

# John's Super-Quick Guide To Pastoral Counseling

*If the cause of the emotional pain is:*

**SIN** - then use Scripture to lead them to repentance, forgiveness, grace and restoration. Make sure that they accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and are filled with the Spirit.

**BEING SINNED AGAINST:** then use prayer, Scriptural exhortation with gentleness, forgiveness, inner healing, and exercises on letting go of resentments such as writing a letter to the person that hurt them then burning it, listing the problems then forgiving them.

**FOLLY /POOR HABITS/LIFESTYLE** - train them up in wisdom, use the Scriptures, keep them accountable for better patterns of living, and correct their unwise choices and lifestyles.

**RELATIONSHIPS / FAMILY** – give wise biblical counsel and try and understand who is doing what to whom and how it can be corrected. Correct wrong perceptions of each other and incorrect beliefs about roles and expectations; explore the history of the relationship. Be accepting, non-judgmental, do not take sides, do not be a referee. Very complex family situations should be referred to a Marriage and Family Therapist.

**MAJOR TRAUMA / GRIEF / LOSS** - then listen gently, be patient, pray for emotional healing, in some cases seek expert help, resources from Stephen Ministries are helpful: [www.stephenministries.org](http://www.stephenministries.org)

**CULTS/RELIGIOUS ABUSE** : Listen, get information about the cult and about any abuse that occurred, be very patient, do not argue forcefully or be too authoritarian as survivors are often very wary of religious authority. Be careful about the use of prayer, the Bible or religious symbolism as they may have had such bad experiences that this may further traumatize them. Go very slowly. In some cases you may need to contact the authorities. Steve Hassan's book *Combatting Cult Mind-Control* is very useful, also see [www.globalchristians.org/cults/](http://www.globalchristians.org/cults/)

**SPIRITUAL WARFARE:** resist the Devil, use the Name of Jesus, deliverance, spiritual cleansing, Ephesians 6 also see [www.newtestamentprayer.com](http://www.newtestamentprayer.com) for some relevant resources

**ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS / CIRCUMSTANCES:** Remove the stressors, teach them how to slow down, set priorities, manage time, money, career etc. Also teach them how to adapt to circumstances or to negotiate them including how to be assertive with their personal boundaries.

**MAJOR MEDICAL, LEGAL, CRIMINAL, PSYCHIATRIC OR FINANCIAL MATTERS:** refer out immediately to the appropriate professionals and simply stand by as a supportive pastor. This is especially so if any harm or potential harm to self or others might be involved.

## HOW TO IDENTIFY THE CAUSE

Listening skills + personal life history + checking the facts. I try to always remember to start off with a statement such as: "Please tell me about your life from Day 1 you might think it is irrelevant but the context will be a big help so I can understand you better." Just be very, very neutral and observe the facts the person tells you, accumulate reliable information and the picture will slowly emerge.

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