



Refugee Services
National Partnership
for Community Training

Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services

Faith Leaders as Strategic Partners

Elizabeth Power, M.Ed

National Symposium:

Connecting Leaders, Impacting Communities & Sustaining Programs:

Strengthening the National Torture Treatment Network

What's Faith/Spirituality Got to Do With It?

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- ▶ Think about the stories from your spiritual tradition
- ▶ If a spiritual tradition is outside of your experience, borrow from someone else's
- ▶ Identify stories of people overwhelmed by terrible situations
- ▶ **What sustained them?**
- ▶ **How does what we believe about what we can't see or touch impact us in a helpful way?**



It's About Relationships.

Trauma / torture:

- ▶ Occurs in relationships
- ▶ Heals in relationships
- ▶ Faith communities/spiritual groups are about relationships

Paradigms.

Paradigm drives practice:

- ▶ Model of illness versus experience
- ▶ Trauma / event as deserved
- ▶ Shepherd tending sheep
- ▶ Those people

What else? How do these paradigms impact relationships meant to be healing?

From Them to We

- ▶ **Whose worlds focus on making meaning?**
- ▶ Meaning we assign impacts how we respond:
 - ▶ Treat
 - ▶ Fix
 - ▶ Respond
 - ▶ Care
 - ▶ Brush off
- ▶ Correlation with spectrum from coercion to collaboration

Avoid Shame-based Models



Models that help or hurt

Help:

- ▶ “What happened **to** them”
- ▶ Sit with discomfort
- ▶ Trauma-informed
- ▶ Manage vicarious trauma

Hurt:

- ▶ “What’s wrong **with** them”
- ▶ Shaming & blaming
- ▶ Diagnosing & labeling
- ▶ Double standards
- ▶ Faith leaders/clinicians as G-dlike

Continuum

Coercion ←-----→ Collaboration

Cooperation
requires respect.
Coercion
demands terror.

Language Matters.

VS

Mental Illness

Patient

Victim

Survivor

Symptoms

Shameful

Damaged

Diagnosis

Result of what happened

Person

Subjected to torture

Child of Creator

Adaptive behavior

Difficult experience

Injured

Response to events

How do people show their paradigm?

- ▶ Language
- ▶ Behavior
- ▶ Labels
- ▶ Limits
- ▶ Engagement
- ▶ Self-care
- ▶ Culture

The Practicalities, 1

- ▶ **Attend to the power** you are assigned
- ▶ **Assess for congregational focus** on what happened (trauma) as cause instead of what's wrong (disease model)
- ▶ **Check your language:** make it person-centric instead of “tribe of mental health” or “tribe of religious tradition”
- ▶ **Educate about meaning making** as function of healing shared between mental health and spirituality

The Practicalities, 2

- ▶ **Be wary** of communities that require people to stay “sick” or demand that they be “healthy”
- ▶ Recognize that a **present-focused, strength based** model liberates everyone (including you!)
- ▶ **Focus on helping communities strengthen**
 - ▶ connections (attachment),
 - ▶ regulating emotions, and
 - ▶ worthiness of life

The Practicalities, 3

- ▶ Work more with communities and people who offer survivors of traumatic experiences:
 - ▶ Unconditional respect without romanticizing their struggles
 - ▶ Understanding of extreme coping mechanisms as adaptive
- ▶ Partner with the American Association of Pastoral Counselors on training
- ▶ Seek resources aligned with health instead of illness

The Practicalities, 4

- ▶ Set respectful boundaries that honor the person you serve
- ▶ Build relationships with spiritual leaders that are sturdy
- ▶ Remember that everyone is doing the best they can (even when it's difficult)
- ▶ Educate community members in person-first and person-centric ways

Resources

- ▶ **AAPC.org**, online, blended, and instructor led training, pastoral counselors
- ▶ **Sidran Institute**, online and instructor led learning based on Risking Connection in Faith Communities
- ▶ **Hearing-voices.org** for resources for people who have out of the ordinary responses
- ▶ Victor Frankl's work on meaning-making
- ▶ Erving Goffman's work on stigma/spoiled identities
- ▶ **Elizabeth Power, M. Ed. 615.714.6389** for training, conferences, and retreats



Contact Information

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Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services

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