

Sorrow, Strength, Forgiveness and Growth

Pastoral Counseling with Immigrants, Refugees, and Other Survivors

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A poem from *Tough Times* *Companion*

“Grief Work”, by Jean Sampson



It is hard work to plow yourself up,
to prepare to nurture new seeds,
small fists tightened against growth
until the harsh season changes.

Soon the sun will warm
each shoot awake.
whatever struggles to reach up
through thick darkness
will grow stronger.

You grieve the tree you loved
that fed you, gave you shade.
Though new life may comfort you
there will remain one wounded,
sacred place where roots and branches,
no longer visible, are
outlined in pure light.

What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?

According to the DSM-IV-TR, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is present when...

- A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event
- B. The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced
- C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness
- D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (e.g. irritability, hypervigilance)
- E. Duration for more than 1 month
- F. Causes clinically significant distress or impairment

Posttraumatic Growth (PTG)

- The positive changes that may arise through the process of struggling with adversity.
- Even in cases of PTSD, Posttraumatic Growth is possible.

Positive changes

- Individuals experience positive changes following a traumatic event in three major domains: change in relationships with others, change in the sense of self, and change in philosophy of life.



PTG & Relationships

- As a result of loss and tragedy, many report feeling a greater connection to others. Also, many experience greater compassion for others who are suffering.
- A greater sense of intimacy, closeness, and freedom to be oneself

PTG & Sense of Self

- Vulnerable yet stronger
- “I’ve been through the absolute worst that I know. And no matter what happens, I’ll be able to deal with it.”
- New possibilities, new interests, perhaps significant new paths in life

PTG & Philosophy of Life

- Changed sense of what is most important
- Greater appreciation of life
- Possibly, positive religious change

Any sorrow can be borne if it can be made into a story, or if a story can be told about it.

--Isak Dinesen

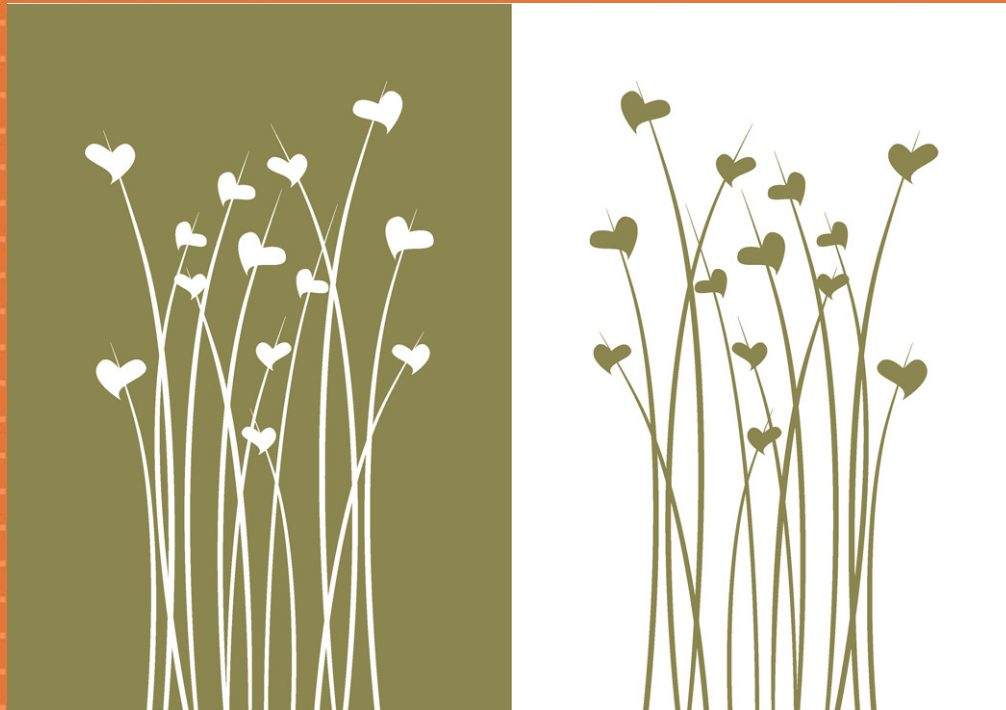


Crafting a narrative

- One of the best predictors of whether PTSD becomes a chronic condition or not is how ***organized*** and ***coherent*** or how disorganized and fragmented one's memories of the traumatic event are.

Telling is watering the flower of sadness. In silence,
one dies inside and hurts the souls of others.

--Roberta Culbertson



The counseling intervention can be understood as...

- ...a continual process of **narrative development**, where the events and experiences are **revisited and retold** many times, with new details included in each version, and different perspectives are taken on the same events. As new details and perceptions are included in each version, the aftermath of the crisis is revisited by each telling. For many individuals, **the retelling will gradually begin to include elements of posttraumatic growth.**

Forgiveness...

- stirs up emotions in everyone
- is the most difficult yet important work we do, as human beings
- is multifaceted and complex
- **occurs in a relational context**

Forgiveness includes realities we'd rather ignore, such as...

- The need to lament and mourn,
- A past that cannot be changed
- A future that can be changed only partially

Realities

- Our intentionality and commitment to forgive fluctuate
- Many complex and interwoven aspects of personality, effecting forgiveness, are below our consciousness awareness

Since we are all so different from one another, forgiveness can take many forms.

Forgiveness can be...

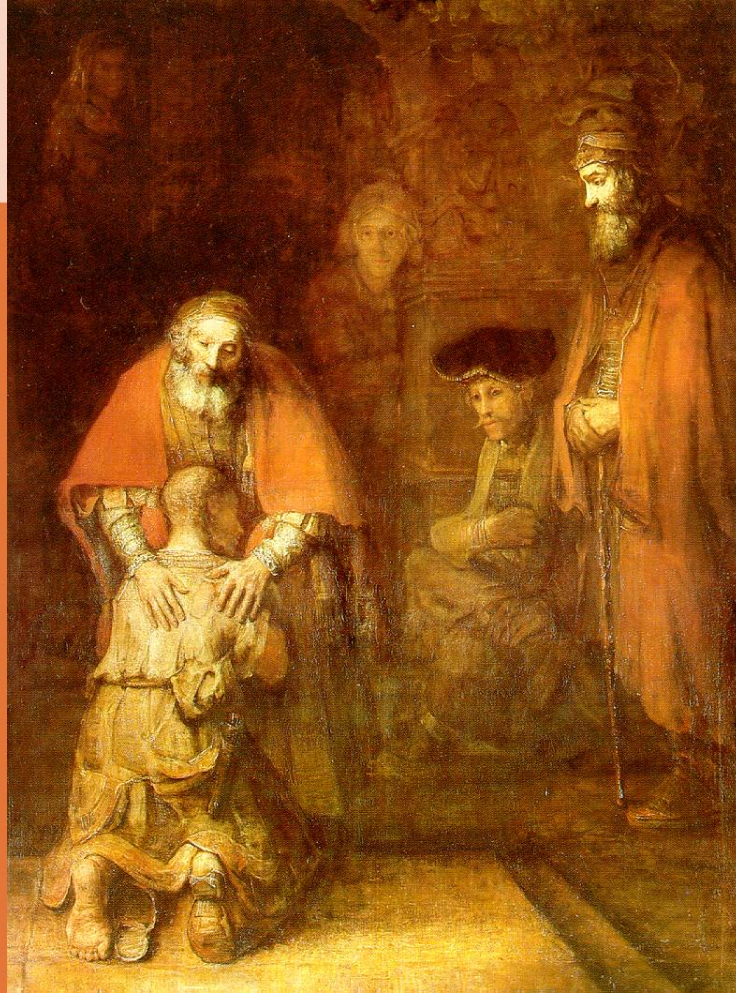
Interpersonal



intrapersonal



Familial



Communal



National



International



Traditional



Spiritual



But, we wonder, WHO is it that forgives

- What does it mean to be a human being?
- What does it mean to be a grown up?
- Why is it so difficult to forgive?
- Who is this person who is acting so strangely and can't let go?
- Who is this person who is so afraid of being vulnerable? Of being “bad”?

Pastoral Care Convictions

**Relationality and the study of what it
means to be fully human and to be in
God's world**

People of faith believe..

- We are made for love
- We are made to be in community
- We are made to connect with creation
- We are broken and in need of second chances
- We have been given a new way to live, yet we often find ourselves living hurting and hurtful lives

Psychology helps us to understand some of this...

- Difficulties with interpersonal relationships to are traced to early experiences.
- We must have a healthy, secure sense of ourselves if we can related to others as God intended.

Not everyone has the same chance

- Not everyone is or can be kept safe
- Not all parents can (circumstances) or are able to (capacities) provide a consistent, safe place to grow up.

Traumas, either early or later on, disturb our attachments to others.

- Attachment is the desire to maintain physical and emotional proximity with important people in our lives
- Points to the need for a secure base, a “haven” (using the attachment figure as a base from which to explore and master the world)
- It is during times of stress (e.g. separation) we activate our particular attachment systems

Attachment problems cause difficulties with forgiveness..

- All children wants to be “all that there is”
- If we come and go in safety, we soon realize we come and go without being either abandoned or destroyed.
- But without personal security, beginning in infancy, the “Other” is perceived as either perfect (all giving) or all bad (a threat).

Crisis Counseling

- “Crisis” in Latin means “decisive moment” –
People have freedom of choice
 - (How am I going to think about this? How will it fit into my belief system?)

Crisis Counseling -- Goals

- Dealing with emotions
- Coping
- Making meaning

Crisis Counseling – What *not* to do

- Don't give advice
- Don't give suggestions

Crisis Counseling – What *to* do

- Listen, Understand, Validate (LUV)
- Be present
- Look for *strengths* in their story
- Listen for *the survivor* in the story
 - “How in the world did you get through that experience?”

LUV -- LISTEN

- Face and give the person your undivided attention.
- Lean toward the person and make eye contact.

LUV -- UNDERSTAND

- Repeat or paraphrase what the person is saying.
- Check your understanding.

Empathetic Response leads

- So you feel . . .
- I hear you saying . . .
- I sense that you are feeling . . .
- You appear . . .
- It seems to you . . .
- You place a high value on . . .

▪

Helpful Response Leads

- So. . I am listening
- Tell me more about that...
- Sounds like talking about that is hard for you....
- Sometimes talking about it helps....
- Sounds like you are angry about that

LUV -- VALIDATE

- Offer minimal encouragers.
- Show your faith in the person by not giving glib advice.

Crisis Counseling –What *to* do

- Ask “getting through” questions
 - "How did you get yourself to do that?"
 - "What did you draw from inside yourself to make it through that experience?"
- Ask “making meaning” questions
 - “As you begin to make more sense of this, what information have you learned so far?”
 - “What advice would you give somebody who was going through what you faced?”

Crisis Counseling – Practice Exercise

Think of some issue or crisis that you have resolved, that you would like to talk about now.

With a partner, take turns as the listener and the teller (pastor and parishioner).

Talk for 10 minutes, then switch roles.
(20 minutes total)

Crisis Counseling – Process Recall

- What was it like to have someone give you their undivided attention for 5 minutes?
- What non-verbal/body language signals let you know they were interested in what you said?
- What was it like to actively listen for a whole 5 minutes?
- How did you get them to elaborate?
- What do you understand about their personal experience in that disaster?

Other psychological considerations in working with immigrants:

- Acculturative Stress
- Attachment

Four Stages of Vulnerability for Immigrants:

- ❖ Premigration (conditions that produce or promote emigration)
- ❖ Transit
- ❖ Period of resettlement
- ❖ Long-term adjustment and adaptation

Acculturative Stress

- ❖ “the loss of familiar ways, sounds and faces, coupled with a sense of not knowing quite how to belong, connect, and get support.”



4 Styles of Acculturation

- ❖ **Assimilation:** relinquishing of one's own ethnic identity and adopting that of the dominant culture
- ❖ **Integration:** incorporating part of new culture but maintaining one's cultural identity
- ❖ **Separation:** may take the form of segregation when imposed by dominant group
- ❖ **Marginalization:** group or individual loses contact with its own culture and with the majority culture, characterized by alienation and loss of identity

Compounding of Premigration and Postmigration Stress

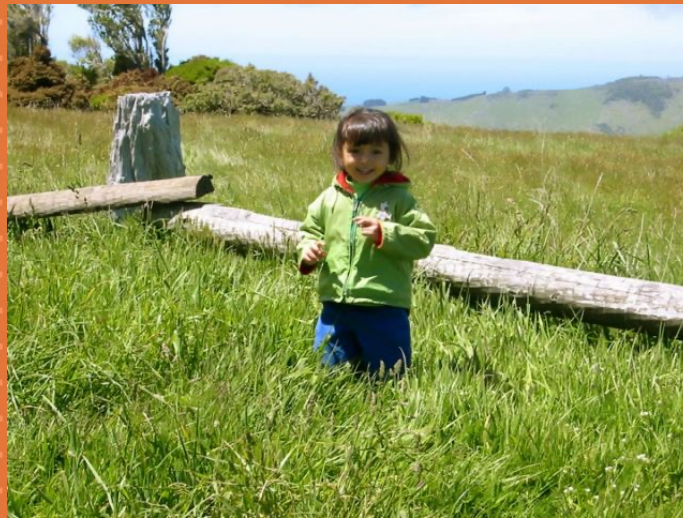
- ❖ Life change events/Traumatic events which occurred during the premigration period (e.g. organized violence, having lives threatened, severe poverty, being separated from family)

-combines with-

- ❖ Postmigration stress (e.g. fears of being repatriated, barriers to work and social services, separation from family, etc.)

Immigration and Attachment

“There is a marked tendency for humans, like animals of other species, to remain in a particular and familiar locale and in the company of particular and familiar people” (Bowlby, 1973).



quoted by Van Ecke, Y. (2005)

Attachment -- Secure

- ❖ Secure attachment
 - ❖ develops as a result of healthy, nurturing interactions with early caregivers.
 - ❖ allows one to respond to one's own emotions and to others with confidence, sensitivity, and flexibility.



Attachment -- Insecure

- ❖ “Anxious avoidant” (children) or “dismissive” (adults): emotions and needs are rejected by caregiver and therefore rejected by self in order to maintain the relationship with the all-important other.
- ❖ “Anxious resistant” (children) or “preoccupied” (adults): when care is inconsistent, one learns to pay very close attention to the other in order to sustain the relationship.
- ❖ “Disorganized” (children) or “unresolved” (adults): when there’s no sense of organization about how to get one’s needs met, how to relate to emotion, or to other people, or to one’s needs (cases of abuse or gross neglect)—the individual’s behavior is “dazed” or “immobile”.

Attachment Trauma

- ❖ An immigrant who experiences separation and isolation within the larger society may experience attachment trauma (“an unresolved, painful, emotional wound to an individual’s internal working model of attachment relationships”).

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Peace.

