

FAITH-BASED MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

Pastoral Counseling

Introduction

The crux of every life is the question of transformation. What causes a person to move from point A to point B? How does a cantankerous, difficult person evolve into a person with solid friendships and new social graces? How does a problem drinker reduce alcohol consumption, or a smoker stop smoking? Why does depression give way to hope, and anxiety to peace? How does a person learn to draw near to God in prayer? How can people learn to handle anger better, or lust, or greed, or contempt? These questions are for spiritual leaders and pastoral counselors.

Care of souls is caring for people in ways that not only acknowledge them as persons but also engage and address them in the deepest and most profoundly human and spiritual and aspects of their lives (Benson, 2003). The foundation of pastoral care and counseling is to be found in a quality that includes but which also goes beyond acceptance and empathy, namely compassionate availability.

At least five forms of soul care should be a part of the life of a church: Christian friendship, pastoral ministry, pastoral care, pastoral counseling, and spiritual direction (McMinn, 2007).

1. Biblical Basis for Counseling

(1 Thessalonians 5:14) *“Now we exhort you brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”*

There are several Biblical words related to counseling that help us understand the nature of pastoral counseling (Litchfield & Litchfield, 2006):

Parakaleo=to come alongside, help, support, comfort, console, advocate.

Noutheteo=to warn, admonish, confront and put in mind.

Paramoutheomai=to encourage, console, and cheer up.

Theramoutheomai=Therapy, healing (used 47 times in N.T.)

2. Goals of Pastoral Counseling

The primary goal of pastoral counseling is the facilitation of spiritual growth. (Benner, 2003). This is not to say PCs are only concerned with spirituality. All problems have spiritual components because all of life is spiritual (Dayringer, 2005).

With God's help and guidance:

We seek to turn anger, depression and discouragement into the joy, hope and peace that God has promised!

We locate the strengths and gifts God has provided and teach others to use them to improve life and relationships!

We help people become fully aware of what God intended for them to be and work toward that reality!

We find a balance between reality and expectations so that disappointment and discouragement can be replaced with acceptance and thankfulness!

We discover negative and destructive thinking patterns and behavior and seek to replace them with the positive thoughts and constructive actions which scripture teaches!

We discover the roadblocks and behaviors that limit achievement and success and replace them with actions that open the pathway to the dreams God bestows!

We explore the origin of unwanted controlling behaviors and set a course which allows for overcoming and developing behaviors which fulfill deep set needs!

We maximize understanding of how God's Word relates to issues, how His plan can resolve those issues, and set a track that follows His plan.

We illuminate how God given temperament sets the individual apart for specific work and how it can be used to enhance God's plan for an individual's life and for His Kingdom.

We help couples and families in conflict see their lives through the eyes of Christ, both how they are now and how they can be, and then set them on a road of hope and recovery.

I believe that an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates the contribution of theology and human sciences, especially psychology, is what best describes pastoral counseling. This is a form of help that is informed by spiritual values and is open to the possibility of exploring spiritual issues in the counseling relationship (Nouwen, 1990). As pastoral counselors we are seeking to empower our clients with tools that will enable them to affect transformation in their lives. Pastoral counseling is unique because of its use of religious resources (Pembroke, 2002). Prayer, Scripture, the sacraments, anointing with oil, the laying on of hands, and devotional readings are all potential resources for the PC. Here are a few general goals for the client:

Maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:13-15).

Wholeness in Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Freedom in Christ (St. John 8:32, 36; Romans 5-8).

Transformation (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Renewing of the mind (Ephesians 4:23).

Abundant life in Christ (St. John 10:10).

This is done within the professional context of accepted standards of training and practice, and is in conformity with current knowledge of psychology, theology, healing, and human development (Townsend, 2009). The key, then, lies in the fact that pastoral counseling, similar to other forms of psychotherapy or counseling helps people clarify, give or find meaning in personal problems of daily life (Williams, 2009). What is specific, though, is the point of view from which help is given. And in this the adjective 'pastoral' is of crucial importance, in the sense of offering a holistic vision of the human being.

3. The Role of Pastoral counseling

Be Present. Of prime importance is the counselor's presence in the room with the client (Brown, 2010). Who the counselor is, the degree of empathy expressed, the values that inspire the counselor (Hahn, 2006), the boundaries that are set, and the importance ascribed to the relationship are all a part of what Larry Yevens calls "The Way of Being." It involves the understanding of self that the counselor possesses of her therapeutic role, as well as the positive or less positive way in which he confronts the always challenging dynamics of psychological counter-transference (Kelsey, 1982).

The way of being, besides this self-awareness, presupposes an open disposition free from prejudices toward the client (Mottram, 2007). Within the humanistic tradition, Carl Rogers speaks of a "positive unconditional" look of the one who comes to our office.

What is important in pastoral counseling therefore is the openness of the counselor to help unveil the intra-psychic dynamics of the person who has come to the pastor, with the clear awareness that both possess spiritual values that can be determinant at the moment of seeking a way out of a crisis situation or given existential problems (Upleger, 2010).

As a discipline pastoral counseling seeks to make space for the presence and activity of transcendence within both counselor and counselee in a clinical helping relationship. What is essential in the 'pastoral' character is the form or style that she/he uses: a.) the way of being of the counselor, b.) the way of understand the one who solicits the help, c.) the way of intervening or of helping the client (Wright, 2002).

Set clear limits on the time, number of sessions, and types and depth of problems that confront them, and refer parishioners when these limits are reached.

Affirmation.

In therapy, we talk a lot about positive affirmations. It is often use as a tool to replace negative beliefs. For instance, if, deep down, one believes "I'm a loser" then we would find an positive affirmation to off-set this core belief. Notice that this negative belief is very precise and definitive – there is no ambiguity. This means that the offsetting positive affirmation must be at

least as powerful. (Jackson, 2009) “I am awesome” is much more powerful than “I could be awesome”. The latter insinuates that there is the POTENTIAL to be awesome, but awesomeness has not yet been achieved. This is a subtle but important distinction. There seems to be no wishy-washiness at all in our negative statements. Think to the last time you made a big mistake. What was your ANT (automatic negative thought)? I bet you were tough on yourself. But a funny thing about people: we seem to very ambiguous when it comes to **positive** statements about ourselves. Now, when choosing a positive affirmation, I always think of buying clothes for a child. Do you buy the kid the size they currently wear? No! Of course not. You buy the clothes that are a little too big so they can grow into them.

Encouragement. Any discussion of encouragement in the field of pastoral counseling should describe a concept that is often taken for granted but never fully elaborated in helping persons gain courage. Understanding what courage is, and how it is a measure of motivation, can assist rehabilitation counselors to establish conditions in the counseling process that can be rightly termed "encouragement." Encouragement in the counseling process, then, may facilitate "empowerment."

Compassion.

Avoid the tendency to focus only on evaluating the moral and/or theological correctness of statements the counselee makes. As Christians, we know that truth is important. We know that the counselee will need to bring her thinking into conformity to God's Word in order to be healed. But our ability to apply this truth will be hindered unless we truly understand how she views this area of her life. (Pembroke, 2002) Be willing to temporarily suspend your immediate right to judge in the interest of better overall understanding of the person. If you are sure about where you stand with the truth, you can afford to do this without fear that you will lose your own theological moorings.

Give yourself as fully as possible to drawing out and understanding the counselee's situation. Being non-judgmental and empathetic does not mean you should become relativistic theologically or morally. It does mean that you communicate acceptance to the counselee regardless of her beliefs or behavior.

It also means that you communicate an understanding of the legitimate parts of the counselee's problem, even if you disagree with her response to it.

Reflection/Reflected Listening. The Bible emphasizes the importance of being a good listener. When God tells us that we should be "quick to listen, (and) slow to speak" (James 1:19), he is alerting us to our natural aversion to listening and urging us to bring this area of our lives under his control. Effective listening is especially important in pastoral counseling. When people come to us with spiritual and relational problems, we may know the answers to their problems. But unless we have learned the art of listening, they will probably not profit from the answers we give them. There are several reasons for this.

Why listening is important

Listening is a basic expression of love. There are many ways to show love, but one of the most basic expressions of love is to take the other person seriously enough to hear what she has to say. By listening, we are affirming and expressing what God says about her--that she is significant. Listening therefore is part of "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). There are times when we do not know the answers to the problem, but we can still minister to the person if we listen carefully and lovingly. This is why Job tells his friends, "Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation that you give to me" (Job 21:1).

Listening is a prerequisite to discernment. Proverbs 18:13 says, "He who answers before listening--that is his folly and his shame." It is arrogant to begin to answer someone before we truly understand what he needs. If we have humility, we will realize that many times we are wrong in our initial assessment of another person's needs. Before we can properly apply God's Word, we need to understand the other person's situation, what and why he feels the way he does, and what the root issues are. The only way we can discover these things is to carefully and prayerfully listen. Important to the sanguine and the self-confident who believe they have the answer without truly understanding the issues.

Listening promotes receptivity to your counsel. Though it may be assumed that you have credibility because the person is coming to you for counsel, your credibility will be hampered if you are a poor listener. Most people seeking counsel are confused by their problems, or they wouldn't be seeking help. They can't imagine that anyone could accurately discern the problem and the solution as quickly as you may have done. Until this confidence is gained, the counselee will be reluctant to follow your counsel no matter how sound it may be. Because of this, it is not enough that you accurately understand the issues; it is also necessary that the counselee has confidence that you understand. This confidence is based largely on your willingness to listen and ask questions, sometimes even after you have discerned the issues.

How to listen.

Listening is not passive; it is not the same as merely not talking. In fact, concentrated listening is more strenuous than talking because it is easy to talk about our own thoughts, but it is difficult to accurately understand another person's. The following reminders can improve our listening skills so that we may become better servants.

Be spiritually prepared. As Christians, we believe that all spiritual and relational healing is the work of God and not something we can do by our own power. The proof that we believe this is that we bathe our counseling sessions with prayer. It is important to personally express your dependence to God in prayer before the counseling session. Ask God to enable you to put aside other thoughts so that you may listen effectively. Ask him also to grant you the ability to spiritually discern the real issues. Learn the habit of turning to God while in the counseling session to ask for these same things. Sometimes, more experienced Christian workers omit this preparation because they "have had so much experience" in counseling.

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Confrontation/questioning. Confrontation is when the counsellor raises the awareness of the client to include information that the client is overlooking, or failing to identify. This technique must be used carefully, as it can lead to a complete disintegration of the client-counsellor relationship. On the other hand, good confrontation can be seen as respectful to the client, as it shows that the counsellor is sincerely listening, and cares for the client. There are a number of situations where confrontation is appropriate. These include:

- The client is avoiding a basic issue that appears to be troubling them
- The client is failing to recognise their own self-destructive or self-defeating behaviour
- The client is failing to recognise possible serious consequences of their behaviour
- The client is making self-contradictory statements
- The client is excessively and inappropriately locked into talking about the past or the future and is unable to focus on the present
- The client is going around in circles by repeating the same story over and over
- The client's non-verbal behaviour does not match their verbal behaviour

- Attention needs to be given to what is going on in the relationship between the client and counsellor; for example, where dependency is occurring, or where a client withdraws or shows anger or some other emotion towards the counsellor.

As shown above, it is obvious that there are a range of situations that confrontation can be used effectively. However, it should be noted that if other non-confrontational skills and techniques are properly used, it is said that the counsellor will generally not have to use confrontation as a method of gaining information from the client (Geldard & Geldard, 2009).

Good confrontation often includes a summary, followed by a statement of the counsellor's feelings and a concrete statement given without interpretation. Good confrontation leaves the client feeling

Boundaries. "Whatever you are willing to put up with, is exactly what you will have." Author Unknown. Problems with setting and maintaining boundaries are common issues dealt with in counseling. Those people who have good boundary management tend to do very well in our society.

Yet, most people could improve on their boundary maintenance.

What are boundaries?

Boundaries reflect more than our need for physical space. They include any aspect of our interactions with others, including our relationship with ourselves (i.e. avoiding self-sabotaging activities) and our environment (e.g. protecting ourselves from noise and noxious stimuli (Cloud, Henry and Townsend, John. (1992). **Boundaries: When to say YES, When to Say NO, to Take Control of Your Life**. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Boundaries reflect our core values, our respect for ourselves and our need for safety and protection. They include being able to say no and mean it, or saying yes and meaning it. They are a way we define ourselves separately from another.

They include the contracts we have with others: authority figures (our boss, the plumber who agrees to a job), financial (saying no to a purchase), sexual (saying yes when the time is right), professional (agreements we have with others about our work) among many others.

Boundaries in Relationships

Strong personal boundaries in relationships are reflected in many ways and especially when we can easily set limits to protect ourselves.

"Yes, I do care for you. And, I also have a need to be out of the house to see my friends at least one night a week."

In other words we can become close to another but also recognize when it is necessary to maintain some distance.

Individuals with poor boundaries tend to compromise their sense of self in relationships.

"If you would feel lonely, I won't go."

Some people with poor boundaries draw on their partners' identities to support their self-worth.

"You're right, it is a good idea for me to have an interest outside the house. But I should check with my husband first."

How do we develop poor boundaries?

Being raised in a family with poor boundaries (i.e. in a physically, emotionally or sexually abusive home) is one obvious source.

Some families are enmeshed causing few boundaries to exist between family members. Unless there is a consensus, going outside the range of typical behaviors is frowned upon. To do something different, is experienced by others in the family as if you are betraying the family.

We can also develop poor boundaries with physical traumas. Surgeries, painful dental procedures and falls are a few examples.

Few people are aware that the womb environment can also create boundary problems. Consider for a moment the fetus who struggles with having a different blood type than the mother.

How to change your boundaries

Poor boundaries are sometimes a function of ignorance. That is, you haven't been exposed to good role models so it's understandably hard for you to call up from within yourself what is appropriate and what isn't.

But it would be very difficult to consider all possible scenarios that you might come across in your life and to depend on seeking the advice of others. Even then, knowing what's appropriate doesn't necessarily mean you would have the capacity to set your boundary.

One of the first steps in changing your boundaries is to learn to *feel* them. Any time we set a boundary or don't set a boundary, we feel it in our body in the form of an arousal pattern. That is, the nervous system is going to relax or go into a sympathetic response (i.e. stress, anxiety).

Consider the following sympathetic nervous system responses:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clenched teeth | <input type="checkbox"/> Shaky |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heart racing | <input type="checkbox"/> Stuttering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawing | <input type="checkbox"/> Cloudy thinking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dry mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> Racing thoughts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tense shoulders | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor posture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shallow breathe | <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness in legs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weak | <input type="checkbox"/> Red face |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clammy hands | <input type="checkbox"/> Pit in the stomach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweating | <input type="checkbox"/> Rounded shoulders |

Sometimes we'll go into a freeze response:

- Blank
- Holding the breathe
- Chilled
- Numbness
- Can't speak

We'll relax our boundaries when we feel safe. The feelings are quite different:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed inside |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling free |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strong | <input type="checkbox"/> Warm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empowered | <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Present | |

One of the best ways of changing your boundaries is through your body. Because, it is through our body that we feel our boundaries. This is one of the insights from somatic therapy.

Never counsel behind closed doors. If there is a window in the door (if not, make one!) make sure it is not covered up. Never let the door be locked

Refer the more difficult and long-term problems to professional counselors. If the pastor, as ealer, is to effectively "hold" the anxiety and pain within a congregation, someone needs to hold them as well. Pastoral counselors, trained in dialogical discernment, can provide the holding pastoral leaders require.

4. Characteristics of Pastoral Counseling

Brief and time-limited Counseling

The pastoral counselor must be active and directive (Litchfield, 2006). Counselors are responsible for directing both the content and the process of the sessions (Benner, 2003). Failure to take an active direction-giving posture is a failure to provide the first and most basic ingredient of pastoral counseling.

Protocols

The Encounter Stage (Aten & Leach, 2009).

- Joining and boundary setting
- Exploring the central concerns and relevant history
- Conducting a pastoral diagnosis
- Gaining a mutually agreeable focus for counseling

The Engagement Stage

Exploring affective, cognitive, and behavior aspects of the problem and identifying the resources for counseling. (the 'doing' phase)

The Disengagement Stage.

- Evaluating progress and assessing remaining concerns
- Arranging a referral (if needed)
- Terminating counseling

Holistic. Biblical psychology is clearly a holistic psychology. Biblical discussions of persons emphasizes first and foremost our essential unity of being (Becvar, 1997). Strategic pastoral counseling asserts that PC must be fully and equally responsive to the behavioral (action), cognitive (thought), and affective (feeling) elements of personal functioning.

Involves assigned homework. There are a variety of forms. Bibliotherapy, the therapeutic use of reading that will aid understanding of the issues being explored. The use of practice of skills (e.g., assertiveness) at home may be useful. Journaling is also useful.

5. Essential Qualities of the Christian Counselor (not in order of importance)

Empathy

Empathetic listening is an inherent confirmation of another person's dignity and worth. This kind of listening, in contrast to the 'listening ear,' suggests a professional, systematic, refined ability to engineer outcomes. (Epstein, 2006). Carl Rogers suggests that unconditional acceptance, empathetic listening, catharsis, self-acceptance and empathy allows the counselor to build a good counseling relationship. (Rogers, 2011).

Good listening skill set (Kelcourse, 2002). Activity can never be at the expense of careful (active) listening.

Commitment to counseling excellence and ethics, integrity, and accountability (Abbott, Ronsheim, & Xander, 2005).

Cultural awareness and respect (Hays, 2002); Lartey, 2003)

Growing as a Christian, a person, a counselor (Collins, 2007).

Appropriate use of Scripture (Benson, 2003).

Knowledge, anointment of the Holy Spirit.

Exercise of Spiritual gifts

A reasonable level of emotional/mental stability

Humility

6. Ethics in Pastoral Counseling. www.aapc.org(American Association of Pastoral Counselors); apa.org (American Psychological Association) & aacc.net (American Association of Christian Counselors).

All ethical standards have to do with values and moral principles. (Sanders, 2006). Christian counselors are called to the highest ethical level. They are committed to continuous personal spiritual growth, including disciplines, humility, and accountability groups. They are always aware that their parishioners are affected by the values and beliefs of the pastoral counselor (Dohring, 1995). The following are areas that are generally accepted by ethical codes of counseling organizations:

Competency

Pastoral counselors need to constantly monitor their level of competency and be willing to be accountable to their clients and other counselors on a regular basis.

PC's should at least know why they do what they do and say what they say. Be sure to do and say what they intend. Know what the effects of their words and actions are likely to be. Adjust counseling to the client's responses.

Reasonable competency includes:

- Adequate training (at least an accredited diploma in counseling).
- Membership in a recognized counseling association.
- Proper on-going supervision.
- Commitment to continuing education.

It is unethical for a PC to counsel in complex problems when she/he does not have the proper training to deal with such problems.

Client autonomy

Counselors respect their client's beliefs and values and PC's do not attempt to impose their beliefs on their client.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is one of the most important ethical issues and must be maintained at all times with these exceptions:

- Protect client and others from harm
- Child abuse
- Disclose information in court

Confidentiality is not a promise of secrecy. It is a promise to hold information in trust and to share it with others only if this is in the best interests of the client or society.

Informed consent

Continuing Education

On-going education through books, journals, attending seminars, counseling association meetings and conferences.

Informed Consent

This is an important ethical issue and failure to obtain it before counseling is a major cause of litigation. Clients must be informed of the counseling plan, expected diagnosis, duration, possible problems, and alternative methods in writing, or at least verbally, before counseling begins.

Dual Relationships

DR happens when you find yourself counseling someone they already know (e.g., friend, fellow worker, relative). It is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain impartiality in such situations. Blurring of boundaries and loss of objectivity may lead to client exploitation.

Exploitation

Sexual & financial exploitation occurs in situations of power differential. Others examples are the counselor cutting sessions short, unexpectedly changing frequency of sessions, or prolonging counseling beyond what is necessary.

Record keeping

Referring

Counselors need to know when to refer a client. This is not necessarily a sign of ignorance, but simply a desire for the client to have the best help available.

Supervision

It is unethical for counselors to practice without regular counseling supervision. This requires a formal contractual arrangement. At minimum, a supervisor must be adequately trained, have more experience in counseling than the counselor, and not be from the same organization.

Ethics summary:

1. Protect the rights of those you counsel. (Mottram, 2007). This includes the right to informed consent to all aspects of the work undertaken together. The right to self-determination and freedom from manipulation or coercion. The right to freedom from harassment or discrimination, the right to freedom from unnecessary or prurient invasion of privacy (Southard, 1989).
2. Avoid dual relationships. Avoid counseling someone with whom you have a close relationship, business or work relationship, or any other type of on-going interaction. Such people should be referred to someone else.
3. Avoid romantic or sexual intimacies in counseling. This guideline seems obvious, but violation of this basic ethical boundary remains alarmingly common. There is absolutely no excuse for this form of exploitation.
4. Be aware of your limitations. All counselors have limitations. Ethical counselors are alert to them and take care to not operate outside their sphere of competence. A pastor can stay within her/his sphere of competence through consultation, supervision, and the making of appropriate referrals.
5. Remain in relationships of personal accountability. Such relationships should begin with the church and faith community but should also extend to members in counseling organizations such as the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

This is done within the professional context of accepted standards of training and practice and is in conformity with current knowledge of psychology, spirituality, healing, and human development (Tolle, 2007). The key, then, lies in the fact that pastoral counseling, similar to other forms of psychotherapy or counseling helps people clarify, give or find meaning in personal problems of daily life. What is specific, though, is the point of view from which help is given. And in this the adjective ‘pastoral’ is of crucial importance, in the sense of offering a holistic vision of the human being, that includes the spiritual dimension.

P.C.s maximize the use of diverse theories of counseling, without falling into the trap of choosing just to be choosing, thereby permitting the counselor to understand and facilitate the

harmonious integration of therapeutic tools and experience with her/his experience as a counselor.

Secondly, is the counselor's mode of understanding the body of counseling knowledge that explains personality theory and structure, normal and abnormal human development, and different ways people change. It also means the knowledge of client's strength, resources, and existing skills. It is the way the counselor 'reads' the reality of the one who solicits her service. It has to do with the theoretical approach of the counselor to such varied affairs as human behavior, systems of belief, and the integration of family values or cultural aspects of the client.

Lastly, pastoral counseling also involves the way of intervention, that is, the work of therapy itself. This is the means through which the counselor interrupts the dysfunctional cycle of the client and allows for the processing of healthier alternatives of thinking, feeling, behaving. In the case of the pastoral counselor this dimension applies, whether the empathic listening of therapy centered on the client is employed, or cognitive conducive strategies that confront the erroneous cognitive perceptions of the client, or the association of ideas of a brief psych-analysis, or any other form of help corresponding to a particular psychological school.

I want to stress that one of the tasks of the counselor consists of reminding the client about the importance of a healthy integration between trust in God's grace and personal effort (McMinn, 2008). When clients are believers, it is common that there is the distorted belief that God can solve the conflicts in a magical way.

Appendix 1

PASTORAL COUNSELING

A Counseling Contract (or agreement, plan) – (Litchfield, 2006)

Every counselor needs to have a theoretical framework within which to operate. This means that the counselor needs to know what they are doing and where they are going.

Counseling Agreement

I understand that my pastoral counselor will help me to understand myself, and help me clarify my problems, goals, and objectives, and help me to look at alternative solutions to my problems. This may involve homework, which I am prepared to commit myself to doing, as requested. I further understand that I am fully responsible for the decisions I make concerning my life and behavior.

I understand that the model of counseling used looks at the past and the present. It includes the exploring and resolving of past hurts, my family of origin, feelings, thought patterns, and communication skills, having in view my personal restoration to wholeness. It is designed to help me focus on achieving optimum health, and encouraging me to seek and find an enriching and fulfilling life.

I understand that I may expect confidentiality in our sessions with the exception of when information indicates a danger to:

- Client and others
- Child abuse
- Disclose information required by the court system

I understand and will commit to keeping all my appointments and I will be on time.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Signed (pastor counselor): _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2

American Association of Pastoral Counselors

**CODE OF ETHICS
(Amended April 16, 2010)**

PRINCIPLE I – PROLOGUE

As members of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, we are respectful of the various theologies, traditions, and values of our faith communities and committed to the dignity and worth of each individual. We are dedicated to advancing the welfare of those who seek our assistance and to the maintenance of high standards of professional conduct and competence. As pastoral counselors and pastoral counseling students we are accountable for our work regardless of our professional functions, the settings in which we work, or the populations which we serve. This accountability is expressed in our conduct of relationships with clients, colleagues, students, our faith communities, and through the acceptance and practice of the principles and procedures of this Code of Ethics. The Code articulates standards that the Association will use to determine whether pastoral counselors have engaged in unethical conduct. In subscribing to this Code, pastoral counselors are required to be knowledgeable of these standards, cooperate with association procedures for responding to complaints of ethical misconduct, participate in AAPC adjudication proceedings, and abide by any AAPC disciplinary rulings or sanctions. The Ethics Code is not intended to be a basis of civil liability. Whether a pastoral counselor has violated the Ethics Code standards does not by itself determine whether the pastoral counselor is legally liable in a court action, whether a contract is enforceable, or whether other legal consequences occur.

In order to uphold our standards, as members of AAPC we covenant to accept the following foundational premises and core values:

- A. To affirm the importance of being both spiritually grounded and psychologically informed.
- B. To maintain responsible association with the faith group with which we identify and in which we may have ecclesiastical standing.
- C. To avoid discriminating against or refusing employment, educational opportunity or professional assistance to anyone on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, health status, age, disabilities or national origin; provided that nothing herein shall limit a member or center from utilizing religious requirements or exercising a religious preference in employment decisions.
- D. As members of AAPC we recognize our responsibility to stay current with research that affects our understanding of clinical issues and the conduct of our practice. We agree at all

levels of membership to continuing education and professional growth including supervision, consultation, and active participation in the meetings and affairs of the Association.

E. To seek out and engage in collegial relationships, recognizing that isolation can lead to a loss of perspective and judgment.

PRINCIPLE II - PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

In all professional matters members of AAPC maintain practices that protect the public and advance the profession.

- A. We use our knowledge and professional associations for the benefit of the people we serve and not to secure unfair personal advantage.
- B. We clearly represent our level of membership and limit our practice to that level. Publication of practice or agency material clearly explains the levels of membership that apply to individuals.
- C. Fees and financial arrangements, as with all contractual matters, are always discussed without hesitation or equivocation at the onset and are established in a straight-forward, professional manner.
- D. We are prepared to render service to individuals and communities in crisis without regard to financial remuneration when necessary.
- E. We neither receive nor pay a commission for referral of a client.
- F. We conduct our practice, agency, regional and association fiscal affairs with due regard to recognized business and accounting procedures. We respect the prerogatives and obligations of the institutions, agencies, or organizations by whom we are employed or with which we associate.
- G. Upon the transfer of a pastoral counseling practice or the sale of real, personal, tangible or intangible property or assets used in such practice, the privacy and well being of the client shall be of primary concern.
 - 1. Client names and records shall be excluded from the transfer or sale.
 - 2. Any fees paid shall be for services rendered, consultation, equipment, real estate, and the name and logo of the counseling agency.
 - 3. We provide recent and current clients information regarding the closing or transferring of our practice and assure the confidentiality of their records.
- H. We are careful to represent facts truthfully to clients, referral sources, and third party payers regarding credentials and services rendered. We shall correct any misrepresentation of our professional qualifications or affiliations.

I. We do not malign other professionals, nor do we plagiarize or otherwise present, distribute, or publish another's work as our own.

PRINCIPLE III - CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

It is the responsibility of members of AAPC to maintain relationships with clients on a professional basis. We take all reasonable steps to avoid harming our clients and to safeguard the welfare of those with whom we work.

A. We do not abandon or neglect clients. We make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, relocation, illness, or disability. If we are unwilling for appropriate reasons, to provide professional help or continue a professional relationship, every reasonable effort is made to arrange for continuation of treatment with another professional. Prior to leaving an agency or practice we complete all files and paper work is documented and signed.

B. We make only realistic statements regarding the pastoral counseling process and its outcome. We inform our clients of the purpose of the counseling, risks related to counseling, possible limits to the services because of third party payer limits, reasonable alternatives, clients rights to refuse or withdraw consent, and the time frame covered by the consent. We take reasonable steps to make sure the client understands the counseling process and has the opportunity to ask questions.

C. We show sensitive regard for the moral, social, and religious values and beliefs of clients and communities. We avoid imposing our beliefs on others, although we may express them when appropriate in the pastoral counseling process.

D. Counseling relationships are continued only so long as it is reasonably clear that the clients are benefiting from the relationship.

E. We recognize the trust placed in and unique power of the therapeutic relationship. While acknowledging the complexity of some pastoral relationships, we avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of clients. We avoid those dual or multiple relationships with clients which could impair our professional judgment, compromise the integrity of the treatment, and/or use the relationship for our own gain. A multiple relationship occurs when a pastoral counselor is in a professional role with a person and 1) at the same time is in another role with the same person, 2) at the same time is in a relationship with a person closely associated with or related to the person with whom the pastoral counselor has the professional relationship, or 3) promises to enter into another relationship in the future with the person or a person closely associated with or related to the person. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, particularly within congregations or in family or couples counseling, we take reasonable steps to protect the clients and are responsible for setting clear and appropriate boundaries.

F. We do not engage in harassment, abusive words or actions, or exploitative coercion of clients or former clients.

- G. All forms of sexual behavior or harassment with clients are unethical, even when a client invites or consents to such behavior or involvement. Sexual behavior is defined as, but not limited to, all forms of overt and covert seductive speech, gestures, written communication, and behavior as well as physical contact of a sexual nature; harassment is defined as but not limited to, repeated comments, gestures, written communication, or physical contacts of a sexual nature.
- H. We recognize that the therapist/client relationship involves a power imbalance, the residual effects of which are operative following the termination of the therapy relationship. Therefore, all sexual behavior or harassment as defined in Principle III G, with former clients is unethical.
- I. Interactive long-distance counseling delivery, when the client resides in one location and the pastoral counselor in another, may be utilized to supplement but not to completely replace face-to-face therapy. We take all reasonable steps to ensure that the client understands the limits of long-distance therapy, the computer application, what it is used for, and its possible effects.

PRINCIPLE IV - CONFIDENTIALITY

As members of AAPC we respect the integrity and protect the welfare of all persons with whom we are working and have an obligation to safeguard information about them that has been obtained in the course of the counseling process. We have a responsibility to know and understand civil laws and administrative rules that govern confidentiality requirements of our profession in the setting of our work.

- A. All records kept on a client are stored under lock and key and are disposed of in a manner that assures security and confidentiality. Records should be maintained for the number of years required appropriate government regulatory statutes.
- B. We take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in records is accurate and reflects the services provided. Such documentation is intended to facilitate provision of services later by other professionals, meet institutional requirements, ensure accuracy of billing and payments, and ensure compliance with law.
- C. We recognize that confidentiality belongs to the client. We treat all communications from clients with professional confidence and take reasonable precautions to protect confidential information obtained through or stored in any medium. These precautions include an awareness of the limited confidentiality guarantees of electronics communication.
- D. Except in those situations where the identity of the client is necessary to the understanding of the case, we use only the first names of our clients when engaged in supervision or consultation. It is our responsibility to convey the importance of confidentiality to the supervisor/consultant; this is particularly important when the supervision is shared by other professionals, as in a supervisory group.
- E. We do not disclose client confidences to anyone, except: as mandated by law; to prevent a clear and immediate danger to someone; in the course of a civil, criminal or disciplinary action

arising from the counseling where the pastoral counselor is a defendant; for purposes of supervision or consultation; or by previously obtained written permission. In cases involving more than one person (as client) written permission must be obtained from all legally accountable persons who have been present during the counseling before any disclosure can be made.

F. We disclose confidential information for appropriate reasons only with valid written consent from the client or a person legally authorized to consent on behalf of a client. We obtain informed written consent of clients before audio and/or video tape recording or permitting third party observation of their sessions.

G. We do not use these standards of confidentiality to avoid intervention when it is necessary, e.g., when there is evidence of abuse of minors, the elderly, the disabled, the physically or mentally incompetent.

H. When current or former clients are referred to in a publication, while teaching or in a public presentation, their identity is thoroughly disguised.

I. We as members of AAPC agree that as an express condition of our membership in the Association, Association ethics communications, files, investigative reports, and related records are strictly confidential and waive their right to use same in a court of law to advance any claim against another member. Any member seeking such records for such purpose shall be subject to disciplinary action for attempting to violate the confidentiality requirements of the organization. This policy is intended to promote pastoral and confessional communications without legal consequences and to protect potential privacy and confidentiality interests of third parties.

PRINCIPLE V - SUPERVISEE, STUDENT & EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS

As members of AAPC we have an ethical concern for the integrity and welfare of our supervisees, students and employees. These relationships are maintained on a professional and confidential basis. We recognize our influential position with regard to both current and former supervisees, students and employees, and avoid exploiting their trust and dependency. We make every effort to avoid dual relationships with such persons that could impair our judgment or increase the risk of personal and/or financial exploitation.

A. We do not engage in ongoing counseling relationships with current supervisees, students and employees.

B. We do not engage in sexual or other harassment of supervisees, students, employees, research subjects or colleagues.

C. All forms of sexual behavior, as defined in Principle III.G, with our supervisees, students, research subjects and employees (except in employee situations involving domestic partners) are unethical.

- D. We advise our students, supervisees, and employees against offering or engaging in, or holding themselves out as competent to engage in, professional services beyond their training, level of experience and competence.
- E. Supervisors have a responsibility to provide timely and fair evaluations of their supervisees and employees.
- F. We do not harass or dismiss an employee who has acted in a reasonable, responsible and ethical manner to protect, or intervene on behalf of, a client or other member of the public or another employee.
- G. To protect the public, employers and supervisors who have dismissed employees and supervisees for ethical cause must report that fact as part of any official report of service or enrollment in a pastoral counseling center or training program.
- H. We are sensitive to the requirements of an organization with which we are affiliated or for whom we are working. In case of conflict with the Code of Ethics and the organization, we clarify the nature of the conflict, make known our commitment to the Code of Ethics, and to the extent feasible, resolve the conflict in a way that permits adherence to the Code.

PRINCIPLE VI - INTERPROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

As members of AAPC we relate to and cooperate with other professional persons in our community and beyond. We are part of a network of health care professionals and are expected to develop and maintain interdisciplinary and inter-professional relationships.

- A. We do not offer ongoing clinical services to persons currently receiving treatment from another professional without prior knowledge of and in consultation with the other professional, with the clients' informed consent. Soliciting such clients is unethical.
- B. We exercise care and inter-professional courtesy when approached for services by persons who claim or appear to have inappropriately terminated treatment with another professional.

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