalabi, E.O., 2021. Prevalence and correlates of sexual violence among adolescent girls and young women: findings from a cross-sectional study in a South African university [origin] [Prevalence and correlates of sexual violence among adolescent girls and young women: findings from a](#)

[cross-sectional study in a South African university | BMC Women's Health | Full Text](#) [Accessed 3.10.2024].

ATSA, 2010. Public recommendation: Addressing campus sexual misconduct. USA: ATSA [origin] <https://members.atsa.com/ap/CloudFile/Download/pgGeYv6p> [Accessed 3.10.2024]

Brown, K., 2024. *The Leaders You Need: How to Create Diverse Leadership Teams for a More Dynamic, Resilient Future*. MIT Press.

Calkins, C., Jeglic, E., Beattay Jr, R.A., Zeidman, S., and Perillo, A.D., 2014. Sexual violence legislation: A review of case law and empirical research. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 20(4), p.443.

Dos Reis, M.J., Lopes, M.H.B.D.M., and Osis, M.J.D., 2017. 'It's much worse than dying': the experiences of female victims of sexual violence. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 26(15-16), pp.2353-2361.

Du Plessis, A.L., Nkambule, C.M., 2020. Servant leadership as part of spiritual formation of theological training. *South Africa: PhilPapers*.

Frost, M.L., 2023. "There Is a Silent War Going On"—African Religious Leaders' Perspectives on Domestic Violence before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Religions*, 14(9), p.1197.

Holy Bible, 2008. *The New Living Translation*. Illinois: Tyndale House Foundation.

Jina, R. and Thomas, L.S., 2013. Health consequences of sexual violence against women. *Best practice & research Clinical obstetrics & gynaecology*, 27(1), pp.15-26.

L. Parmer, L., and E. Dillard Jr, J., 2019. The way employees are treated predicts power feelings. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 40(1), pp.2-16.

Le Roux, E. 2013. Sexual Violence in South Africa and the role of the church. *South Africa: URDR*. [Origin] <https://tears.co.za> [Accessed 6.03.2024].

Makhanya, N.M., 2025 (b). Caring for perpetrators of sexual. Defining sexual violence, possible causes, its impact, and risk factors. *CPSC Notes*. May 2025, pages 20-22.

Osmer, R.R. 2008. *Practical Theology. An Introduction*. Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Petersen, A., 2021. He asked me to pray afterward: Exploring Cheryl Zondi's mediated court testimony as a narrative of clergy sexual abuse.

Rivkin, W., Diestel, S, Schmidt, K. 2014. *The Positive Relationship between Servant Leadership and Employees' Psychological Health: A Multi-Method Approach*. USA: ResearchGate.

Soleas, E.K., 2020. Leader strategies for motivating innovation in individuals: a systematic review. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 9(1), p.9.

Surrell, A. and Johnson, I.M., 2020. An examination of women's experiences with reporting sexual victimization behind prison walls. *The Prison Journal*, 100(5), pp.559-580.

Teo, J. 2021. Summary of "Developing the Leaders Around You." USA: Joetoe.[Origin] [Summary of "Developing the Leaders Around You" by John Maxwell — Joe Teo](#) [accessed 3 November 2024]

Zamiri, A., Heidari, A., Askari, P., and Makvandi, B., 2020. Effect of Organizational Intelligence, Workplace-Life Skills, and Employee Empowerment Training on Promoting Organizational

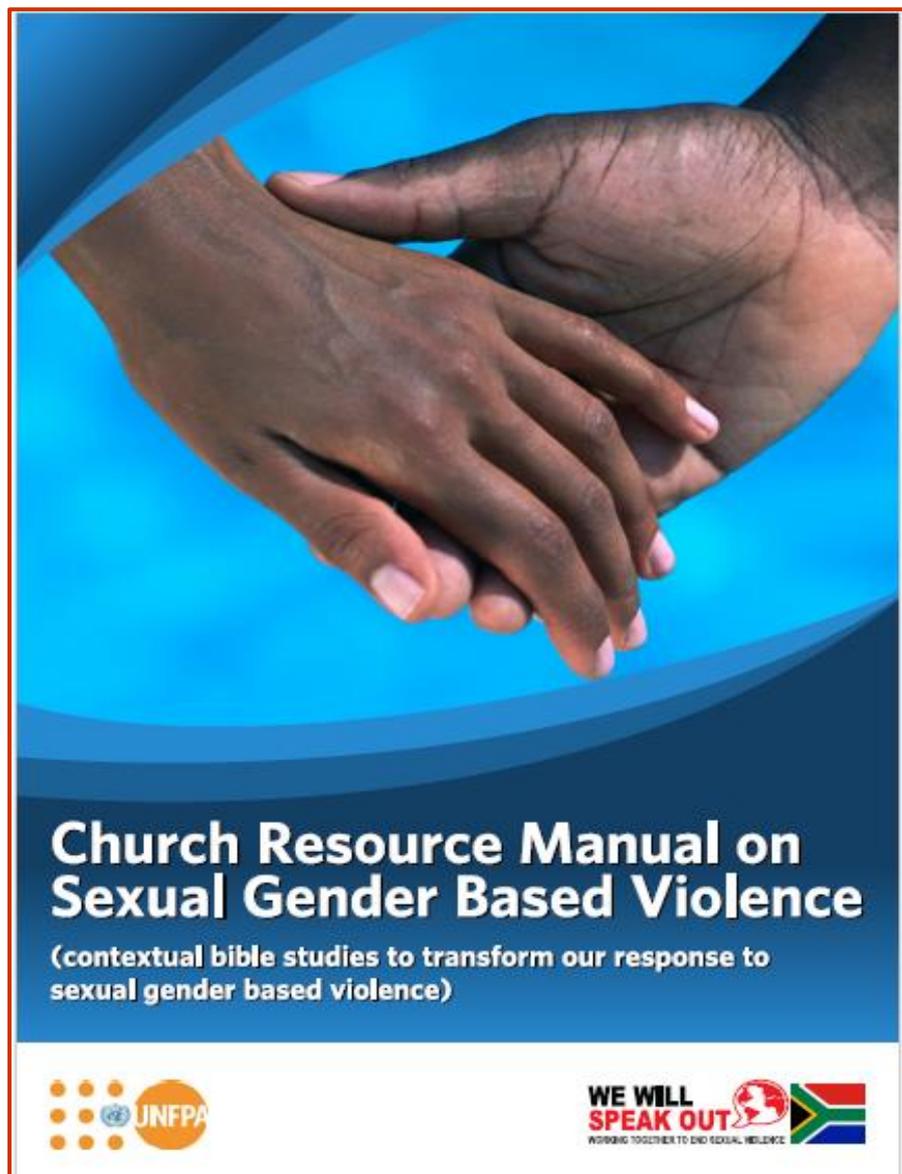
Productivity and Socialization among Employees with Job Stress. Archives of Hygiene Sciences, 9(1).

**BIOGRAPHY**

After an initial career in town planning, Rev Nkosi started an academic journey in Theology at the University of the Free State in 2021, holding the following: Advanced Diploma (Theology) (Cum Laude), Bachelor of Practical Theology (Honores),

and Masters Degree in Practical Theology (Cum Laude). He is presently pursuing a PhD in Practical Theology at the University of The Free State. He leads a Ministry (International Worship Centre), based in Bloemfontein where he practices as a pastor, counsellor and marriage officer. Nkosi is 51 years old and is married to Pastor Kgomotso Makhanya for 27 years and they are blessed with 3 children (Boy and two girls). ■

**Note:** Justice is the responsibility of the legal system (police, courts) within the country. However, it is important that the church and community understand the laws of the land and work with the government to strengthen the legal system with regard to tackling sexual violence effectively.



This book has different Bible studies, chosen by individuals who have worked on contextual Bible studies and are aware of the issues of sexual violence and gender justice that churches are grappling with in 21st Century South Africa.

A self-discovery tool helps you identify which areas you may benefit from addressing first.

If you score low in a particular area during the self-discovery, you can then use the relevant Bible study to look at this issue in more detail.

The Bible studies follow a clear layout. You may wish to photocopy the self-discovery pages and Bible study pages to give to others in the group.

Download for free:  
<https://genderjustice.org.za/publication/church-resource-manual-on-sexual-gender-based-violence/>

## Coping with pet loss and grief: Healing Heartfelt Paw Prints

By Rene D Rossouw, CPSC associate

**T**his article explores the profound emotional bond that exists between pet owners and their companion animals, delving into the psychological, physiological, and spiritual dimensions of pet loss. As society increasingly humanizes pets, their passing is experienced with a grief that closely parallels the loss of a human loved one.

By integrating research findings, personal reflection, and pastoral insights, this article advocates for broader cultural recognition of pet-related grief and highlights the need for professional support structures to address both disenfranchised and compounded grief. *This topic holds personal significance for the author, whose lived and pastoral experience with pet bereavement continues to inform and advocate a compassionate approach to grief support.*



as hunting, herding, or protection – modern society increasingly embraces pets as family members, attributing to them emotions and social roles. This transformation is shaped by factors such as urbanization, lower birth rates, and the growth of consumer markets focused on pet care.

As digital platforms change the way people interact, traditional relationships have become more accessible yet often lack emotional depth. The need for genuine, meaningful connection remains, and pets have quietly assumed the role of steadfast companions—providing emotional presence, consistency, and unconditional love that digital interactions cannot replace. Consequently, when a beloved pet dies, the grief reflects not only their absence but also the depth of a relationship that is woven into daily life and emotional wellbeing.

### Introduction

When God created animals—just before forming mankind—He looked upon them and declared them good. Through His love and wisdom, God recognized the human need for companions who not only share our homes but also comfort our hearts and teach us the sacred language of unconditional love.

Pets become living examples of swift forgiveness, never keeping record of wrongs, and exemplify trust, dependence, and wordless communication. They do not judge, gossip, or betray; instead, they find joy in the presence of their beloved humans and ache during every moment of separation.

In His tenderness, God endowed animals with quiet superpowers: the ability to sense our sadness, anxiety, or grief, and to respond with a gentle nuzzle, a warm gaze, or the quiet comfort of a head resting on our lap. Somehow, they know just what kind of cuteness will melt our hearts. These animals are not mere companions – they are gifts from the heart of God.

Not everyone relates to animals in the same way. While some may view pets as having mainly a functional role, others cherish them as deeply loved companions. This paper examines the emotional depth of pet-human relationships and explores why pet parents often experience grief with the same intensity as those mourning a human family member.

### Humanization of Pets

The humanization of pets represents a significant societal shift in how animals are perceived. Where animals were once valued predominantly for their utility – such

According to research from the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI), 95% of pet owners consider their pets to be family members, highlighting the extent of emotional attachment. Furthermore, 98% of pet owners report experiencing health benefits from their relationship with their pets, indicating that these bonds extend well beyond affection to include tangible psychological and physiological benefits.

### Mental Health Benefits Of Having A Pet:

Playing with a pet elevates levels of serotonin

Fulfillment

Helps people socialize

Provide companionship

They make you feel safe

Reduce anxiety and depression

Helps add structure and routine

Give purpose

Provide sensory stress relief

Helps decrease blood pressure in stressful situations

@RealDepressionProject

### Physiological Effects of Human-Pet Interaction

Deep emotional bonds with pets provide measurable physiological benefits, often experienced as a subtle sense of wellbeing, rather than as consciously pursued outcomes. This quiet effect—feeling whole, grounded,

and emotionally regulated—helps explain why devoted pet owners, after grieving a loss, often welcome a new companion into their lives. The heart, once opened to a pet, yearns to love again.

Research has identified several physiological benefits associated with bonding with pets:

- **Oxytocin Activation:** Enhances trust and emotional regulation (Frontiers in Psychology).
- **Stress Reduction:** Lowers cortisol, heart rate, and blood pressure (Scientific Times).
- **Immune Function & Empathy:** Improves resilience and emotional regulation.
- **Long-Term Health:** Supports recovery and reduces loneliness (Purdue Conference on the Human–Animal Bond).

Additionally, some individuals possess an intuitive ability to communicate with animals, known as Intuitive Interspecies Communication (IIC). This faculty is facilitated by mirror neurons, enabling mutual emotional attunement. Through this non-verbal exchange, a quiet symbiosis is created between pet and parent, where moods and needs are instinctively understood.

### Emotional impact of pet loss and grief

Relational loss and grief often seek understanding. When the presence of a beloved companion is taken away, what remains is not just silence—but a void that aches for Presence. Acknowledgement, witnessing, and comfort are needed. Scripture reminds us that God is the Father of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3–4), and in our deepest sorrow, we often yearn for the embodied compassion of Jesus—expressed through a listening ear, a gentle touch, or quiet companionship from a fellow believer.

### Social dismissal

Despite the significance of pet loss, it is frequently misunderstood by society, often minimized or dismissed in ways that invalidate the mourner’s experience. Unlike human bereavement, grief for a pet may not receive communal recognition, leading to disenfranchised grief—a sorrow that lacks social permission to be fully expressed (Doka, 2002).

### Nature of the loss

The circumstances of pet loss can significantly affect the grieving process. Extended trauma, such as a pet’s prolonged illness, can wear down emotional resilience, while sudden trauma, like an accident, can leave the mourner

in shock and disbelief. Euthanasia, frequently a compassionate necessity, can cause deep guilt and inner conflict, challenging the human impulse to protect those we love. Ending the life of a cherished companion, even mercifully, feels fundamentally at odds with our deepest relational instincts.

### Vulnerable groups

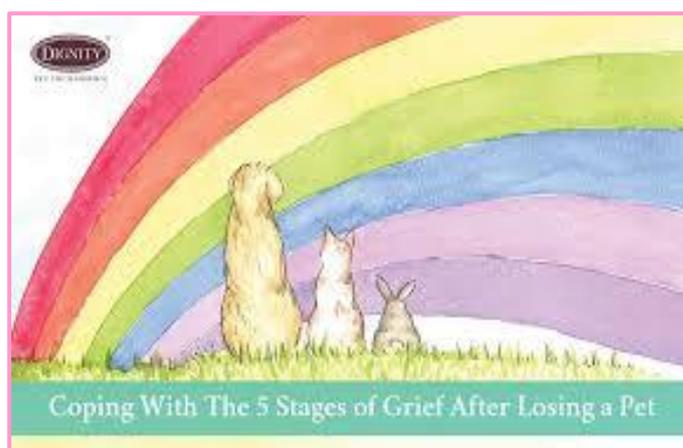
While pet loss is emotionally challenging for most owners, certain groups are especially vulnerable. Children, single individuals, the elderly, and those who rely on therapy and service animals may experience not only the loss of a beloved pet but also the unravelling of daily companionship, emotional stability, routine, purpose, and even functional independence. The grief experienced when such a bond is severed is therefore layered and complex.

### Clinical grief categories in the context of pet loss

The counselling community is familiar with the typical grief process following profound loss. However, for many pet owners—especially those already facing vulnerable life transitions—the grief process can become layered and complex. Several types of grief may converge, deepening emotional strain and necessitating compassionate recognition:

- **Disenfranchised Grief:** As previously described, pet loss is often met with societal misunderstanding. Unlike human bereavement, grief for a pet may be dismissed or minimized, leaving mourners without the validation or support they need. This creates disenfranchised grief—a sorrow that is real but goes unacknowledged (Doka, 2002).

- **Compound Grief:** Elderly individuals may experience several losses in rapid succession, such as the death of a spouse, a move to a retirement facility, the loss of a pet, and declining health. These overlapping losses contribute to compound grief, where each sorrow amplifies the next (Boss, 2002).
- **“Functionality” Grief:** This term describes the loss of lifestyle and independence intimately tied to the presence and role of a service animal. Beyond emotional companionship, service animals support daily routines, mobility, and identity. Their absence disrupts not only the heart but also daily life and a sense of functionality (Rossouw, 2025).
- **Interrupted or Suppressed Grief:** In work environments like security or law enforcement, service animals are seen as partners. When one dies, the need to



quickly replace them can interrupt the grieving process, leading to suppressed grief, where sorrow is shortened or bypassed for practical reasons.

- **Complicated Grief:** When grief is prolonged, intense, and difficult to resolve—especially after traumatic or sudden loss—it can evolve into complicated grief, affecting emotional regulation, relationships, and spiritual wellbeing (Rando, 1993).
- **Traumatic Grief:** Traumatic grief warrants special consideration. Pet parents can become stuck in the moment of sudden, violent, or morally complex loss. Research indicates that euthanasia can leave family members and caregivers with long-term psychological effects, such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, particularly when the decision felt morally ambiguous or rushed (Rohlf & Bennett, 2011).

In cases involving euthanasia, traumatic grief may manifest as persistent guilt over the decision—even when it was made compassionately—mental replaying of the final moments, questioning whether it was the right time or choice, isolation due to lack of understanding from others, and spiritual dissonance as the mourner struggles to reconcile their faith with the act of ending a life.

### Pastoral reflection

Scripture provides comfort for these sorrows: “The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” —Psalm 34:18. In moments of guilt-ridden grief, what is needed is not answers, but Presence. Healing often begins not with resolution, but with being seen, held, and reminded that mercy and love were present even in the hardest choices.

### Professional support

Because pet loss and grief are often socially dismissed or minimized, many grieving pet owners do not realize that their sorrow qualifies for professional grief support. This lack of cultural recognition obscures the reality that losing a beloved animal can have an emotional impact equal to that of human bereavement. While many individuals gradually find healing, unresolved or unacknowledged losses may accumulate, creating a

layered and complex grief landscape. Without compassionate intervention, this emotional burden can deepen into prolonged distress, highlighting the importance of

both clinical awareness and pastoral care.

### Recommendations

Most pets live heartbreakingly short lives, and their passing often leaves a profound emotional void. Pet bereavement deserves far more attention than it currently receives. The bond between pet and parent runs deeper than is commonly acknowledged, necessitating a cultural and clinical shift to recognize pet loss as a legitimate source of grief. Professional services should be expanded to support these mourners with empathy, expertise, and dignity (Kemp et al., 2021).

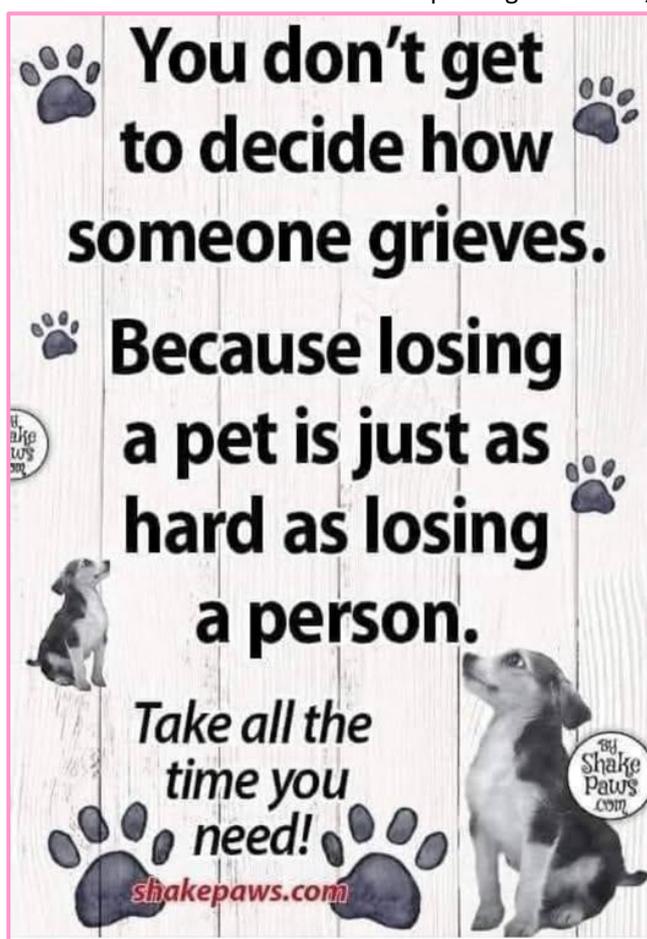
- **Integrate pet loss into mental health training:** Psychology and counselling programs should incorporate modules on pet loss and disenfranchised grief, equipping

professionals with the tools to validate and support grieving pet owners.

- **Create pet loss support services:** Veterinary clinics and organizations providing service animals should offer grief brochures, memorial options, and referrals to counsellors, ensuring that owners feel supported after a loss.
- **Develop age-appropriate resources for children:** Storybooks, school workshops, and therapeutic play kits can help children process pet loss and build resilience.
- **Support for elderly and isolated individuals:** Retirement communities and elder care services should provide pet loss support groups and therapeutic pet interactions, recognizing the compounded grief experienced by the elderly and isolated.
- **Expand public education and awareness:** Efforts should be made to destigmatize pet grief and educate the public, with social media playing a key role in shifting cultural narratives and fostering empathy.

### Conclusion

God is the author and finisher of our faith. He calls us into ministry because of His heart, as reflected in Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the



LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."

By honouring pet loss, we bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty from silent sorrow, and create space for healing where grief has long been hidden.

## References

- Beetz, A., Uvnäs-Moberg, K., Julius, H., & Kotrschal, K. (2012). *The effect of a real dog, toy dog and friendly person on cortisol levels in children with insecure attachment*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3, 352. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00352>
- Boss, P. (2006). *Loss, Trauma, and Resilience: Therapeutic Work with Ambiguous Loss*. Norton.
- Doka, K. J. (2002). *Disenfranchised Grief: Recognizing Hidden Sorrow*. Lexington Books.
- Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI). (2022). *Pressroom Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://habri.org/pressroom/20220116>
- Kemp, K., Jacobs, R., & McCutcheon, H. (2021). *Pet loss and grief: A systematic review of the literature*. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 26(4), 321–339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2020.1765097>
- Rando, T. A. (1993). *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*. Research Press.
- Rohlf, V., & Bennett, P. (2011). *Perpetration-induced traumatic stress in persons who euthanize nonhuman animals in veterinary and animal shelter settings*. *Society & Animals*, 19(3), 225–242. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853011X578371>

- Rossouw, R. D. (2025). *Coping with Pet Loss & Grief: Healing Heartfelt Paw Prints*. Groep 7 Drukkers en Uitgewers (PTY) Ltd. <https://www.petkidz.co.za>
- Science News Today. (2025, July 31). *How Pets Influence Human Mental and Physical Health*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencenewstoday.org/how-pets-influence-human-mental-and-physical-health>

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

From an early age, my love for animals has been a constant in my life. I earned my BA in Psychology from the University of Pretoria in 1983, driven not only by a passion for understanding the human mind but also by a deep desire to support emotional well-being. Years of ministry work strengthened my connection with people, ultimately leading me to a pivotal realization—our bonds with animals are just as profound, and the emotional welfare of pet owners is an often-overlooked need and the pain of their loss is socially dismissed. After retiring, I founded Petkidz turning my lifelong love for animals into a meaningful venture. One of my first projects was writing an e-book—Coping with Pet Loss & Grief: Healing Heartfelt Paw Prints (see <https://books2read.com/Petkidz>) It was created to help and support pet parents worldwide as they navigate the grief and loss of their beloved companions. My hope is that it provides comfort, understanding, and reassurance to those who need it most. ■



## Book review: *Big Faith Little Religion*

Godwin Booyesen is an Advanced Religious Specialist in Christian Pastoral Counselling

**The book: “Big Faith Little Religion, Little Faith Great Miracles”.**

**The author: Godwin Booyesen**

This book by Godwin Booyesen conveys two key ideas:

- **Big Faith, Little Religion:** Strong faith doesn't require extensive religious practices or dogma. True faith can thrive beyond traditional expectations.
- **Little Faith, Great Miracles:** Even a small amount of genuine faith can lead to remarkable and significant outcomes. Faith and miracles aren't directly proportional to religious adherence.

**The book challenges traditional notions of faith, religion, and miracles, offering a fresh perspective on the transformative power of genuine faith.**

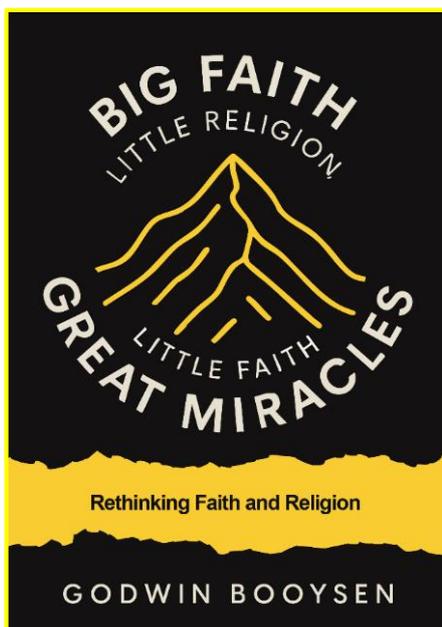
The author explains: *“This book represents a culmination of my passion for integrating theology and psychology to promote holistic well-being.*

*I explore various topics that are essential to a comprehensive approach to counselling, including critical thinking, embracing uncertainty, authenticity, and resilience.”*

The book's psychospiritual approach encourages readers to connect with something greater than themselves, while promoting personal growth, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence.

By examining the complex relationships between faith, religion, and mental health, the author aims to provide counsellors and individuals with a deeper understanding of the human experience and the importance of spiritual growth in achieving overall wellness with a sense of freedom.

The topics discussed in the book, such as overcoming fear and guilt, embracing diversity, and finding



balance between faith and reason, are highly relevant to the field of counselling and wellness.

By sharing his insights and expertise, the author hopes to contribute to the ongoing development of counsellors and wellness professionals, enabling them to provide more effective support to the clients who come across as religious and yet feel helpless in their walk and faith and religious experience.

As an Advanced Religious Specialist in Christian Pastoral Counselling, he believes that this book aligns with the principles of holistic practice and ongoing professional development. He is confident that the knowledge and perspectives shared in the book will enhance fellow counsellors' understanding of spiritual dynamics, ultimately benefiting their clients and the broader community.

**“Rethinking Faith and Religion” is an invitation to explore new perspectives on faith and spirituality, to challenge assumptions, and to discover a more authentic, personal, and meaningful approach to your spiritual journey.**

The author's hope is that this book will inspire meaningful conversations, spark important reflections, and empower the readers to find a sense of freedom and liberty in their souls: *“Let's embark on this journey of rethinking faith and religion together, and may it bring positive impact and transformation to your life...”*

### About the author

Godwin Booyesen is a pragmatic Military Chaplain, renowned Specialist Wellness Counsellor, and an Advanced Religious Specialist in Christian Pastoral Counselling.

He empowers individuals and communities with compassion, empathy, and leadership, skilfully navigating complex emergency situations. He further provides guidance and support to those coping with traumatic environments.

Godwin's life's journey has been marked by significant personal

***This book completely changed how I view faith. I've spent years trapped in religious performance, and this helped me rediscover the simplicity and power of real, living faith. Thank you, Godwin, for this courageous and compassionate message. – Review by Zanele K.***

***Godwin writes with a rare mix of authority and tenderness. He challenges long-held beliefs, but never without grace. This book gave me permission to believe differently—and more freely. – Review by Thabo M.***

growth and evolution over the past three decades, alongside numerous accomplishments. This transformative process has not only been incredibly fulfilling but has also profoundly deepened his understanding of faith and spirituality.

With a strong educational foundation, including a Master of Social Work (Health and Wellness) and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Counselling, Godwin possesses a deep understanding of human behaviour and development. His professional journey spans nearly three decades, with extensive experience in counselling, training, and community development.

Throughout his career, Godwin has undertaken numerous professional development courses, honing his expertise in areas such as trauma counselling, conflict resolution, and HIV/AIDS training, treatment counselling and case management. His passion for empowering others drives him to continue growing and learning, ensuring that his clients receive the best possible support.

Godwin's impressive military background is marked by his completion of numerous specialized courses. This training has equipped him with valuable skills in leadership, discipline, and resilience. Godwin has been decorated with numerous medals, including the Nkwe Medal, General Service Medal, Unitas Medal, Commandos Commemoration Medal, the 30 Years Service Medal,

***Every chapter felt like a conversation with a trusted mentor. The stories, the reflections, and the truth behind it all left me inspired to walk in faith—not fear.***

**– Review by Daniel K.**

Tshumelo Ikatelaho Medal, and the Op Vikela SAMIM Medal. Additionally, he has qualified as an elite airborne task force Operator.

As a Victim Empowerment Officer, Godwin has worked closely with vulnerable populations, providing support and guidance. He has had the privilege of serving in various military units and a church ministry running parallel to it for ten years, officiating weddings, speaking at graduations, and providing comfort to widows and families of fallen soldiers.

His spiritual exploration has led him to be part of various Christian denominations, including Methodist, Pentecostal Holiness, Evangelical, and Anglo-Catholic traditions. Within some of these denominations, he has held high-ranking positions, which have provided invaluable learning experiences and broadened his spiritual perspectives.

Consequently, Godwin Booyesen's convergent approach to faith is reflected in his writings and Authorship, which embody a philosophical blend of psychology, theology, and metaphysics. This unique approach enables him to explore the complexities of human existence and the nature of reality, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the human experience. Through his work, Godwin Booyesen offers a distinctive perspective that integrates the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects of human life, fostering a deeper understanding of oneself and the world. ■

***"A key factor in making Godwin special, besides outstanding scholarship, is that he has demonstrated a keen understanding of distressed people and an ability to arrive at the core issues quickly. He has minimized the suffering of many souls.***

***In addition, he holds an intrinsic capacity to blend theology and psychology, a quality which is quite rare in my 34 years of experience."***

**– Dr. Heywars B. Ewart III, Christian psychotherapist**

#### **HOW TO ORDER THIS BOOK:**

##### **On the website:**

<https://godwinbooyesen.co.za/>

##### **Via WhatsApp:**

**072 166 1341**

##### **Cost:**

**R300 + courier costs**



## Butterfly Reflection

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

Romans 12:2 (KJV)

“ 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Ecclesiast 3:3-4 (KJV)

“ 3 To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance”

**Keywords:** renewing, season, purpose, reflection

### Introduction

A glare into the distance, almost like an unreal reflection through the window. Staring into the unknown. Suddenly a surge in time. The movement of unexpected happenings... then a sudden halt in the moment of reflection... in hindsight the view of the first encounter with a beautiful yellow and orange butterfly. Before the appearing butterfly, it was like the earth shook beneath the existence called life. One does not know what is a constant and what is not. A distressed altering of the reflection shone upon time.

What lies within this butterfly reflection? What is meant by all of this... is it to state that all will be fine, that hope or new changes in life will follow?

Death is part of the earthly life, and each person enters a different state of mind when death is at the door. Just like the seasons change, so can everything in any moment.

Although, individuals may discuss end of life or grief; there are things not always understood.

### Content

In understanding my butterfly reflection on the end of life and grief, one needs to have some retrospection to the word metamorphosis and reflection, thus renewing.

The word metamorphosis comes from Greek words that mean “changes shape”. Metamorphosis is the process in which a dramatic change in body structure occurs during development. Metamorphosis means a rapid transformation from one object to another or a distinct or even degenerative change in appearance, personality, condition, or function. The metamorphosis or transformation also called changing (Isila, S.M.,2017).



The word “renewing” is a translation of the Greek word anakainosis; and the action of the preceding verb (“transformed [the metamorphosis]”) directs attention to a continuous renewing process. In II Cor. 4:16 we are told that “the inward man is renewed [lit., ‘is being renewed’] day by day. This renewing process is to keep on taking place day in and day out for the entire duration of the pilgrim walk here on earth (A. L. Chitwood, 2004).”

Sage Publication states the following definition:

“Reflection is a state of mind, an ongoing constituent of practice, not a technique, or curriculum element. Reflective Practice can enable practitioners to learn from experience about themselves, their work, and the way they relate to home and work, significant others and wider society and culture. It gives strategies to bring things out into the open, and frame appropriate and searching questions never asked before. It can provide relatively safe and confidential ways to explore and express experiences otherwise difficult to communicate.”



D. Haynes (2013) refers to Liu (2001:168-169) who states that: **“Butterflies undergo complete metamorphosis, passing from a larva or caterpillar stage to an immobile pupa or chrysalis, from which the winged adult emerges. Anyone observing these life stages would make the association with rebirth, resurrection, immortality and longevity, as had the Chinese and Mycenaean Greeks.”**

I want to make use of this description within my butterfly reflection from losing my mother; and how my journey might benefit the counsellor during the counselling process.

Before the larva stage, the butterfly lays eggs on the plants which becomes food for the hatching caterpillars. My mom gave me a set of values in life: faith, care, kindness, honesty, trust, tolerance, love and dedication, as well as to work hard.

The values held might differ from the social upbringing of an individual. Rudyard Kipling in the ‘Values in

Life' exclaims: "Values are found in all cultures and in all communities where humans subsist. Empathy, love, honesty, respect and consideration are some of the values which help humans to maintain brotherhood and peace... life is wasted by the constant pursuit of wealth. It is difficult for a man to have balance in life and therefore, there is suffering. Though suffering may not be how the individual feels. Wealth is an illusion that man chases thinking that they will be happy. Yet the poorer man can be happier than the man who is wealthy."

The eggs laid on the plant by the female butterfly will later hatch into magnificent caterpillars. It is important that one acknowledge that all family systems in society might not be healthy. Yet, this is where God provided counsellors and many others with the ability to be mindful and be active, yet emphatic listeners.

I was fortunate enough that my mother instilled healthy values within my life. This has given me the strength to guide other young individuals on their journeys and to provide them to develop resilience and mindfulness. I use the values my mother laid as the foundation, to guide many who experienced trauma, as well as my daughter on her daily journey in life. Everyone is 'butterflies'- we reflect daily and 'lay eggs daily', thus leave either positive or negative imprints onto an individual's life.

G.Bolton (2018) states ways we reflect:

- what you know but do not know you know
- what you do not know and want to know
- what you think, feel, believe, value, understand about your role and boundaries
- how your actions match up with what you believe
- how to value and consider personal feelings.

This form of reflection seems to enable practitioners to explore and experiment with areas of experience difficult otherwise to approach, such as:

- what you can change in your context; how to work with what you cannot
- how to value the perspective of others, however different they are to you
- how others perceive you, and their feelings and thoughts about events
- why you become stressed, and its impact on life and practice
- how to counteract seemingly *given* social, cultural and political structure

A poem I have used as reference when guiding and in my own 'butterfly reflection'.

#### "If" by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too; If you can wait  
and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,

And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise: If  
you can dream—and not make dreams your master.

If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools, Or  
watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools: If  
you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'  
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute With sixty seconds'  
worth of distance run, Yours is the Earth and  
everything that's in it, And—which is more—you'll  
be a Man, my son!

Keep faith and hold on, since there will be 'Triumph and Disaster'. So the butterfly enters the new reflection stage... that of the Larva.

During the larva stage the caterpillar grows, and it splits its skin and sheds it about 4 or 5 times. Moreover, the food eaten at this time is stored and used later as an adult. This stage is important during a young adult's life and right into adulthood: there will be multiple choices and decisions to make. One develops that inner strength and maturity, as well as to become the 'you' according to God's Will. Yet, this is not easy and there might be triumphs and disasters.

If one listens to God and be still in the moment; God re-creates 'four to five' or many more moments as needed; for His child thus 'caterpillar' to listen to Him. He 'splits its skin and sheds' it, just as He let Jesus get martyred, for all of us on earth. God wants us to grow like the caterpillar, 100 times their size, thus, to become the best version of us irrespective of all the 'disasters' one might face on our earthly journey.

During my butterfly reflection, the pupa also known as chrysalis, was seen during the end-life stage with my mother. My mother's body suffered many dramatic changes, and this led to the trauma experienced by all of us.

What changes did my mother's body go through, here on earth: blood clots, pancreatitis, unknown bleeding from somewhere etcetera. At the end the physicians had to amputate her left leg, to save her life, yet in

the process she suffered and near the end she was on a ventilator, and she had pneumonia.

The medical doctors said that where there is signs of life they had to continue to try and save mom. Yet, one cinched inside: on the one side of the coin, one wanted mom back, yet full bodied and on the other side of the coin this was not the reality, and she was in pain, yet God didn't want to fetch her: for some reason she had to go through all this pain and trauma.

What is end-life care? "Patients who are approaching the end of their life need high-quality treatment and care that support them to live as well as possible until they die, and to die with dignity. This guidance identifies several challenges in ensuring that patients receive such care and provides a framework to support you in addressing the issues in a way that meets the needs of individual patients. Providing treatment and care towards the end of life will often involve decisions that are clinically complex and emotionally distressing; and some decisions may involve ethical dilemmas and uncertainties about the law that further complicate the decision-making process.

This guidance is intended to help you, in whatever context you are working, to address these issues effectively with patients, the healthcare team and those who have an interest in the patient's welfare. It seeks to ensure that people who are close to the patient (partners, family, carers and others) are involved and supported, while the patient is receiving care and after the patient has died (General Medical Council, 2024)."

However, during my butterfly reflection journey, I felt that the communication lacked between the physicians and our family... one would phone and try to get clear answers of what is going on. The severity was never quite explained in a black-white way.

It felt like watching from an unreal reality of light flashing pass - clinging to a sort of false hope. I saw my mother's body enduring so much pain. One never understood the journey her psychological, emotional and spiritual self is going through. The hope was: if only she could speak to us, yet she was on a ventilator and more often sedated that she could not speak to us.

God made me realise that none of us are in control of our metamorphosis. C. Bidwell Smith (2018) describes this unreal overwhelming sadness that comes after one realises that life changes in an instance; as the experience of anxiety: "The intense number of emotions that come with grief can also heighten your sense of fear and danger. Most people have never felt such strong emotions as they do when they lose someone they love. It can be very frightening to find yourself

overwhelmed with sadness or anger, and this can lead to even more anxiety, even years after the loss."

During this immense sadness and seeing mom go through all the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual changes, as she journeyed through so many realms of reality, in split seconds; one realises that light does come towards the end of the butterfly reflection. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross & David Kessler (2024) indicates five stages of grief to consider when one starts the process towards healing.

The time one might spend in each stage will differ from person to person. One can move to and fro amongst the stages.

The next stage - the body of the caterpillar breaks down into a thick and usually green liquid. The clusters of cells regroup and reform into the adult form of a butterfly. I saw how my mother's human body started to break down, slowly. It was like having an epiphany- yet one I could not understand: I wanted my mom to have no more pain and to have peace, yet at the same time wanted her back completely healed. I always prayed that God would take her peacefully and with dignity. Yet, we cannot decide how and when God will call us back to Him. We had to carry on. My father being in hospital, and knowing how tethered he must feel, as well as battle through his own illness and now loss of mom: had to find a way to come back to us, yet longing for his life partner. God gave my father the strength to return to us.

Personally, I could not comprehend or make sense of everything. I longed to hear my mother's voice just one more time, to talk to me, to have her phone me and to listen to me. This was not the right time, yet, for the loss was unbearable, I wanted mom here without pain. Dad could not even say goodbye to his friend of 43 years, since he was in hospital with end-life liver cirrhosis. Yet, this realisation of reality didn't add up. God started his 'butterfly reflection' in my life not as a counsellor, but as an everyday individual.

A new metamorphosis started- during this sadness, God send me mom in the form of a butterfly. I fell on my knees and broke down in sadness, there it was, my first encounter with a most beautiful yellow-orange butterfly. My mother's soul taking flight with wings dancing around me, trying to help me to find my place in this world.



**Place in this World- Michael W. Smith**

*The wind is moving  
But I am standing still  
A life of pages  
Waiting to be filled  
A heart that's hopeful  
A head that's full of dreams  
But this becoming  
Is harder than it seems  
Feels like I'm  
Looking for a reason  
Roaming through the night to find  
My place in this world  
My place in this world  
Not a lot to lean on  
I need Your light to help me find  
My place in this world  
My place in this world  
If there are millions  
Down on their knees  
Among the many  
Can You still hear me?  
Hear me asking  
Where do I belong?  
Is there a vision  
That I can call my own?  
Show me, I'm looking for a reason...*



final stage the butterfly is ready to emerge, it breaks free from its pupa.

My new journey, dad's new journey, my daughter, and my mom's new journey is going to emerge. Through the longing of having mom's physical presence, God is taking care of her and so the new butterfly reflection starts.

Mom appears in many colour butterflies in the weeks to follow, after her passing to give guidance: mostly yellow, orange, white, and black towards the end black with blue-yellow.

According to Marilyn Alauria, the black butterfly represents the things ready to change transitions, moves, and giving birth to new ideas. Whereas the white butterfly represents the spirit dancing with you and wants you to know that you are never alone. Furthermore, the white butterfly wants to show that you are always being guided wherever you go and they want you to talk to them; even if you don't hear their answers, they are there, answering you and you will one day hear them loud and clear.

Moreover, according to Marilyn Alauria the black and yellow butterfly with blue dots, may signify transformation,

According to Chaitanya, yellow-orange butterflies symbolize positivity, hope, and transformation. Encountering, thus seeing one might mean good news or positive changes are headed your way. Furthermore, a yellow butterfly can symbolize that you're near a spiritual awakening. God send mom in the form of my own butterfly reflection, to give me some form of calmness in the storm and the uncertainties, as well as the fears experienced.



The grieving process is sacred: the loss of my mother and little one (miscarriage), as well as to be strong for my father during his end-life liver cirrhosis. This journey has shielded me, with better tools to assist a client during grieving therapy or an emotional trauma.

The magnificence in everything was; when my father said that he had a vision of my mother after her passing: she is in heaven, exquisite without any physical deformity, no pain and hurts. He said that she is about 33 years old and immensely joyful, as well as unblemished: this was so miraculous. A new season, thus new beginning was soon to emerge. During this

change, and new beginnings. The black colour can represent the unknown or the darker aspects of life, while the yellow and blue dots symbolize joy, light, and serenity. Together, they suggest a journey of self-discovery and the ability to embrace life's challenges with optimism.

At the end of the butterfly's journey the newly hatched butterfly will be wet and small in comparison to its finished state and so the butterfly will use a liquid that forms in the abdomen to pump up the wings, it will then hang until the wings are dry.

### Conclusion

This means that during the grieving process be still, give yourself some time to heal and most important have faith and know that those who passed is still

At the end of the butterfly's journey the newly hatched butterfly will be wet and small in comparison to its finished state and so the butterfly will use a liquid that forms in the abdomen to pump up the wings, it will then hang until the wings are dry.

with us. We need to just be still and seek our own unique butterfly reflection through recognising His presence. Once the butterfly is dry they are ready to fly. This is beautifully versed in Ecclesiastes 3:3-4: “<sup>3</sup> To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: <sup>2</sup> A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; <sup>3</sup> A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; <sup>4</sup> A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;...”

Just like the butterfly involves four distinct stages: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult butterfly, Earth goes through four seasons:

periods of new beginnings (spring), growth and activity (summer), reflection and change (autumn), and rest and preparation (winter).

No matter what season you might find your life to be in, you can be sure that God will provide guidance through the silence and renew your butterfly reflection. We find this message in Romans 12:2 - “<sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

William Wordsworth writes the poem “To A Butterfly” which emphasis the ‘pleasant’ days.

*Stay near me—do not take thy flight!  
A little longer stay in sight!  
Much converse do I find I thee,  
Historian of my infancy!  
Float near me; do not yet depart!  
Dead times revive in thee:  
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art!  
A solemn image to my heart,  
My father's family!*

*Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,  
The time, when, in our childish plays,  
My sister Emmeline and I  
Together chased the butterfly!*

*A very hunter did I rush  
Upon the prey:—with leaps and spring  
I followed on from brake to bush;  
But she, God love her, feared to brush  
The dust from off its wings.*

Although, during the counselling process there might be clients, yet also in life: the challenge to face many ‘leaps’, and where we do not want to depart with the physical being or form. God says that there will be an image imprinted into our hearts our soul and be stored into memory. We should not let go of these and should safeguard all the greatness of the most precious memories and keep it in sight. Sometimes one will

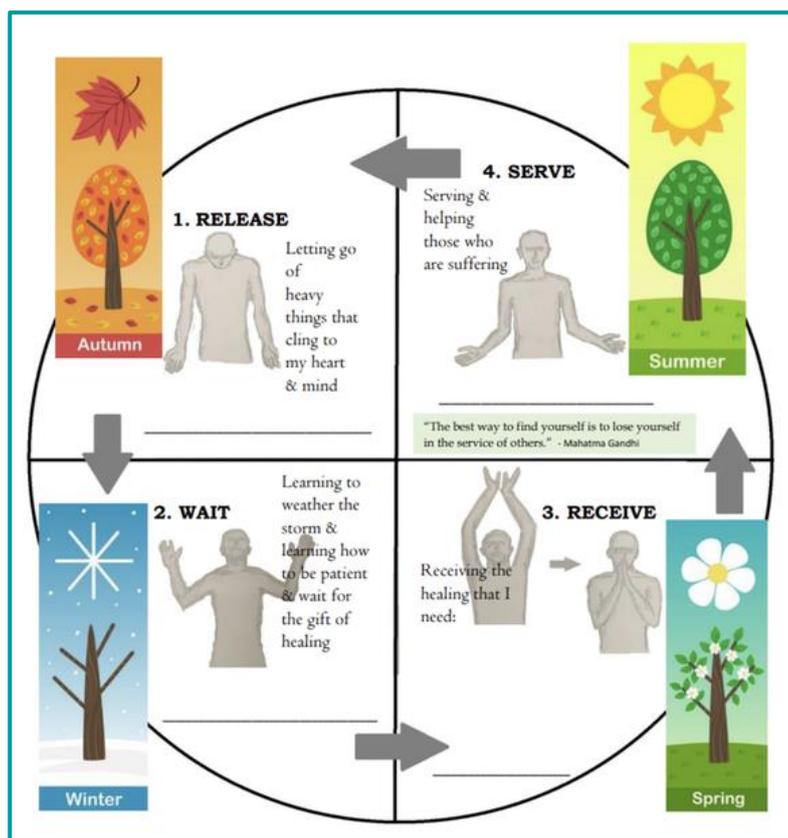


Image taken from: <https://www.growingedgesnm.com/4-seasons.html>

find with a client more sad memories than the joyful ones. Yet, it is our role to guide these clients' butterfly reflections and let their minds be renewed through guiding them into faith unto God. This is easily said than done and not always attainable. God says that we are not alone in this task and that is why he gave the Word and many theories as guidelines; yet most of all He gave our unique experiences: each counselor and individual's journeys; to share and to provide guidance to others.

So let's be active listeners and look through the looking glass with real empathy and kindness, since many seasons are experienced by so many of us.

Let us try to reflect upon the journey of each client's butterfly flight in Rebecca Saint James lyrics in *You make everything beautiful*:

"Grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change;

Grant me the courage, Lord, to change what I can;  
Grant me the wisdom to know the difference."

"In my weakness, You can shine; In Your strength, I can fly."

## References

- Bolton, G. & Delderfield, R. (2013). *Reflective practice writing and professional development*.  
Chitwood, A.L. (2004). *The metamorphosis: A transforming work of the spirit*.  
Haynes, D (2013). The symbolism and significance of the butterfly in ancient Egypt. <https://ansp.org/exhibits/online-exhibits/butterflies/lifecycle/>

Smith, C.B. (2018). *Anxiety: the missing stage of grief. A revolutionary approach to understanding and healing the impact of loss*. LONG First Edition: Da Capo Press, an imprint of Perseus Books, LLC.  
*Reflection and reflexivity: what and why*.  
[https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upmbinaries/32441\\_01\\_Bolton\\_3e\\_Ch\\_01.pdf](https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upmbinaries/32441_01_Bolton_3e_Ch_01.pdf)  
*Metamorphosis for better life in Nicholas Spark's, a Walk to Remember: An individual psychological perspective (2017)*. School of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta <http://bibleone.net/Metamorphosis.pdf>  
[https://resources.corwin.com/sites/defaulthttps://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/Treatment\\_and\\_care\\_towards\\_the\\_end\\_of\\_life\\_\\_\\_English\\_1015.pdf\\_48902105.pdfult/files/handout\\_14.1.pdf](https://resources.corwin.com/sites/defaulthttps://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/Treatment_and_care_towards_the_end_of_life___English_1015.pdf_48902105.pdfult/files/handout_14.1.pdf)

*Treatment and care towards the end of life: good practice in decision making. Professional standards*, 13 December 2024.  
<https://www.chamundaswamiji.com/orange-butterfly-spiritual-significance>  
*Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief*. <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/537/6683/17922/44868164318.pdf>  
<https://www.thenatureofthings.blog/2024/07/poetry-sunday-to-butterfly-by-william.html> ■

## Contemplating supervision principles in pastoral counselling

By Dr Willem Semmelink

**P**astors are the shepherds of the people taking care of the people in their congregations<sup>1</sup>. Through their guidance, teaching and assistance, they earn the trust of the individual to the point they are willing to approach the pastor for counselling.

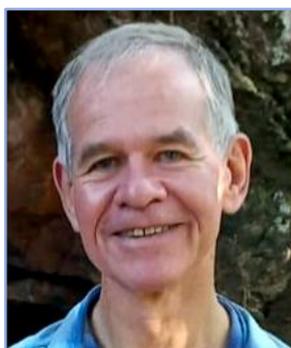
In theological training focus is given to biblical studies, exegesis, how to interpret scripture (hermeneutics), how to present a message (homiletics) and study of doctrines (dogmatics).

As the circumstances and the needs of the congregants have changed, so did the requirements of the training of pastors. This required additional disciplines such as pastoral counselling.

Christian Counselling – including Biblical Counselling – requires students to have supervision during their training and practical experience. Contrary to this, pastors during their training hardly receive any practical experience in pastoral counselling. Of further concern—most pastors in the world have little or no training at all.<sup>2</sup>

**The lack of experience in pastoral counselling by the presupposed overseers leaves pastors with the sole responsibility to self-navigate the ethical boundaries of pastoral counselling.**

Pastors' influential involvement in the local community leads to congregants and even people from the community viewing them as trustworthy. To fulfil this responsibility faithfully, it is advisable that pastors receive continued professional development with a focus on pastoral counselling. This will ensure that they are well equipped for their role in the community that will significantly impact the lives of the individuals that seek counselling. People who reveal their emotions, challenges in relationships, circumstances and experiences to the pastor could



place the ill-equipped pastor in a vulnerable and stressful situation.

**Depending on the structure of the denomination, supervision is presupposed—in the presbytery system it is expected of elders to oversee their pastor, or in the episcopal system priests submit to the local bishop.**

The overseeing by the elders or bishops requires mutual trust and care in their relationship. Although elders or bishops may have many years of experience in their role to oversee pastors, they have even less training in pastoral counselling.

The lack of experience in pastoral counselling by the presupposed overseers leaves pastors with the sole responsibility to self-navigate the ethical boundaries of pastoral counselling. Pastors should therefore be aware of their own limitations when assessing the situation. Like a paramedical or a general practitioner, the client (congregant) should be referred to a more qualified counsellor or specialist, should the pastor find himself lacking the qualification.

**Not all pastors are called to do pastoral counselling.**

**Pastors who do engage in counselling need to adhere to the principles that are required within pastoral counselling.**

Not all pastors are called to do pastoral counselling. Many will refrain from counselling due to the time-consuming nature and the responsibility of counselling.

Pastors who engage in counselling need to adhere to the principles that are required within pastoral counselling.

<sup>1</sup> 1Pt5:2

<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that less than 5% of all clergy have formal education and training. This led to the establishment of the Association for Christian Religious Practitioners (ACRP) with the

requirement of minimum training to register with one or more of the Councils – Council for General Ministry Practitioners (CGMP); Council for Ministry Training Practitioners (CMTP); and the Council for Pastoral and Spiritual Counselling (CPSC).

These principles ensure ethical integrity, professional development and emotional support.

**The three key functions of supervision—normative, formative, and restorative—can be meaningfully understood through a biblical lens, offering a holistic framework for guiding counsellors in their ministry.**

**Normative: Upholding integrity and accountability**

The normative function of supervision focuses on maintaining ethical and professional standards. This translates to upholding the truth of God’s Word and ensuring that counselling practices reflect biblical values. a safeguard against error and a means of cultivating a culture of transparency and trust.

**Formative: Cultivating continued development**

The formative function centres on the development of the counsellor’s skills, insight, and spiritual maturity. It involves helping counsellors reflect on their practice, learn new approaches, and deepen their understanding of both human nature and divine grace. It’s a space for theological reflection, case discussion, and skill enhancement.

**Restorative: Offering support and renewal**

The restorative function of supervision provides a safe space for counsellors to process their own emotional responses, receive encouragement, and prevent burnout. Thus, to foster an environment of grace and truth, where

counsellors feel safe to grow, confess, and be challenged.

Thus, pastors who engage in counselling but does not have supervision, or where supervision provided in the structure of the church is insufficient, should seek supervision.

This will ensure that their integrity is safeguarded and they receive professional development and emotional support.

**Supervision is vital, not only for the professional wellbeing of the pastor but also to faithfully serve the client (congregant) and to testify to the validity of pastoral counselling within the local community.**

**BIOGRAPHY**

Willem Semmelink has dedicated his life to theological education and pastoral care, with a career spanning nearly five decades. Over the past thirty years, he has contributed to theological training across various institutions, shaping the minds and hearts of future faith leaders. His deep commitment to pastoral counselling has supported countless individuals and communities through life’s challenges. Willem also served as a board member of the Association of Christian Religious Practitioners (ACRP), where he helped guide the organization’s mission to uphold ethical and professional standards in ministry.

**The Restorative (Supportive) function** of Professional Supervision considers the impact of the work on the supervisee and the necessary emotional and psychological support that may be required to support the supervisee into the future. This function can help heal wounds and disappointments as well as restore energy, vision and passion for the ministry. It can also mitigate the stresses and impacts of the work and help to establish and maintain the well-being of the Supervisee through helping them identify and set healthy boundaries.

**The Formative (Educative) function** of Professional Supervision focuses on the ‘educational’ aspects of supervision, such as developing knowledge, skills, self-awareness, attitudes and abilities. Supervision will seek to help the supervisee identify what might be limiting their ministry as well what blind spots they might be unaware of. The Supervisor will work with the supervisee to identify where they can source help to grow in their competence, capability and capacity.

**The 3 Functions of Supervision**

Adapted from Inskipp F. & Proctor B. (1995)

**The Normative (Managerial) function** of Professional Supervision focuses on the accountability of the pastor for their ministry and its impact on others within their congregation or outside of it. It considers how ministry practice intersects with principles of best practice, ethical and legal guidelines as well as relevant church and/or denominational professional standards, codes of conduct and procedures. The aim is always safe practice and the wellbeing of the Pastoral Leader themselves and those they minister to.

## Kintsugi bowl: The restoration of the wound

By Liza Borstlap, CPSC affiliate

**T**he Kintsugi bowl is a broken ceramic bowl repaired with gold lacquer that becomes a visible hymn to resilience. The gold does not hide the damage. It traces every fracture and elevates the seam into the focal point of beauty.

The Kintsugi bowl rejects concealment and disposal and insists that damage can hold meaning, that seams can carry testimony, and that repair can be an art.

### Biblical resonance

Scripture repeatedly values brokenness as the stage for divine work. The potter who reshapes the cracked vessel, the Psalmist who sings out of lament, and the Gospel scenes where the ragged and rejected are gathered all point to a God who does not discard fragments but reorders them into purpose.

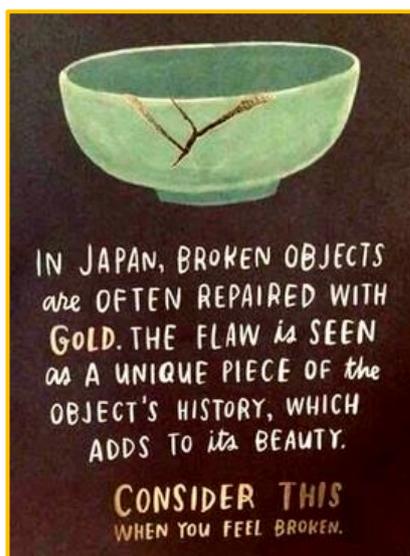
Peter's impulsive act at Gethsemane and Jesus' response reveal that human haste can wound and divine restoration invites a different way of being. Paul's language of strength made perfect in weakness re-frames fracture as the place where grace is most visible. Biblical restoration honours the story of the wound while reorienting identity around resurrection life.

### Psychological insight made practical

Repair happens through three things at once.

- **Contain the emotion**  
Help the person feel steady enough to speak about what happened. Use grounding exercises, breathing techniques, and short safety checks so strong feelings do not take over the session.
- **Help them make meaning**  
Support the person to put words to the event and to the beliefs that followed. Use simple questions such as "What did this change for you?" and "What do you want this experience to teach you?" Guide them toward a clearer and kinder story.
- **Rebuild relational trust**  
Support small, reliable steps that reconnect the person to others or to their own sense of reliability. This looks like consistent, practical actions rather than grand gestures.

If the work focuses only on wiping away symptoms, the seam remains hidden and fragile. Combining emotional containment, straightforward meaning-making, and small relational actions helps people keep the memory of



what happened while weaving a stronger, more coherent sense of self.

### Simple tools for counsellors

#### 1. Containment tools

- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding.
- Box breathing for one to three minutes.
- Short safety check at the start and end of each session.

#### 2. Meaning-making tools

- One-line summary prompts: "This happened. I felt. I believed."
- A short timeline of events written together on a page.
- Gentle reframing prompts: "What does this **not** mean about you?" and "What might this mean if there is a kinder explanation?"

#### 3. Relational repair tools

- Create one practical step to try before the next session.
- Role-play brief, specific phrases for apology or boundary-setting.
- Track small consistency tasks and review them together.

Use any combination of these tools in the same session. Contain first, name second, act third. Repeat the cycle across sessions until the person reports greater steadiness and clearer meaning.

### Applications in everyday life

- **In relationships**  
Honest acknowledgement and specific reparative actions restore trust more reliably than vague apologies.
- **In leadership**  
Leaders who name mistakes and map the concrete



steps of repair cultivate psychological safety and loyalty.

- **In vocation**

Career setbacks become sources of skill and empathy when reframed through learning and measurable next steps.

- **In spiritual life**

Prayer, lament, and small rituals mark thresholds of repair and invite a renewed identity grounded in grace.

### Reflection prompts

- Where are your visible seams at work or at home that you have tried to hide or discard?
- What short story do you tell about those fractures and how might you reframe it with one kinder sentence?
- What is one small, reliable step you can take this week to show repair is possible?

### God gilds the broken

God does not discard the broken. God gilds it. Every fracture is a story. Every repair is a resurrection. Let the Kintsugi bowl remind you to honour the break, attend to the work of repair, and let the healed lines become places where your life reflects renewed beauty and purpose.

#### Liza Borstlap

Pastoral and Wellness Counsellor | CPSC 2018P016  
Ecometrist | BA Theology (Hons)  
Art Life Coach



## Finding Balance Through Decluttering: A Path to Grounding and Order

By Pastor Charlotte Meintjes

**I**n our fast-paced world, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the clutter that accumulates in our lives. Both physical and mental clutter can distract us from our purpose and lead to stress, confusion, and a sense of being unanchored.

For Pastors and Counsellors, guiding individuals and families toward a more organised life can be a transformative journey. One that offers both spiritual and practical benefits.

### The spiritual aspect of decluttering

Decluttering is not just about tidying up our physical spaces; it also has profound spiritual implications. In 1



Corinthians 14:33, we are reminded, "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace." When our environments are cluttered, it often reflects or contributes to a sense of chaos in our minds and hearts. By taking steps to declutter, we can create spaces that foster peace, allowing us to focus more on our relationships with God the Father and others.

### The benefits of a decluttered life

- **Restoration of Balance:** Decluttering helps us regain balance in our lives.

When our surroundings are organised, we can find what we need quickly, allowing us to spend our time

and energy on what truly matters. Our relationships, our faith, and our mission.

- **Grounding and Rooting:** A tidy environment can serve as a physical representation of our inner state. Just as we root ourselves in faith and community, having a clean and orderly space can ground us, helping us feel more connected to ourselves and to the Father.
- **Increased Productivity:** When we eliminate distractions and streamline our environments, we can work more efficiently. This means we spend less time searching for items and more time fulfilling our callings. As Pastors and Counsellors, this increased productivity can translate into more effective ministry and counselling sessions.

**Practical steps for decluttering**

- **Start Small:** Begin with one area—a drawer, a closet, or a desk. Breaking the task into manageable pieces prevents overwhelm and allows for a sense of accomplishment.
- **Set Clear Goals:** Identify what you want to achieve with your decluttering efforts. Do you want to create a more peaceful workspace? A welcoming home environment? Write down your goals to keep yourself accountable.
- **Create a System:** Establish a routine for maintaining order. Consider the "one in, one out" rule: for every new item you bring into your space, remove an old one. This helps prevent future clutter.
- **Involve Others:** Encourage family members or church groups to join in the decluttering process. This not only makes the task more enjoyable but also fosters community and shared purpose.



**Conclusion**

Decluttering is a powerful tool for fostering balance, grounding, and productivity in our lives. By simplifying our environments, we create spaces that reflect peace

# de·clut·ter

/ 'dēklətər /  
verb

1. to remove mess or clutter from (a place).
2. to organize and prioritize (one's commitments, material possessions, etc.)

and order, allowing us to focus on our spiritual journeys and the needs of those we serve.

As you encourage those in your care to embrace decluttering, remember the wisdom of Proverbs 24:3-4: "By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches."

May your efforts in decluttering lead to richer, more meaningful lives rooted in faith and community and grounded in Him.



Pastor Charlotte Meintjes

Charlie's Thrift Store  
0763815074

*Pastor Charlotte Meintjes is the visionary founder and CEO of Poems of Hope Pty Ltd, a dynamic platform dedicated to empowering individuals through words of inspiration and practical support.*

*With a prolific career as an author, Charlotte has penned over 24 books and completed six major projects, showcasing her dedication to spreading hope. Her creative talents extend beyond literature; she has composed more than 800 songs and poems that resonate with audi-*

*ences far and wide.*

*In her mission to foster spiritual growth and community well-being, Charlotte initiated the 4th October International Prayer Day of Hope, a testament to her commitment to prayer and healing. She has a heartfelt ministry focused on helping individuals declutter their homes, particularly those struggling with hoarding tendencies, guiding them towards finding order and hope once again.*

*With the guidance of the Lord, Charlotte has successfully built her business, Poems of Hope, which operates as Charlie's Thrift Store. This initiative not only provides a space for affordable goods but also includes a drop-off zone for unwanted items, encouraging generosity and community support.*



*Located at 26 Amatola Road, Doringkloof, Centurion, Charlotte strives to make a difference in the lives of those in need, embodying her mission of hope and renewal through her work and ministry. ■*

## Challenges faced by Christian teenagers — how the church can help?

Prepared by Busiswa H. Sakwe

*Life Coach, Marriage and Family Counsellor  
Ordained Pastoral and Spiritual Counsellor  
(CPSC Affiliate)*



### Introduction

**P**arenting a teenager in the 21st century is no easy task. In an age shaped by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, our youth face unique pressures that demand patience, understanding, and intentional guidance from parents and church leaders alike.

Having worked in children's ministry for many years, I have had the privilege of walking and working closely with teenagers — teaching them the Word of God, listening to their struggles, and watching them grow. Many of them confide in me about sensitive issues they grapple with daily. These conversations have convinced me that as Christian counsellors and church communities, we must be more proactive in supporting our young people.

### The Bible reminds us:

“The tongue of the infant clings to the roof of its mouth for thirst, the young children ask for bread, but no one breaks it for them.” (Lamentations 4:4)

This verse is a powerful call to action — a reminder that if we do not meet the spiritual and emotional needs of our teenagers, they will search for answers elsewhere.

### Who Is a Teenager?

A teenager is anyone between 13 and 19 years old — a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. In this stage, young people begin to take on adult responsibilities, develop their identity, and prepare for life's demands.

A Christian teenager, specifically, is one who believes in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, seeking to live according to His teachings (Romans 10:9–10, John 1:12). This is a deeply personal matter of the heart — but it is also one that must be nurtured by family and community.



## The Challenges Facing Christian Teenagers

### 1. Cultural and Media Pressures

Today's teens live in a world that often opposes Christian values. Popular culture and media promote materialism, relativism, and lifestyles that can clash with biblical teaching — including messages about sexuality, identity, and morality. Schools and universities may even present environments where Christian faith is challenged or dismissed.

### 2. Personal Faith and Identity

Many Christian teenagers struggle to make their faith their own. Biblical illiteracy makes it hard for them to stand firm in their beliefs, and confusion about self-worth and identity can lead to insecurity. Media exposure makes it even harder to uphold biblical standards of sexual purity (Romans 12:1–2, Genesis 1:26).



### 3. Family and Community Challenges

Broken homes, domestic violence, divorce, absent fathers, and unsupportive parents all take a toll. Teens may also face intense peer pressure to compromise their beliefs just to fit in.

### 4. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Anxiety, depression, loneliness, and pressure to succeed are common struggles. These issues are sometimes misunderstood or dismissed in church settings, leaving teens feeling isolated.

## The Role of The Church and Parents

The church and parents must work together to build a strong, safe, and supportive environment for teenagers. Here are key steps we can take:

- **Provide Spiritual Guidance** — Teach Scripture, mentor teens, and equip them to live out their faith.

- **Build a Reliable Community** — Create mentorship and discipleship programs that encourage growth and service.
- **Model a Solid Lifestyle** — Parents must lead by example, showing teens how to live faithfully and responsibly.
- **Create Safe Spaces** — Offer secure environments where teenagers can share openly about their struggles.

**Practical Church Initiatives**

- **Social Relief Desk** – To address practical needs (Mark 6:31–44)



- **Career Guidance Desk** – Helping teens discover their purpose (Daniel 1:17)
- **Discipleship Teams** – Teaching and training in the Word (Matthew 28:19–20)
- **Counselling Teams** – Providing wise guidance (Proverbs 11:14)
- **Bible Study Groups** – Deepening understanding of Scripture (Acts 2:42, 2 Timothy 3:16)
- **Social Media Team** – Sharing uplifting and faith-based content (Habakkuk 2:2)

**Concluding Remarks**

If we can establish these support systems, we will help parents better understand what their children are facing and equip teenagers to grow into strong, resilient believers.

As the Bible instructs:

“Teach [these commands] diligently to your children, talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6–7)

“Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

By faithfully guiding the next generation, we build a stronger church and a stronger future.

**Work Cited**

[https://: www.parents.com](https://www.parents.com);  
 New Living Translation, 1998;  
 New Revised Standard Version Bible, 1989 ■

## ***A Story of Healing and Hope: Reflection on Trauma, Faith, and Forgiveness***

By Grace Jordaan

**E**very person carries a story, one that reflects both brokenness and redemption. My journey is one of deep wounds, painful memories, and seemingly insurmountable struggles, but also of healing, restoration, and hope through the love of Jesus Christ. This reflection is not only about the past I endured, but about the God who transformed my life.



**Background**

I was born into a traditional Portuguese family, the eldest of three children. My parents emigrated from Madeira to South Africa as youngsters in the 1960s, bringing with them the values, traditions, and scars of their own upbringing. They settled in a small Free State farming community, where I grew up as a first-generation Portuguese South African.

While I was raised in a Catholic home, the cultural and social environment often made me feel like an outsider, caught between two worlds. Accepting and embracing my heritage was not always easy. My father’s life story, in particular, shaped the atmosphere of our home. Raised in hardship and deprivation, he never experienced love, nurture, or affirmation. By the age of thirteen, he was already working for strangers, robbed of both education and affection. That absence of nurture left its mark on him, influencing how he treated his own children. For my father, discipline came more naturally than love, and harshness more easily than gentleness.

As the eldest child, I carried a heavy weight of expectation. I was to be the strong one, the example for my younger siblings. From as early as eleven, I worked in our family shop, learning responsibility and resilience,

though deep down I longed for tenderness and acceptance. These early years shaped much of my personality. I became shy, insecure, and often fearful of my father. His temper and emotional distance left me retreating into silence. My longing for affection made me deeply vulnerable, something I would only recognize later in life.

At eighteen, during my matric year, tragedy struck. My father was murdered in a robbery while opening our store one Monday morning. The trauma of his violent death was compounded by financial devastation—at the time, he was once again facing liquidation. Within days, we lost everything: our business, our car, and our home.

Were it not for the generosity of a Portuguese family who offered my mother shelter and employment, we would have been left homeless. This combination of cultural displacement, childhood longing, and sudden trauma became the foundation of my story. It was a beginning marked by loss, yet also by resilience. A resilience that would carry me into the years that followed, shaping both my struggles and my pursuit of healing.

### Trauma and the loss of innocence

At the age of ten, my father began to cross the boundaries no child should ever endure. Molestation entered my life in secrecy and confusion. My body manifested the pain through severe stomach cramps. Though a perceptive doctor suspected abuse, I could not articulate the truth.

As a child, I equated ‘hurt’ only with physical pain. The sexual abuse ended, but the silence, fear and emotional scars remained and were replaced with verbal abuse. At seventeen, another violation occurred. I was manipulated and raped by someone who used my longing for affirmation against me. Again, I felt frozen, voiceless, powerless. These experiences cemented a lie within me, that I had no right over my own body and no value beyond being used.

### The shadow of death

My father’s life spiralled downward into alcohol, financial ruin, and rage. His inner demons consumed him, and the family bore the consequences. As a teenager, I faced death multiple times: a car accident, a terrifying night

when my father held a gun and threatened to kill us both, my own suicidal thoughts, and the murder of my father.

### Encountering Jesus in the Mist of Pain:

Looking back, I see that Jesus had been with me all along. Even as a small child in the Catholic Church, I once saw Him – dressed in radiant white, smiling and waving at me. To my mother’s horror I waved profoundly back to nobody, but that image would be part of my healing later in life. Though I didn’t know Him, then, He was already

marking my life with His presence.

One day, in a moment of complete despair, I lay on the floor crying and called out to Jesus: “Jesus, Jesus, here I am! Jesus, help me, please help me!” I fell asleep on the ground, and when I awoke, I felt lighter. Something had shifted. This was the start of my healing journey. After my lowest point, Jesus began drawing me closer. I met a counsellor who led me to a born-again relationship with Jesus Christ. Healing came gradually, through His Spirit, through my marriage, through community and His Word.

*“Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path”*  
Psalm 109:105 NIV

Through marriage and the discovery of unconditional love, I

began to experience healing. Jesus worked with my heart like a skilled surgeon, slowly binding wounds, removing scars and restoring joy. My physical afflictions - such as endometriosis, depression and fear -- became places where I witnessed God’s power of healing and grace.

*“Move your heart closer and closer to God, and He will come even closer to you. But make sure you cleanse your life and keep your heart pure and stop doubting.”* James 4:8 TPT

### Forgiveness and freedom

Perhaps the hardest challenge of my journey was learning to forgive, especially my father. Not excusing his sin, but releasing its hold over my life.

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth”*  
– Ephesians 6:1-3 NIV

- **Pastoral counsellors must listen for hidden pain – often expressed in physical symptoms, behavioural changes, or silence.**
- **Pastoral care must help survivors break the cycles of shame and self-blame and affirm their identity in Christ.**
- **Counsellors must remind survivors that God hears even the faintest cry for help and that His work is often a process, not an instant cure.**
- **Pastoral counsellors should help individuals to see small victories, to recognize God’s presence in their pain, and to hold onto hope for transformation.**
- **Counsellors, empowered by Christ’s example, must guide believers in the forgiveness process.**
- **As pastoral counsellors, we should walk gently with the broken, listen without judgement, and with discernment continually point them to the One whose love never fails.**

But how could I honour someone who wounded me so deeply? The breakthrough came unexpectedly, through my five-year-old son with his innocent questions about my father. He knew my dad was deceased, but that was all the information he had. While answering his questions truthfully, yet gently, regarding what my father enjoyed and what was his favourite food, I found myself recalling the good qualities of my father and the valuable skills I had learned from him.

We often think forgiveness is about weakness, caving-in, or giving up.

It's not.

Forgiveness is about letting go. It's about reclaiming ownership of your heart, your mind, and your body.

Forgiveness is about you deciding to no longer carry the weight someone else has put in your backpack. It's about taking the bricks out and setting them down so you can move forward lighter and free.

Forgiveness is about freedom.

Forgiveness is about you.

John Delony

The Holy Spirit softened my heart and reminded me that forgiveness is not about excusing the wrong but about releasing ourselves from bondage. I had to first feel, and the feeling I needed to discover, was compassion, compassion towards my father. He never dealt with his childhood trauma; he never had to opportunity to surrender to a Saviour that heals a broken heart.

He died traumatised and broken. Forgiveness became the key to my freedom. I could finally see my father not only as the man who hurt me, but also as a broken child who never received love. Honouring my parents became a spiritual discipline, not based on worthiness, but on obedience to God's Word, and that was freeing. The freedom I experienced is beyond description, yet if I could capture it in words, it was as though two massive boulders of chains I had been dragging on my back were suddenly gone. I felt light, unburdened, and absolutely free. Once you taste the freedom that forgiveness brings, every step of the journey is worth it. It opens your heart to forgive more easily and to live with peace.

*"Taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him"* Psalm 34:8 NIV

## Hope beyond the pain

My story is not one of perfection, but of redemption. Where the enemy sought to destroy me, God used every scar to reveal His glory. Today I can say with confidence that I am free, not because my past disappeared, but because Jesus transformed it. True healing is not forgetting but seeing it through the lens of His grace. True forgiveness is not condoning the wrong, but entrusting justice and healing to God. True hope is not in our strength, but in Christ alone, who promised:

*"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness"* 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Hope in Christ isn't passive, it's an anchor, keeping us steady in trials, and a light guiding us forward. When we live as followers, not just believers, our faith becomes active, seen in love, obedience, and perseverance.

## Pastoral insights

Children who suffer abuse often do not have the language to describe what is happening. Counsellors must listen for hidden pain, expressed in physical symptoms, behavioural changes or silence. Safe spaces, trust, and gentle persistence are essential in drawing out the unspoken. Unaddressed trauma increases susceptibility to further harm.

Pastoral care must help survivors break cycles of shame and self-blame and affirm their identity in Christ. Moments of spiritual surrender often emerge in the deepest valleys. Counsellors must remind survivors that God hears even the faintest cry for help and that His work is often a process, not an instant cure. Healing is rarely linear. Counsellors should help individuals see small victories, recognizing God's presence in their pain and hold onto hope for transformation.

Forgiveness is not condoning worth but is necessary for freedom. Counsellors must guide believers in the forgiveness process, sometimes repeating it many times, empowered by Christ's example.



“This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and FORGIVE us our debts, as we also have FORGIVEN our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but DELIVER us from the evil one.” – Matthew 6:9-13 NIV



Jesus Christ took all the sins of the world upon Himself for everyone; when you choose not to forgive, whose sin is truly greater? When Christ took all the sins of the world upon Himself, He bore every sin, including the sins of unforgiveness, bitterness, pride, and judgment. He paid the price in full, offering forgiveness freely to all. But when someone chooses not to forgive, they are essentially rejecting the very grace that saved them. In that sense, the act of withholding forgiveness doesn't make their sin greater in quantity, because Christ already paid for it, but it reveals a heart that resists the mercy of God.

Every survivor's story is unique, but the message is the same: Jesus heals, restores, and brings hope where despair once ruled.

As pastoral counsellors, we are invited to walk gently with the broken, listen without judgement, using discernment and continually pointing them to the one whose love never fails.

### Highlighted pastoral themes

1. The hidden wounds of children – abuse is often invisible and unspoken. Be attentive.
2. The cycle of trauma – Unhealed pain can lead to repeated victimisation.
3. The battle for life – Many survivors face suicidal thought; hope must be proclaimed.
4. The process of healing – God's restoration comes in steps, not instant fixes.
5. The power of forgiveness – True freedom comes through releasing bitterness and entrusting justice to God. ■

### BIOGRAPHY

Grace is a devoted child of God, deeply rooted in faith and family. Formerly in the finance field, she answered God's call into a new season of motherhood and homeschooling, nurturing both hearts and minds. She is passionate for helping women and young girls discover freedom, purpose, and a deeper walk with Christ. Grace lives with gratitude for life's simple joys—time in nature, good food, and everyday moments that reflect God's goodness. Her heart for pastoral care is expressed through encouragement, compassion, and a desire to see others healed and restored through God's love. ■

## Why counselling?

By *Henriette Brown, Basic Religious Professional in Christian Pastoral Counselling*

**I**nner healing is the bridge between the “here” and “there”. The “here” is where you as an individual are right now, in this time and place, the sum of all your experiences. “There” is the place where we can function as a whole human being in society, with all our emotions intact.



We all walk with the scars of our childhood and the traumatic experiences we experienced in life. We all are the products of how we were raised.

The older I get the more obvious the differences in generations become to me.

The younger generations are so much freer in expressing their feelings and issues, which must be liberating in so many ways.

But for the 60s and 70s babies, the norm was “cowboys don't cry” and “you don't talk about issues”, or “to suck it up, and carry on”. So many became embittered old people because they have been nursing their pain and anger for so long. The downside is it hampers people from opening up to relationships, never mind trusting people.

Forgiveness is a huge gift from God -- once you have made a conscious decision to forgive, the relief comes. And through a process of counselling this can be guided to full restoration.

The Bible is full of examples of people who cried, and emotions are spoken about freely:

In Psalm 118:28 David says, “I weep with grief; my heart is heavy with sorrow; encourage and cheer me with your words...”

Job 30:16-18 talks about a broken heart filled with pain, that causes sleeplessness.

Even Jesus wept and became angry. But if as a child you were “programmed” not to show emotions and to switch off feelings – how can you identify with and acknowledge them as an adult?

We are all created in God’s image – we all consist of spirit, soul and body. God wants us to be restored physically, emotionally and spiritually so that we can be in harmony with Him. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 TLB – “may your Spirit and soul, and body be kept strong...” If we are in harmony with God, we can serve Him more effectively!

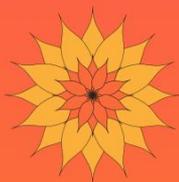
Psalms 147:3 states, “He heals the broken-hearted, binding up their wounds”. That would be emotional and physical wounds. We cannot keep on living in the past and hanging on to emotional garbage. A good counselling session is like a good spring-clean. Issues are identified and sorted, the “dirty” items are cleaned, and order is restored.

A counsellor is there to listen to, and not to judge, the counsellee. They can help organise confused minds and can help to restore a shattered person to wholeness. In so many cases physical illnesses disappeared after emotional issues were effectively dealt with.

When traumatic incidents become too severe for our bodies to deal with, we can blank it out in our minds. This is a survival technique as old as the hills. But if we constantly keep suppressing our hurts and anger, we become like a pressure cooker. And eventually something will give. Our bodies may talk for us, even if we cannot verbalise it. The emotions experienced may be mood swings, anger outbursts, or changes in sleeping patterns, with day and night reversed.

You have the power  
to heal your life.  
We think so often that we  
are helpless but we are not.  
We always have the  
power of our minds.  
Claim and consciously  
use your power.

Louise L. Hay



outofstress.com

Any form of trauma clouds our perceptions of people. It gives us “tainted glasses to view the world around us”. In counselling, you can get clarity, and you can deal with your “blind spots” that trip you up in your daily life. In most day to day living, emotional pain is seldom caused

by our present situations. The new situations just trigger the old stored away pain in the recesses of our minds.

### An example

Many years ago, I started seeing a lady in her late sixties. Her mother was alive and in her late 80’s. Her demeanour was that of a very confident, well-dressed and well-spoken lady. But in her eyes you could see a vulnerability. As time went by, something in our spirits just clicked, and we became best friends.

#### WHY COUNSELLING?

**BECAUSE HEALING IS POSSIBLE IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT WHERE YOU ARE SEEN, HEARD AND BELIEVED.**

In a nutshell – Ilse grew up in a house with a dictator father and very staunch and rigid mother. As an only child she was not allowed friends, and she became a loner. Her father sexually abused her into her teenage years. As soon as she could, she left school and started off on her own. She coped with menial jobs, and later she met and married her husband who was a lot older than her. Due to the shame she was feeling, she did not at first discuss her past with her husband.

She tried reconnecting with her mother and father who lived in the UK but was shunned. After her father passed away, she again reached out to her mother, hoping that her daughters could meet and get to know their grandmother. But she was told to stay away. She told her mother, “I forgive you for not protecting me against my father”. Her mother’s response was that she was again lying about her dad, and that she wanted nothing to do with her. She said she no longer had a daughter.

It was a tough situation. And we often spoke about the phone conversations, and we always came to the same conclusion. Her mother knew, and did nothing, because then she would have had to admit to herself that she was a failure as a wife and mother. And secondly, her mother felt no regret for her actions. I am sure deep down inside, she had lived in so much denial about the reality of what had happened, that it became her reality. The sad thing is she did not care one way or another about her daughter’s welfare.

The most important thing for Ilse, though, was that she was able to say those words to her mom. What her mom did with those words was not her responsibility.

For Ilse, this removed the shackles from the past. They moved back to the UK. Ilse became a much happier person, while her mother died a lonely and embittered old lady. Ilse passed away in her late 80’s. but the legacy she left to her girls is one of love, kindness and forgiveness. She really led by example. This is what God expects from all of us - not fancy cars, or money as a legacy, but His love and compassion in action.

For me the most special word in the Bible is grace: God does good things for us, despite us not deserving it! And we should put that grace into practice.

The Holy Spirit will carry you on this journey, God only needs a willing heart for this journey to become your testimony. God 's angels are working, and we don't realise it! As a victim of severe childhood abuse, you may feel dirty, unworthy, angry, betrayed and rejected. And in our human mind, we think God can't use us, but HE CAN!.

In children, trauma often manifests in in isolation. They think they are dirty and that the shame they feel will be revealed. They need to hide these secrets and fear that they will get blamed for everything. That is the psychological impact of trauma on children. They always carry a deep feeling of loneliness and of not fitting in anywhere. Being constantly exposed to trauma breaks a child's spirit. Later in life they lack the skill of logical problem solving, as they only know survival mode.

The reality is we do not live in a perfect world; there are no perfect families - children from broken homes become broken, damaged adults. When these individuals get married, they bring their own personal experiences into the marriage. If they stay in a bad cycle, the repetitive abuse remains toxic to families. Pre-marriage counselling is therefore vital, as undealt-with issues often sink marriages.

So many people carry a child within them who had suffered trauma. Those experiences made them believe

that all people are bad, and this belief often carries over into adulthood.

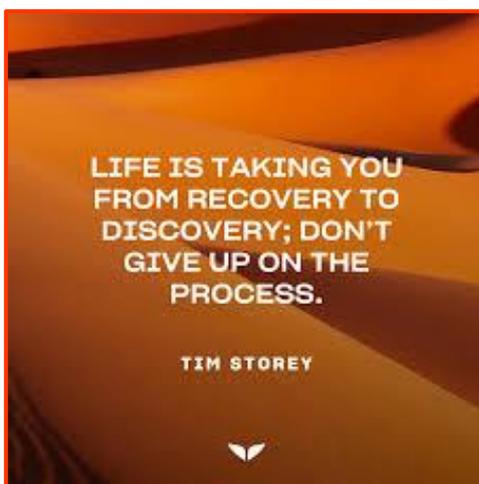
The first step towards a healing journey, is forgiveness. That is the foundation for the journey. You cannot get a better foundation for your life. Life is too short to live with anger and resentment. God will give you insight and will reveals things to you at the right time. God can remove a heart of stone and replace it with one filled with love and kindness. The journey of healing can be a roller coaster ride with lots of ups and downs, but all we need to do, is to trust Him with a willing heart and to have faith in Him. God's grace is the cements that will hold it all together, just trust God in the process.

**BIOGRAPHY**

Henriette was born in 1965 in Vanderbijlpark. She is the mother of a son in Cape Town and a daughter in Basel, Switzerland, and the grandmother of a precious granddaughter. She has been a volunteer counsellor since 1993. She feels privileged to see broken people restored to wholeness. She is also a Trauma Incident Reduction (TIR) facilitator and has SAP occult training.

She loves writing articles for magazines to spread awareness of trauma, suicide, and cancer. She has run various support groups for those impacted by cancer and suicide and will restart again as soon as venues become available.

Henriette is available to act as a speaker at events regarding these topics. ■



## CPSC CPD training events

### Pastoral counselling course: Helping the helpers – pastoral perspectives on stress, burnout and compassion fatigue

Presented by Prof Wentzel Coetzer

**Being constantly involved in the counselling and spiritual guidance of emotionally wounded and traumatized persons can ultimately be costly if the spiritual leader/counsellor is ignorant and naive and he/she does not have preventive measures in place.**

There are many pastors, counsellors, social workers, therapists, etc., who run this daily risk that often results in emotional breakdown, resignation from successful careers, and even the destruction of marriages and other intimate relationships.



Against the above background, this course's focus is on the realities and risks linked to areas such as stress, burnout and compassion fatigue.

Typical symptoms and characteristics that may indicate an impending emotional storm are discussed and a variety of possible triggers are also examined.

**To register, click on the following link:**  
<https://forms.gle/F9gAP1VaD86Xobua8>

Finally, several practical guidelines and preventive measures are discussed, both to prevent the potential emotional dangers and to counsel those who have already fallen into the traps.

**“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”** – Rachel Naomi Remen, Kitchen Table Wisdom 1996 *Feel like you're drowning?*

The course is open to all – presentation will be in Afrikaans, with an English manual being available

Date: No specific dates, link to course

Time: 4 hours

Format: Online presentation

Accreditation: 5x CPSC CPD points (pastoral counsellors)  
5x CPD points (Dutch Reformed Church)  
5x AFM PCD points

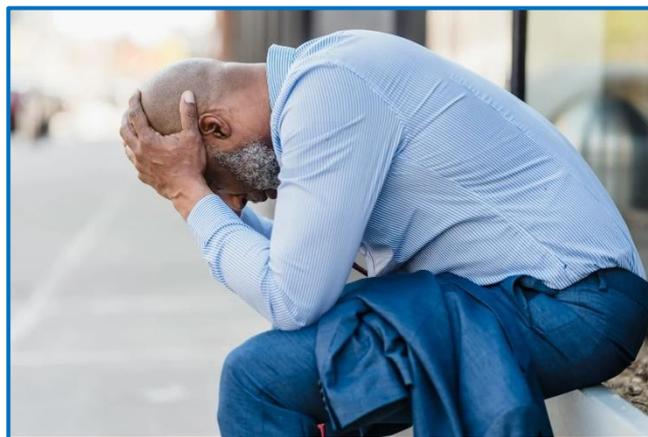
Cost: R275 pp

Manual for sale (optional): R370 (R250 plus R120 for courier)

Enquiries: 0836600409 or email: [wentzelc@gmail.com](mailto:wentzelc@gmail.com)

**Individuals can register at any time to receive a link to the course.**

To register, click on the following link:  
<https://forms.gle/F9gAP1VaD86Xobua8>



**BIOGRAPHY**

Prof Wentzel Coetzer holds a DTh degree in New Testament, a MA in Greek and a PhD in Practical Theology. He was a lecturer at UNISA in New Testament from 1977 to 1984. From 1985 to 2002 he was the full-time minister at the Dutch Reform Church Garsfontein in Pretoria. Since 2003 he has been extraordinary Professor at the North-West University in Practical Theology. Prof Coetzer has published 22 articles in academic journals, 35 books and 6 e-books and has compiled 63 manuals on Pastoral Counselling.

**This course focuses on the realities and risks linked to areas such as stress, burnout and compassion fatigue.**

## 2026 CPSC Supervision Conference

### 5 February 2026; 09:00

**The 2026 CPSC Supervision Conference really is one of those “do not miss” events!**

**PLEASE register for this all-important event! It is extremely relevant to all CPSC affiliates – supervisees and supervisors!**

*Definition of a supervisee: A supervisee is a person who is being supervised or mentored by another more senior person called a supervisor.*

*This relationship is common in professional settings where the supervisee receives guidance and oversight to develop their skills and responsibilities.*

*Key aspects of a supervisee's role include actively engaging in the process, sharing information, being open to feedback, and working to improve their performance and professional boundaries.*



## 2026 CPSC SUPERVISION CONFERENCE INFORMATION:

**Please do not miss out on joining this event!**

**This event will not be a repeat of the 2025 CPSC Supervision Workshop!**

**All your questions re supervision will be answered!**

**Theme: *Guiding the profession, protecting the client***

**Focus:** Back to the Basics

**Date:** Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2026

**Time:** 09:00 – 13:00 (might go on 4 longer)

**CPSC CPD points:** 3(E)

**Fee:** R150

**Format:** Role play, panel discussions

### REGISTRATION:

**PLEASE register for this all-important event! It will be extremely relevant to all CPSC affiliates – students, supervisees and supervisors!**

### GOOGLE REGISTRATION FORM:

- <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfwrJvkgIjDTDninPi9ke-jXMPi6oHbeicGMs5mtXa341qfMhw/viewform?usp=publish-editor>

If at all possible, PLEASE use this link to register! **You can also copy and paste the link into your internet browser.**

- As with the 2025 CPSC Spring conference, you will need to pay the registration fee into the CPSC Nedbank account to complete the registration.
- We need both your proof of payment and the completed registration form to finalize your registration and to add you to the WhatsApp group. PLEASE try to do both at the same time!
- When you start to fill out the registration form, you will see that we have supplied the banking info (account details, references to use, etc.) on the form and that there is a specific place where you will need to add the proof of payment PDF document.

### PAYMENTS & BANKING DETAILS:

**ACCOUNT NAME:** CPSC (THE COUNCIL FOR PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL COUNSELLORS)

**BANK:** NEDBANK

**BRANCH:** WOODLANDS

**CODE:** 136-305

**ACCOUNT NUMBER:** 1020501553

**PLEASE USE YOUR SURNAME, INITIALS + SV2026 (SURNAMEINITIALSSV2026) IN THE CORRECT FIELD TO BENEFICIARY.**

**PLEASE ALSO SEND A COPY OF THE PROOF OF PAYMENT TO ANITA AT [ANITA.SNYDERS@ACRP.ORG.ZA](mailto:ANITA.SNYDERS@ACRP.ORG.ZA)**

- Remember to click "Submit" once you have completed the registration.
- If you experience problems with the online registration, please contact Ilse at [ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za](mailto:ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za) for the Word registration form.

### WHATSAPP GROUP:

- After we have received your registration and proof of payment, you will be added to the *2026 CPSC Supervision Conference WhatsApp* group.
- Please do not remove yourself from this group as all the important information will be shared via this medium.

### DISCUSSION:

- PLEASE supply us with all the questions you have regarding supervision, so that we can address them during this meeting. Submit your questions before 20 of January 2026.
- You can enter your questions on the Google or Word registration form, and you can also send them to Ilse at [ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za](mailto:ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za)

 <p><b>HAVE YOU EVER DREAMT OF SEEING YOUR NAME IN LIGHTS?</b></p>	 <p>We need our talented and creative affiliates to assist us during the 2026 Supervision Conference.</p> <p>We need both supervisors and supervisees!</p> <p>PLEASE inform me ASAP if you would be willing to partake in the conference.</p>	<p><b>You now have the opportunity to appear on the CPSC stage!!</b></p>
---	---	--

### 2025 CPSC SUPERVISION WORKSHOP VIDEO:

**We have received several requests for the 2025 Supervision Workshop video.**

The recordings of the event, the presentations of the presenters, the questionnaire and the answering sheet are **available for free** to all CPSC affiliates.

Herewith the **Dropbox** link to the **2025 CPSC Online Supervision Workshop** information:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/kk0244foi8q7rg2gp1p3v/AIGkfwA46eFsiZvtAeMj2sg?rlkey=ojfptk6led7cs3m6z5boy483x&dl=0>

Please note that the presenters' documents may NOT be shared.

Affiliates who could not attend the event can still complete the questionnaire to receive 3 ethical CPSC CPD points.

Please submit the completed questionnaire to Maria at [maria.jansen@acrp.org.za](mailto:maria.jansen@acrp.org.za)

### **CPSC staff new email addresses, contact numbers and office hours**

Our old email addresses will be deleted soon. Please make a note of our responsibilities office hours and contact details

#### **FINANCES**

*All payments, renewals,  
Designated Affiliate certificates*

**Responsible: Anita Snyders**

Email address:

[anita.snyders@acrp.org.za](mailto:anita.snyders@acrp.org.za)

Cell phone number: 066 345 6842

Office hours:

Monday to Fridays: 09:00 – 13:00

#### **CPD POINTS & CONFERENCES**

*Recording of CPSC CPD points,  
conference certificates & recordings,  
database, contact details*

**Responsible: Maria Jansen**

Email address:

[maria.jansen@acrp.org.za](mailto:maria.jansen@acrp.org.za)

Cell phone number: *email only*

Office hours:

Monday to Fridays: 08:00 – 13:00

#### **ADMIN**

*All enquiries, registrations, CPD  
applications, supervision, conference  
arrangements, Student & Associated  
Affiliate certificates, CPSC Notes*

**Responsible: Ilse Grünewald**

Email address:

[ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za](mailto:ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za)

Cell phone number: 072 705 1183

Office hours:

Mon to Wed: 09:00 – 17:00

Thursdays: 09:00 – 15:00

## Notes from the Finance Office

Dear CPSC Affiliate

**M**y November message for 2025 is one huge thank you from the bottom of my heart! With Christmas around the corner and the spirit of Christmas already in our hearts, a heartfelt thank you message is befitting.

- \* Thank you for your ongoing support and your loyalty during 2025.
- \* Thank you for so many kind words in your emails and WhatsApp messages to me.
- \* Thank you for enthusiastically attending our annual online CPSC Spring Conferences as well as the annual online CGMP Autumn Conferences. These conferences provide easily accessible CPSC CPD points based on excellent, relevant content.

The annual CPSC Supervision Conference is the newest addition to our information sessions offered and CPSC CPD events, and we expect a record attendance at this very valuable, informative conference about something as highly valued and important as supervision.



We are so proud and thankful that affordable CPSC CPD points are now easily accessible to all our affiliates!

- \* Thank you for keeping our arms high in the three CPSC offices. Thank you for your kind-heartedness towards me in the Finance Office, it has not been unnoticed.

Without you as active affiliates we wouldn't have been able to function as CPSC!

CPSC as pastoral counselling specialist council is one of the three councils of ACRP. ACRP is the only Christian Ministry Professional Body in South Africa.

Many of you have been with SAAP for many years before CPSC and ACRP even existed and you will still remember the 26-year struggle that SAAP had from 1991 to 2017, fighting for professional recognition for Pastoral Counsellors.

This resulted in the founding of ACRP when SAAP (focused on pastoral counselling) amalgamated with AMTP (focused on accredited ministry training) and via this route ACRP was recognised as a Professional Body by SAQA in September 2017.

The objective and dream of pastoral counselling being a recognised as a profession was achieved! CPSC/ACRP can now award professional designations to our affiliates, designations that are registered on the NQF.



Professional recognition logically comes with responsibilities and requirements all other professions already had to adhere to, but these requirements were and still are relatively new to CPSC.

These measures are however aimed more to safeguard than to restrict the profession and helps to protect the public as well. Ilse as Administrator provides a treasure chest of information on these relatively easy, doable and often very logical requirements to function optimally in a sound professional environment.

Adhering to ethical standards, working within the prescribed Scope of Practice which provides safe borders and guidelines, adhering to the all-important supervision requirements and amassing the required CPSC CPD points are all equally important to function as a professional.

### Renewals

As the CPSC Finance Officer I also want to thank you for your financial support. The 2026 CPSC subscription renewal notices were dispatched on 8 October 2025, and I am happy to say that 25% of our affiliates have already paid their dues.

This renewal should please be done before 31 December 2025, as that is the expiry date on your 2025 certificate. Please help me to do this as soon as possible if you have not yet done so and try to have it done before Christmas to give me time to allocate the payments and issue the 2026 CPSC certificates well before the 31 December expiry date.

The 2026 renewal notices will be sent to you for a second time before the last week of November. Please note that the sender will be [admin@pastors4africa.com](mailto:admin@pastors4africa.com) and not CPSC or ACRP. Please check your inbox as well as your spam folders for the email.

Please use a clear reference with your payment in the "information to beneficiary" field. If you use the **6 digits of the registration number P0xxxx in combination with your surname and initials or your name** (if that is more unique and identifiable than your surname), it will really help me. I sometimes struggle with the allocation of payments as finger errors can be made with the P-number and sometimes the wrong field is used for the reference, and I only see "CPSC Annual fees" or something similar.

If you haven't received your renewal notice by 30 November, please contact me and I will download and email it to you.

Thank you for all your support over the 9 years that I have been with CPSC/SAAP.

Best wishes and Christmas Blessings

Anita [anita.snyders@acrp.org.za](mailto:anita.snyders@acrp.org.za)



## Notes from the CPSC Conference Office

By Maria Jansen, Administrative Officer of CPD Solutions

**H**ere from the CPSC Conference Office, I wish to thank all registered ACRP Affiliates and the non-affiliates who registered for the 2025 CPSC Online Spring Conference. The Conference was a huge success – without you it would not have been possible!

Thanks and appreciation also to our master of ceremonies, Dr Candida Millar, and CPSC Conference Convener and IT guru, Dr Nadine Dunn, who yet again managed the conference outstandingly.

The theme of the 2025 CPSC Spring Conference was “A Journey of Healing for those Broken by Abuse: Restoring Lives & Strengthening Communities” and it took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2025.

### Presenters

- **MR MTHUNZI PANI:** *Impact of abuse on faith and perception of God: a theology of trauma*
- **DR SIPHO MAHLANGU:** *Beyond Survival: Practical Theological Response Informed by Contextual Epistemologies of Trauma and Community Healing*
- **MRS KAREN TEWSON:** *Ethics and Court Cases: Supporting the integrity of witness testimony in court proceedings*
- **DR MICHEL VAN DER MERWE:** *Play the harp: The understanding of the journey towards healing for the victim of domestic violence*

Please remember that if you missed out to register for the 2023/2024 and 2025 CPSC Spring Conferences, all is not lost, you can still register!

Complete the registration form and make you payment. On receiving your payment and registration form, the link to the recordings and questionnaire will be sent to you.

To receive your certificate and CPSC CPD points, you need to complete and submit the questionnaire to (Attention: Maria) at [maria.jansen@acrp.org.za](mailto:maria.jansen@acrp.org.za)

**This is a very affordable way to earn highly applicable Pastoral Counselling focused CPD points.**



You can obtain the registration forms from Ilse at [ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za](mailto:ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za) or Maria at [maria.jansen@acrp.org.za](mailto:maria.jansen@acrp.org.za)

### For your attention the different conferences and their fees:

**2023 – “Christian Counselling and Restoration”**

Active CPSC Affiliates and registered Student Affiliates: R250; non-affiliates: R500.

**2024 – “Christian/Pastoral Counselling: Do No Harm”**

Active CPSC Affiliates and registered Student Affiliates: R260; non-affiliates: R520.

**2025 – “A Journey of Healing for those Broken by Abuse: Restoring Lives & Strengthening Communities”**

Active CPSC Affiliates and registered Student Affiliates is R270; non-affiliates: R540.

### CPSC banking details

NEDBANK

Account name: CPSC

Account number: 1020501553

Branch code: 136305

**\*Please send your proof of payment to Anita at [anita.snyders@acrp.org.za](mailto:anita.snyders@acrp.org.za)**

As we near the end of 2025 I want to wish you all a blessed Christmas season and may the gift of faith, the blessing of hope and the peace of His love be yours.

May you and your loved ones have a Holy Christmas and a prosperous new year.



Warm regards,

Maria ■

# Notes from the Admin Office

By Ilse Grünewald

Dear ACRP CPSC affiliate

**It's December 2025, and let's face it: we are tired.**

It has already been 11 months of dealing with clients, patients, meetings, reports, emails, friends and family, health problems, the ever-growing costs of living, the violence and corruption in the country and abroad, etc, etc...

Maybe you think it is just you who is experiencing *end-of-year* fatigue, but it is not. Maybe it's not as much physical exhaustion as it is spiritual or mental, but we're all worn out.

Biblical accounts indicate that Jesus, as a fully human being, also experienced human exhaustion, e.g.:

**Physical exhaustion:** The gospels describe Jesus becoming weary and tired from travel.

**Compassion fatigue:** Jesus experienced emotional exhaustion from the constant healing and teaching demands of the crowds.



**When Jesus rested,  
He still had work to do.  
People still needed Him.**

**YET,**

**He chose to rest.**

**– Lisa Rowell**

**Needing rest and sleep:** He needed his rest, e.g. sleeping soundly during a storm after a long day of ministering and dealing with people.

Being tired and needing to rest is not a sin! If you're consistently running on empty, you're heading for burnout. Jesus stopped to rest, so can you. Jesus slept through a storm, so can you.

If we are going to make it through this holiday and Festive Season, don't forget that our Saviour took time to stop, rest, and recharge. For the sake of your health, your family members, your clients, your church, hit the pause (and snooze!) button regularly to recharge your batteries!

Have a magical Christmas, and may 2026 be a good year for you and yours.

Please be safe on the roads!

Blessings

Ilse ■



**1. Physical Rest**

↳ Sit down, stretch, nap, or have a quiet night in. Your body will thank you.

**2. Mental Rest**

↳ Unplug, declutter your mind, and give yourself permission to say "no" to the noise.

**3. Emotional Rest**

↳ Set boundaries. It's OK to skip a party or lean on someone else for a change.

**4. Sensory Rest**

↳ Find moments of silence. Turn off the TV, put your phone away, and just breathe.

**5. Creative Rest**

↳ Whether it's admiring nature or even baking, give your imagination a bit of playtime.

**6. Social Rest**

↳ Spend time with the people who you truly love.

**7. Spiritual Rest**

↳ Reflect or meditate; it might be faith, mindfulness, or just a quiet moment under the stars.



<p>■ <b>ADMINISTRATION OFFICE:</b>  <b>Ilse Grünewald</b>   Cell: 072 705 1183 (am)                  Email: <a href="mailto:ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za">ilse.grunewald@acrp.org.za</a>                  Mon to Wed 09:00–17:00                  Thursday 09:00–15:00</p> <p>■ <b>FINANCES OFFICE:</b>  <b>Anita Snyders</b>   Cell: 066 345 6842 (am)                  Email: <a href="mailto:anita.snyders@acrp.org.za">anita.snyders@acrp.org.za</a>                  Working hours: Mon to Fri: 08:00–12:00</p>	<p>■ <b>ACRP CONFERENCE &amp; CPD OFFICE:</b>  <b>Maria Jansen</b>                  Email for ACRP (CPSC &amp; CGMP) conference registrations, questionnaires, certificates, and CPD points: <a href="mailto:maria.jansen@acrp.org.za">maria.jansen@acrp.org.za</a>                  Working hours:                  Mon to Fri: 08:00–13:00</p>	<p><b>BANKING DETAILS</b>                  CPSC (The Council for Pastoral and Spiritual Counsellors)                  Nedbank                  Branch: Woodlands                  Branch code: 136-305                  Account no: 1020501553                  E-mail proof of payment to the Finance Office at <a href="mailto:anita.snyders@acrp.org.za">anita.snyders@acrp.org.za</a>. Please state your initials and last name as reference for any deposit made.</p>
--	--	--

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

*God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen* is a traditional Christmas carol that offers comfort and reassurance, reminding listeners of the joy and salvation brought by the birth of Christ. Its timeless message of hope and peace encourages reflection on the true meaning of Christmas, with the promise of goodwill to all.

[www.ChristmasMusicSongs.com](http://www.ChristmasMusicSongs.com)

# God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

Arrangement  
by Kyle Coughlin

*in the key of G minor*

18th Century English Carol

Gm D Gm Eb Cm D Gm

1. God rest ye, mer - ry, gen - tle - men, Let noth - ing you dis - may, Re -  
 2. In Beth - le - hem, in Is - ra - el This bless - ed Babe was born, And  
 3. From God our heav'n - ly Fa - ther A bless - ed an - gel came; And

Gm D Gm Eb Cm D G7

mem - ber Christ our Sa - vior Was born on Christ - mas Day; To  
 laid with - in a man - ger Up - on this bless - ed morn; The  
 un - to cer - tain shep - herds Brought tid - ings of the same; How

Cm F Bb D7 Gm C F

save us all from sa - tan's power When we were gone a - stray. } O—  
 which His moth - er Mar - y Did noth - ing take in scorn. }  
 that in Beth - le - hem was born The Son of God by name. }

Bb Bb D Gm C7 F F7

tid - ings of com - fort and joy, com - fort and joy, O—

Bb Eb Gm D Gm

tid - ings of com - fort and joy.



© 2024 by Kyle Coughlin All Rights Reserved [www.ChristmasMusicSongs.com](http://www.ChristmasMusicSongs.com)