



Pastoral Care: Spiritually Integrated Trauma Care

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Spiritual & Theological Dimensions of Trauma

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 - 04 Lived theology
(theological theory of change)
 - 05 Life limiting versus
life giving theology

SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF TRAUMA

Embedded Theology

Beliefs and values from childhood with unconscious influence that surface under stress. People may not even be aware of their embedded theology until they experience an existential crisis that disrupts their world. This can bring unconscious beliefs, values and practices to the surface.

This is a time individuals excavate those beliefs, values and habitual ways of coping and decide whether such embedded theologies are still relevant and meaningful as well as if the beliefs are helping connect them with a sense of the sacred and make sense of what is happening.

Theology Reflexivity

The process of theological reflexivity begins at a personal level in conversations that hold us responsible for identifying embedded theologies formed in childhood that still have an influence which may be life-giving and life limiting for us and/or others.

Theological reflexivity is a way to integrate one's theological education into one's own formation as a pastoral caregiver and into care for trauma survivors that identifies, assesses and respects the unique ways they make spiritual sense of and cope with trauma.

Deliberative Theology

The process of examining embedded theology.

The understanding of faith that comes from a process of reflecting upon embedded theological convictions. Embedded theologies use first order pre critical expressions of religious experiences, deliberative theology draws upon informal and formal theological education to use second order religious language to interpret and assess embedded theologies.

Pastoral and spiritual caregivers learn second order ways of reflecting on beliefs and values through their theological education. Just as health professionals draw upon health sciences and clinical training to identify, assess and explore psychological responses to trauma, so too spiritual and pastoral caregivers are responsible for exploring, assessing and helping trauma survivors create religious meanings and spiritual practices that are life-giving for them.

Lived theology

Lived beliefs and values are what the individual personally relates to and puts into practice in their daily lives.

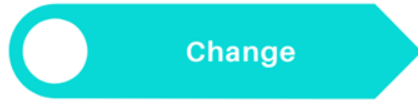
Embedded theology analyzed through deliberative theology through experiences of life that cause one to wrestle through beliefs to integration (life giving theology)



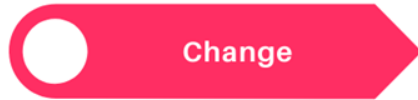
THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN THEOLOGICALLY GROUNDED TRAUMA CARE

(Theological theory of change)

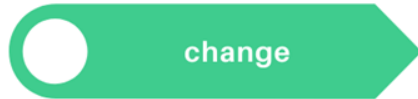
→ What changes for trauma survivors in theologically grounded trauma care?



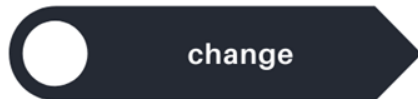
Change is described as one's lived theology.



occurs emotionally and physically as trauma survivors explore lived theology from trauma related emotions like fear, guilt, shame and anger.

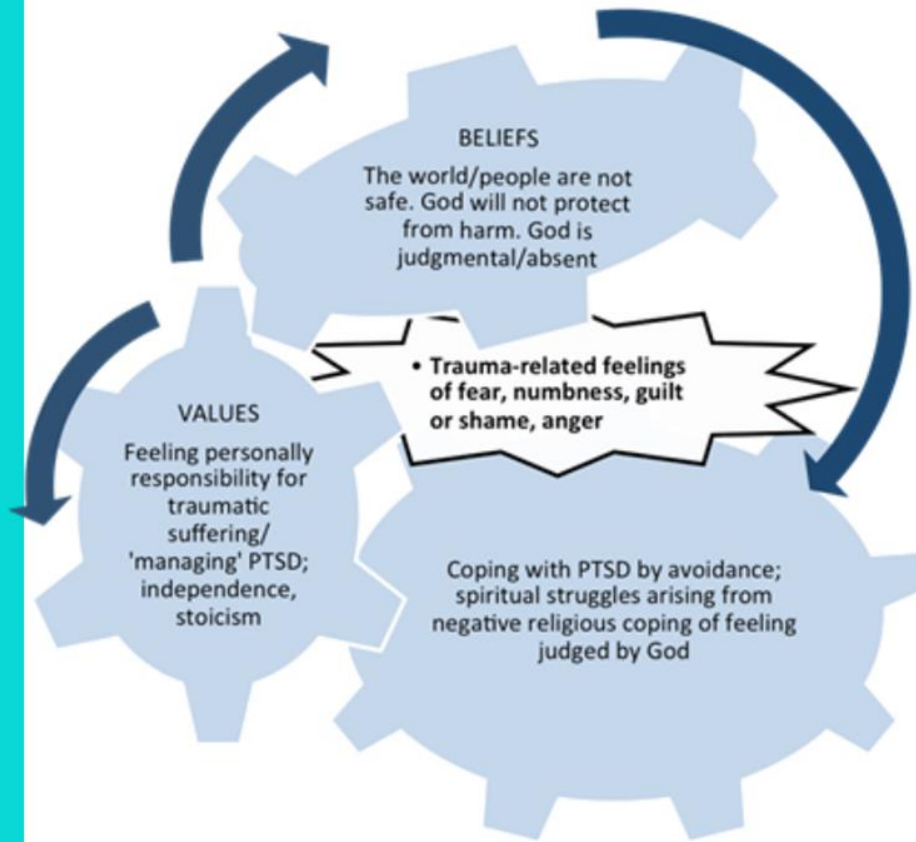


happens when pastoral care helps people integrate and embody spiritual practices that foster goodness and compassion with beliefs and values complex enough to account for suffering.



Spiritual practices provide unique resources for trauma survivors. These practices can counteract the life limiting theology that trauma may have generated or reinforced.

Life limiting theology in our lived theology



MODEL BY: CARRIE DOEHRING

The model to the left represents how a *life limiting theology* of values, beliefs and practices might be energized by trauma-related emotions.

This *lived theology* might be reinforced by our collective moral theology that makes a woman responsible for her symptoms and responsible for her traumatic experiences

ex: you drank alcohol so it is your fault that you were sexually assaulted

Life limiting theology has conflicts between pre-trauma beliefs/values and trauma related doubts and questions like, "How could a loving God allow this to happen to me?"

SUBLIMINAL THEOLOGY OF TRAUMA

SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES LEAD TO
A SUBLIMINAL THEOLOGY OF
TRAUMA

THOSE WHO HAVE TRAUMA RELATED SPIRITUAL
STRUGGLES USE NEGATIVE RELIGIOUS COPING:

1.

Believing in and experiencing
God as punitive and
abandoning

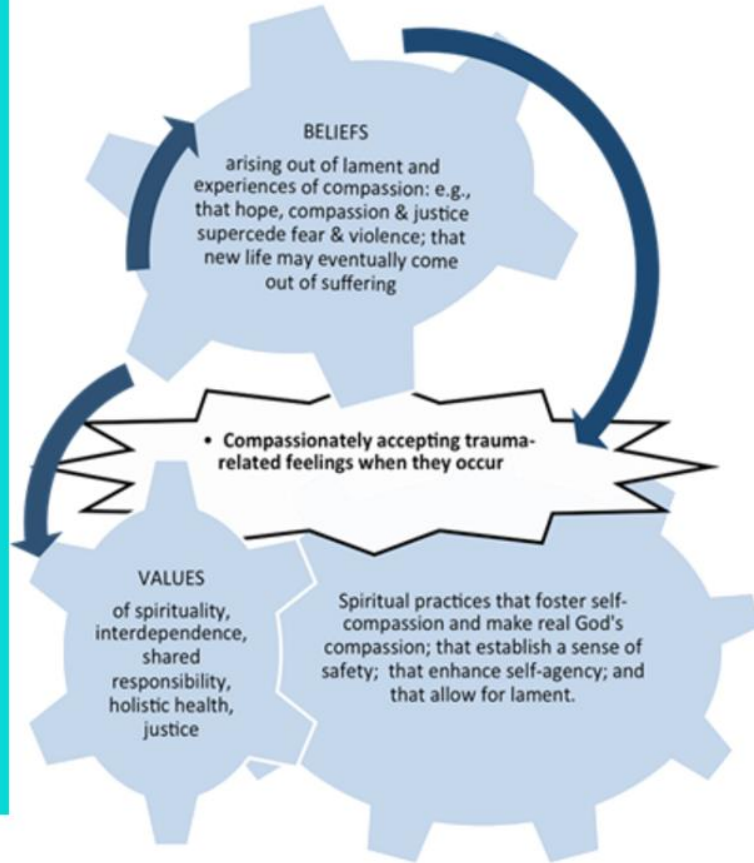
2.

Questioning God's love
Questioning humanity's
goodness

3.

Being discontented with their
religious communities

Life giving theology

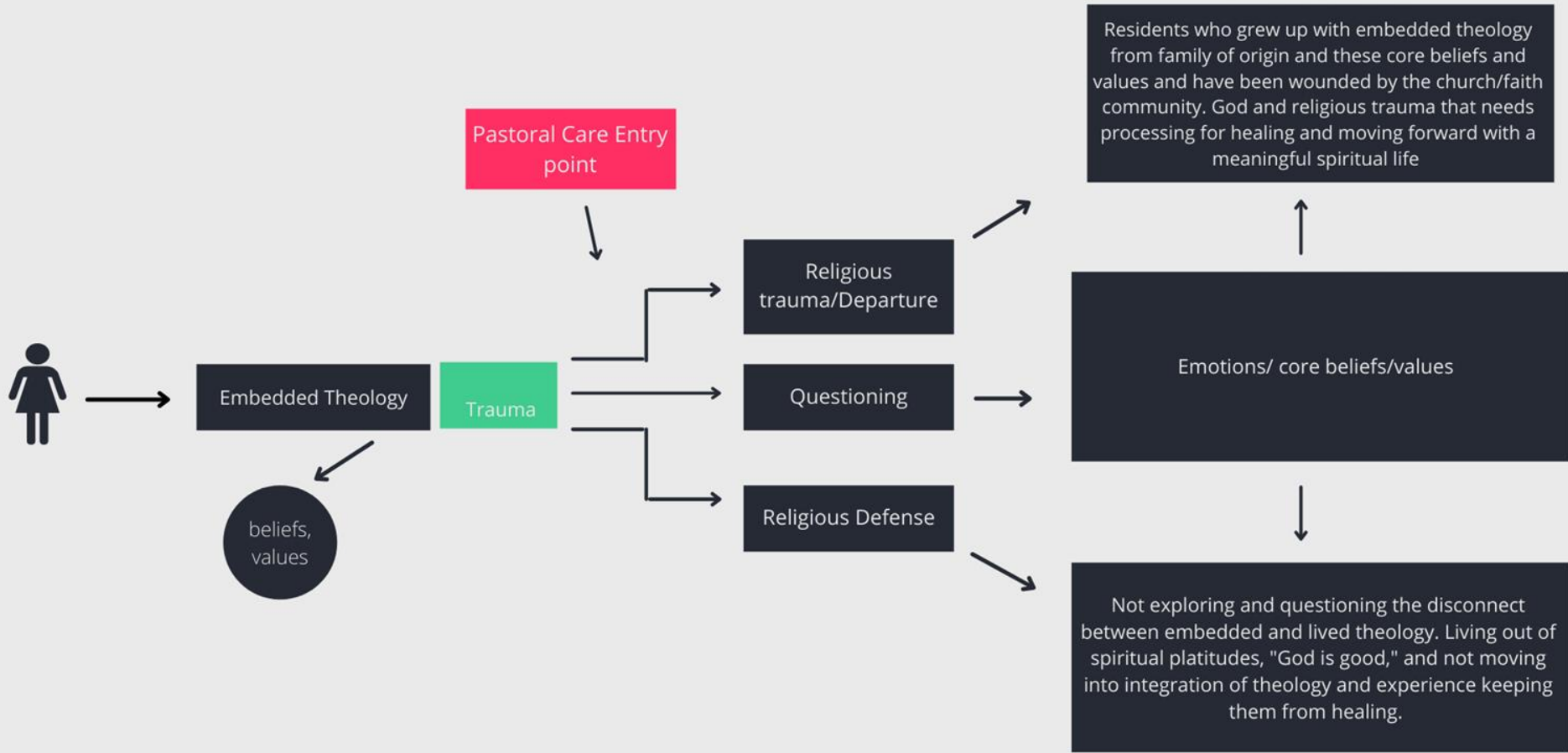


MODEL BY: CARRIE DOHRING

The model to the left shows how survivors can have life giving practices and beliefs that connect them with God/goodness/support systems.

This *lived theology* helps a survivor with spiritual growth, spiritual integration from beliefs and experience and increases posttraumatic psychological growth.

This is a theology that is complex enough for walking the road of suffering and trauma





Embedded Theology

Complex Trauma

Pastoral Care Entry point



Deliberative Theology



Religious Departure

Questioning

Religious Defense



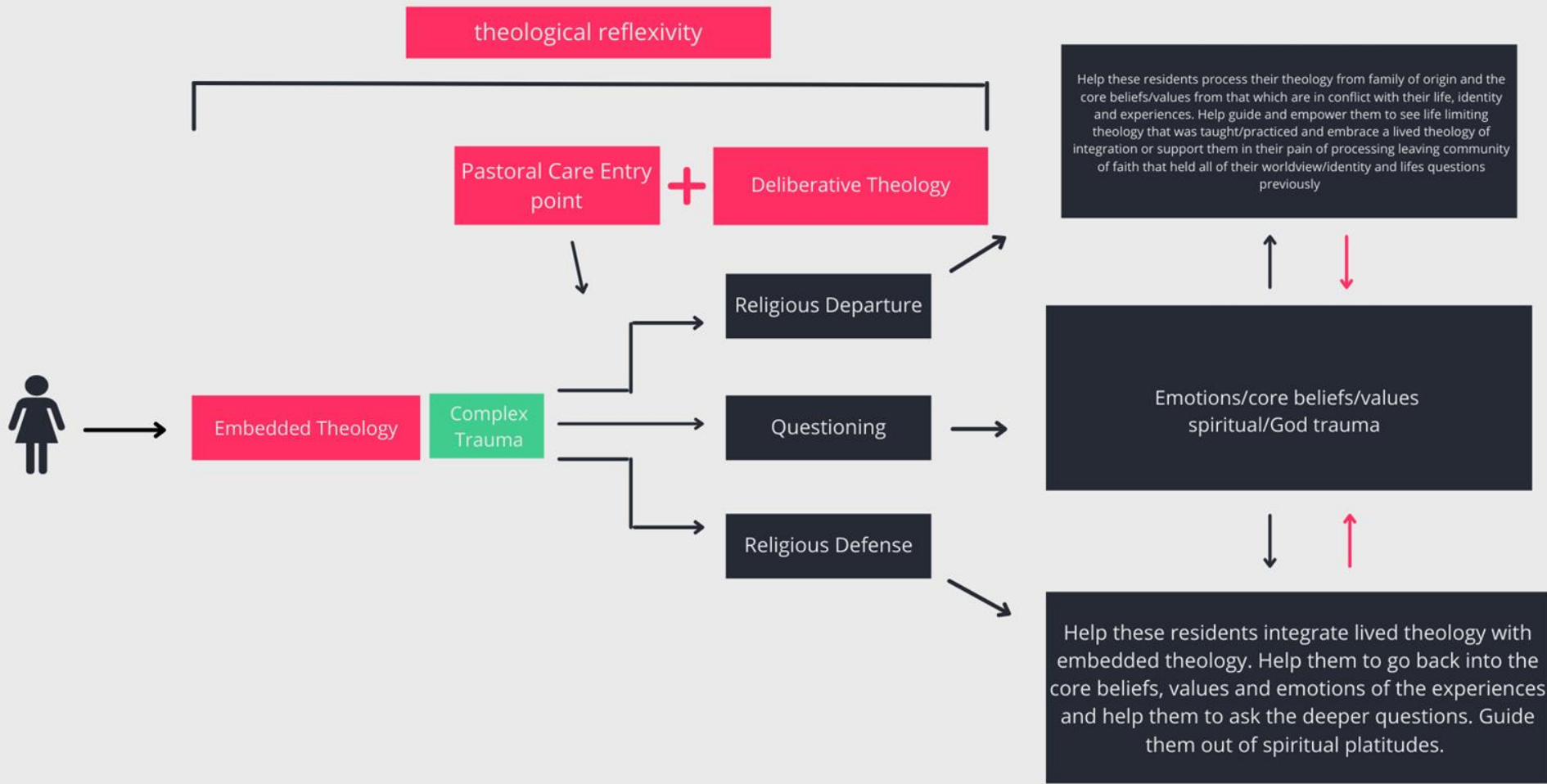
Help these residents process their theology from family of origin and the core beliefs/values from that which are in conflict with their life, identity and experiences. Help guide and empower them to see life limiting theology that was taught/practiced and embrace a lived theology of integration or support them in their pain of processing leaving community of faith that held all of their worldview/identity and lifes questions previously

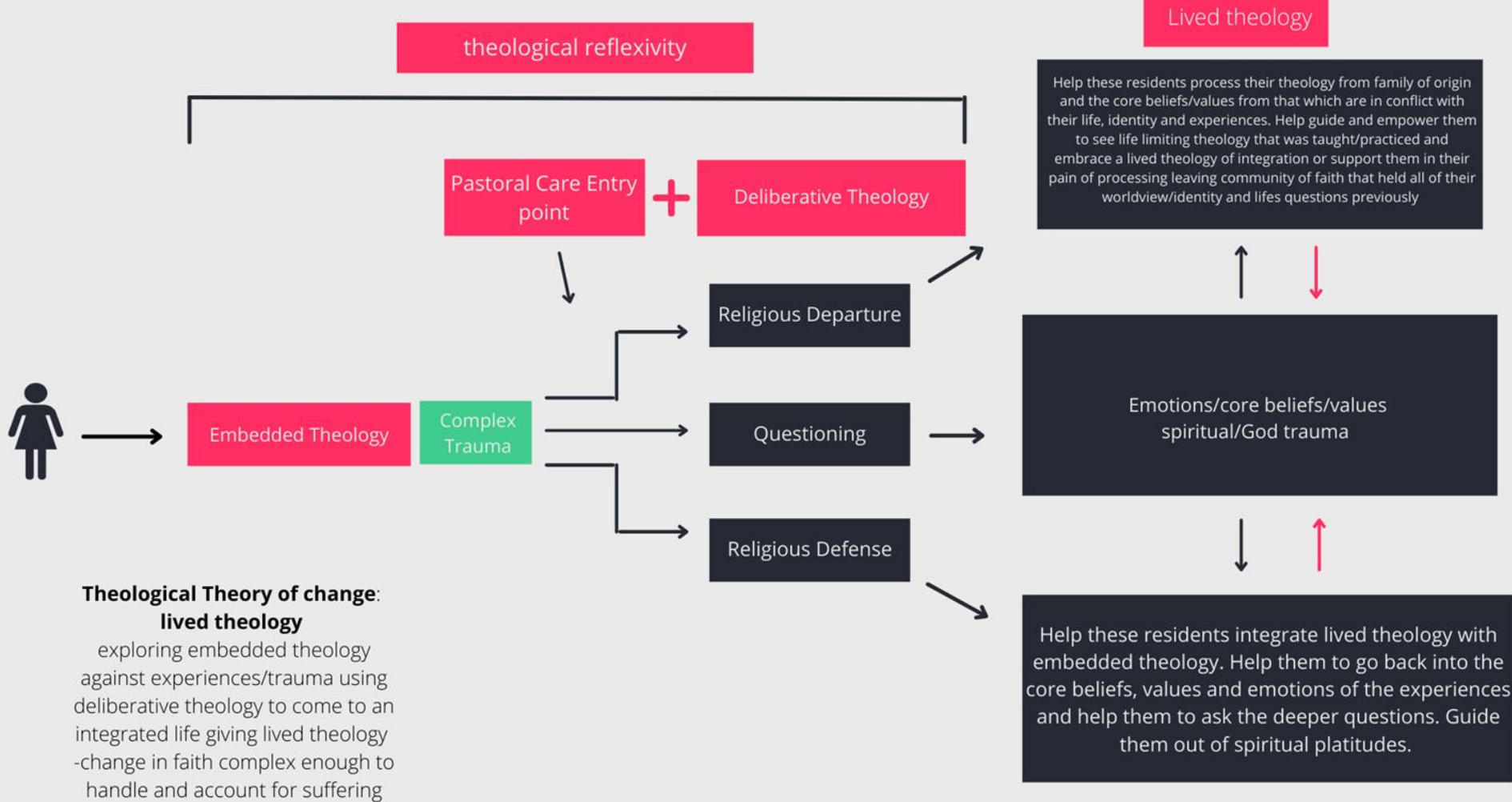


Emotions/core beliefs/values spiritual/God trauma



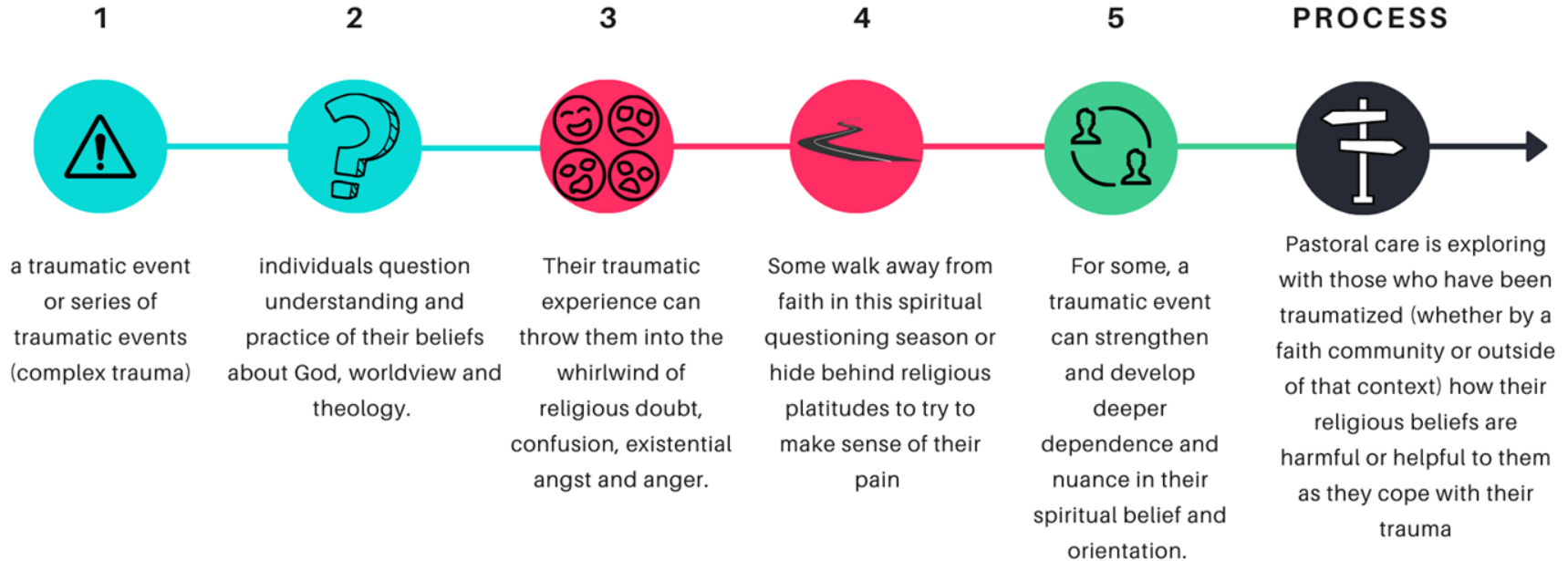
Help these residents integrate lived theology with embedded theology. Help them to go back into the core beliefs, values and emotions of the experiences and help them to ask the deeper questions. Guide them out of spiritual platitudes.





SPIRITUAL TRAUMA PROCESS

Pastoral Care



Pastoral Care role

Spiritual Trauma

02

Pastoral care explores with the person suffering from trauma how they understand and identify with their religious faith in light of their traumatic experiences. Their trauma can affect their identity, their views and beliefs about God and their ideas of fairness or justice

01

co sufferer with an individual guiding them in their dark night of the soul spiritually to healing and reconciliation with the suffering servant (traumatic event/series of events)

03

Pastoral care offers people who suffer from a traumatic event a way for these people to associate themselves and their experiences found in sacred stories and religious texts, traditions and histories. There are narratives some people find helpful while experiencing trauma, loss and death.

→What can a spiritual counselor or pastor specifically contribute to the trauma healing process?

- Ministry of presence: witness & co-sufferer
- Meaning-making
- Spiritual safety/security
- Autonomy
- Empathic guidance
- Non-anxious presence



MEANING MAKING

Faith provides the tools: a worldview that believers can use to structure their understanding of the world, stories for making sense out of realities that feel chaotic, a vocabulary for speaking about events that otherwise seem incommunicable. But this valuable meaning-making work can only occur once safety has been achieved.

Faith has stories with timeless themes to help believers make sense of the chaos of the world. Humans attempt to account for evil, seek to understand their own fallibility and vulnerability and search for hope. The texts and wisdom of the traditions of faith aim to address those big picture questions. These stories can provide deep spiritual grounding during unstable times because the messages of hope and comfort embedded in them. These words, stories and songs can help individuals regain a sense of spiritual safety even when physical and psychological safety cannot be assured. The Psalms of lament and other texts can show us people's struggles and help give us the sense that we do not suffer alone.

02

AUTONOMY

Their safe environment was violated because of the trauma the person involved was out of control. As a result, trust in others and self can be damaged while trust in God is also challenged. Allow space for their own beliefs, theology, worldview and feelings to be expressed and explored encouraging their own strengths, competence, needs and desires.

04

01

MINISTRY OF PRESENCE: WITNESS & CO-SUFFERER (NON ANXIOUS PRESENCE)

This is an attitude by Edwin Friedman that does not allow itself to be led by fear and is not a quick fix in which something must be solved, removed or dealt with. The aim is to find a way to connect with the counselee and offer the possibility to connect with his or her suffering, in order to perforate the isolation and lessen the loneliness. To be a co-sufferer.

03

SPIRITUAL SAFETY/SECURITY

Confidential sharing. Even without emotional and physical safety experienced from trauma finding spiritual safety in connection with God. The pastor should never take the initiative to approach the traumatic events. A sense of security to express confused feelings and allows counselee to address God with the most penetrating why questions.

05

EMPATHIC GUIDANCE

Create a space for transformation to take place. Don't dominate, take a following and accompanying role. Have an attitude of empathic guidance, accompanying the counselee on their search. Don't step outside of the boundaries marked out by the other. Counselee must have full control over what it is that he or she wishes to share.

PASTORAL CARE THEOLOGIANS INFORMED BY TRAUMA THEORY

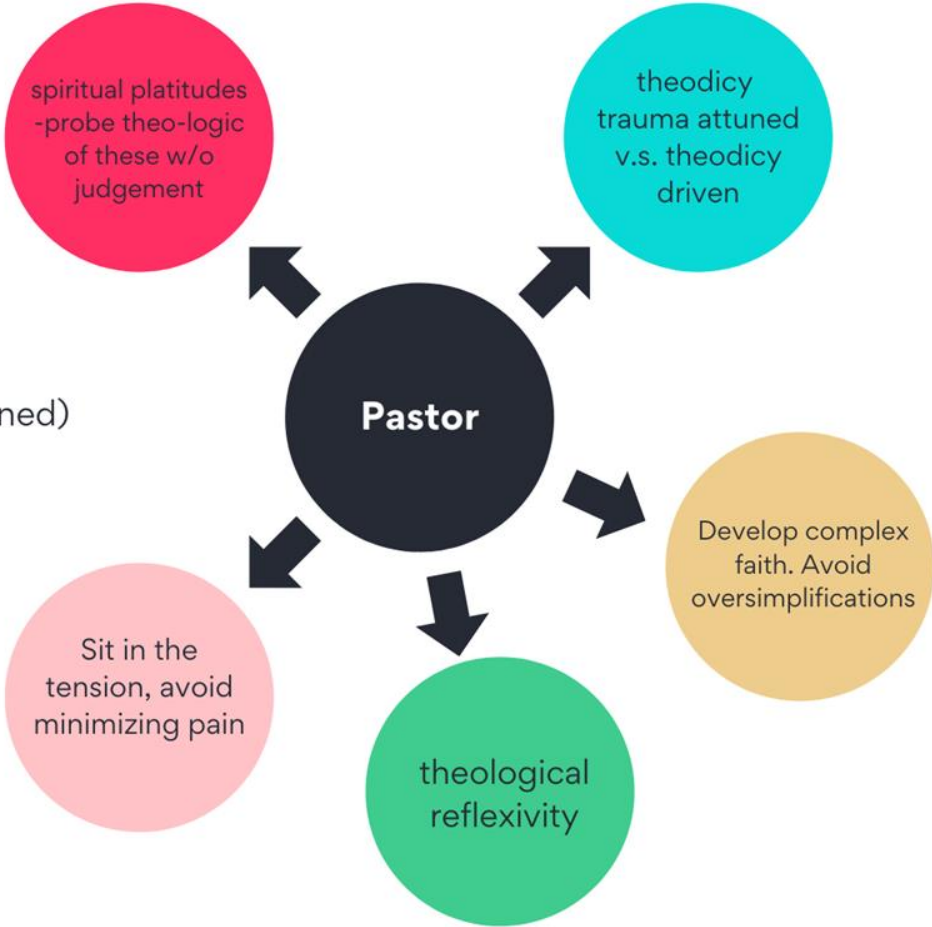
- Spiritual Platitudes

- Theodicy framework (trauma attuned)

- complex/nuanced faith

- Spiritual prescriptions/spiritual bypassing

- Theological reflexivity



PASTORAL CARE THEOLOGIANS INFORMED BY TRAUMA THEORY: INTERSECTION OF TRAUMA & THEOLOGY

- Pastoral Care practitioners who are theologians informed by trauma are attuned and wary of platitudes and how they may function in situations of trauma. Certain phrases capture whole theological systems: “It is God’s will.” “God is testing me.” They probe the theology underlying these spiritual platitudes. They do not seek to judge these platitudes as good or bad but rather to interpret the impact they have had on those who hold them.
- Theologians informed by trauma look at suffering and the framework of theodicy, of how we make sense of evil we experience. Pastoral care’s theology needs to move as well beyond theodicy frameworks to witness the experiences of the sufferer and its complexities, not just an abstract problem to be solved with an answer.
- Theologians informed by trauma resist prescriptions about suffering because these prescriptions can diminish the reality of someone’s suffering, push it below the surface, or sacralize suffering as good in itself.
- Theologians of trauma help individuals process where their experiences of trauma intersect with the theological affirmations in their religious tradition as well as where it departs from aspects of their tradition. A trauma-attuned posture rather than a theodicy-driven posture allows for those contradictions and tensions sitting with others in those places. Individuals in this place are interpreting all religious/faith based teachings through the lens of this life-shattering event and shifting their theology to account for the nuances of life.
- Pastoral Care theologians who have learned from trauma theory emphasize the importance of accompaniment, truth telling, and wound tending. Theology informed by trauma theory is not simplistic proclamations of God’s victory over suffering and you are healed declarations. Theology informed by trauma theory is not quick answers or fixes for difficult questions but a relational journey as a co-sufferer with an individual to bring them out of isolation. Theology informed by trauma theory is acts of witness and testimony that acknowledge the reality of the traumatic experiences, and the healing power of giving a witness to suffering in a ministry of presence.

Trauma Informed Ministry

MINISTRY PRACTICION

Sensitively use a basic understanding of trauma and reflect upon its implications for the various aspects of ministry such as preaching, bible study, prayer and other religious rituals and spiritual practices.
-practice sensitivity & awareness to triggers
-Help promote coping skills to reduce stress

Step 2

SPIRITUAL DIVERSITY

Aware of the impact of trauma upon persons depending on age, gender, social and marital status and sexual orientation
-meets people where they are in different worldviews, beliefs and theology
-advocates for the marginalized/oppressed

Step 3

FAITH RESOURCES

Gives those suffering from trauma the wisdom, insights and resources of the religious faith and tradition of those who have been traumatized and utilize those cultural attributes for the sufferer's benefit.

Step 4

COLLABORATION /REFERRAL

Collaborate with other community members who can provide additional resources and to whom the religious helper can refer those needing assistance in coping with their traumatic experiences

Step 5

TRAINING/KNOWLEDGE

Pastoral caregivers know the nature of trauma and how it impacts the quality of life of the person and the impact of that trauma on their relationships with other people and their understanding of God and spirituality.

Step 1

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