

# What is Lay Spiritual / Pastoral Care?

It is what laity do during their encounters with others within institutional settings such as hospitals, aged care facilities, palliative care units, schools, and prisons OR when visiting the home-bound etc.

# What is lay spiritual care?

- Lay spiritual care does not align exactly with **pastoral care**
- Of the definitions of **pastoral** care that are regularly cited, five explicitly or implicitly acknowledge that laity provide pastoral care in institutional settings.
- **Spiritual care is** helping others to help themselves to use their own spiritual/religious resources to deal with whatever they are facing.

# Common features of the five definitions of **pastoral** care and where the term differs from **spiritual** care.

- The aim is to achieve some clear psycho-spiritual state for the beneficiary
  - Being spiritually healed
  - Being helped through some existential crisis
  - Receiving guidance in the spiritual dimension
  - Being reconciled to someone or something

BUT only the first definition talks about how (viz., being rigorously trained specialists using basic caring and counseling techniques)

## Common features (cont'd)

- The beneficiaries are seen as existentially or spiritually troubled persons for whom meaning-making is problematic
- Pastoral care is seen as a role undertaken by Christians representing (i.e., accountable to) their Church. The term **spiritual care** recognises that laity of Faith traditions other than Christianity can and do offer spiritual care to others on behalf of their Faith group.
- Pastoral care practice is not explained in the therapeutic terminology familiar to use-of-self professionals
- The defining feature of *pastoral care* is its religious motivation and frame of reference.

# Pastoral care is not:

- Not diversional therapy
- Not psychotherapy
- Not an “intervention” selected after using a spiritual assessment tool
- Not psychiatry
- Not social work
- Not administering the Sacraments (per se)

# What is a spiritual/pastoral care encounter?

- The lay spiritual carer/chaplain offers the other person a *relationship*
  - (which they may either accept, sidestep, or reject outright).
- The relationship is *spiritual/pastoral* because the lay spiritual carer/chaplain helps the other person to help themselves to use their own spiritual/religious resources to deal with whatever they are facing.

# What is supposed to happen during spiritual/pastoral care encounters?

- There are five functions *performed* during spiritual/pastoral encounters:
  - Sustaining (“being present“ for the other person)
  - Healing (helping the other person to move from psychological fragmentation to being made whole)
  - Guiding (gently suggesting options)
  - Reconciling (helping the other person to forgive someone and/or accept someone/something)
  - Nurturing spiritual growth (never proselytising!!)

# What is the lay spiritual /pastoral carer supposed to bring to the pastoral encounter?

- Themselves (a unique combination of nature-nurture)
  - Insights from their own life experience:
    - especially those experiences that would help them empathize with the other person's predicament; plus
    - Emotional Intelligence (ability to “read” other people)
- These insights from life experience are IMPLICIT KNOWLEDGE but might be made Explicit Knowledge if they are shown how they tend to react to events and to other people, and shown how they prefer to deal with events and other people (e.g., Myers-Briggs profile).

# What is the lay spiritual / pastoral carer supposed to bring to the pastoral encounter?

- Ability to draw upon the explanatory paradigms from the human sciences and use them “on the run” to assess “where the other person is at”:
  - Developmental stages
  - Needs
  - Loss & Grief cycle
  - Stages of faith development

This is EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE and is a COMPETENCY

# What is the lay spiritual / pastoral carer supposed to bring to the pastoral encounter?

- Insights from their spiritual/religious tradition that would enable them to:
  - Identify the other person's spiritual/religious issue(s)
  - Initiate a conversation about those spiritual/religious matters
  - Sustain the conversation at a spiritual/religious level
  - Take the conversation to the point where there appears to be some enhancement of the other person's psycho-spiritual state .

# What insights from the spiritual/religious tradition are useful?

- Those insights that help the lay chaplain to:
  - accurately identify a spiritual /religious issue
  - suggest how the issue might best be raised
  - suggest how to keep such a conversation going
  - suggest how to make such a conversation positively constructive for the other person

These are a combination of IMPLICIT and EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE , and are both a COMPETENCY and a DISPOSITION.

# Summary of the four inputs?

- The four inputs are:
  - Myself (nature and nurture)
  - Insights from my experience
  - Insights from applying the Human Sciences paradigms
  - Insights from my spiritual/religious tradition

# How best to explain what these insights are?

- Knowledge: Implicit v. Explicit
- Competency v. Disposition
- Different “Ways of Seeing”

I prefer the third category because:

- Spiritual/pastoral care is not just knowledge; it is essentially performative v. propositional.
- Competency and Disposition are simply aspects of the performative.
- “Ways of Seeing” are inherently performative.

# What is Spirituality?

- Not necessarily “religious”
- Broadly embraces *performative* ideas such as:
  - Discovering one’s purpose over a lifetime
  - Transforming one’s human character with a view to realising one’s full potential
  - Reducing the ego’s focus and hold on one’s perception of reality
  - Placing love and truth at the centre of one’s life
  - Realising one’s essential oneness with creation and harmonising one’s life with this higher order

# What is Religion?

- A religion is performative in the sense that it is not simply a collection of beliefs but a particular “Way of Seeing” the world, or a “Way of Knowing”, that satisfactorily explains the place of human beings in the universe for the believer, and shapes how they behave
  - \* problem: theology is generally defined in propositional not performative terms. Practical Theology tries to address this shortcoming.

# How to correlate these various “Ways of Seeing”

- Resolve them in favour of one of them?
- Dialectically synthesize them into a new perspective?
- Hold them in suspension?

# Are the “Ways of Seeing” hierarchical/sequential?

- Insights from one’s life experience are instinctive (whether they present themselves consciously and unconsciously to the mind)
- Insights from the Social Sciences require conscious effort
- Insights from one’s spiritual/religious tradition are not easily articulated except:
  - Metaphorically
  - by categorising the other person’s “issues” within the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love