

Best Practices & Ways for the Healing and Care of Victims/Survivors

The Pontifical Commission continues to discuss and collect best ways to help victims/survivors heal. Additionally, PCPM wishes to include the voices of the survivors in the global and local ministries of the Church's healing and safeguarding efforts. The PCPM will never forget who we serve, and for that reason our efforts in this area will always be on-going.

There is no perfect 'one size fits all' healing treatment or action and since each survivor is different, paths to healing are different too. Below are thoughts and suggestions provided by those who have worked many years in the ministries of healing and safeguarding. It is a buffet of suggestions for episcopal conferences and dioceses to select and implement as what best fits their circumstances.

This document is dynamic, and will constantly change and be updated as additional suggestions come to the PCPM's attention from all over the world.

May we never forget we serve a God of the impossible. Healing IS possible. John 14.26: But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. *Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth.*
Let us pray: O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

- Conduct survivor listening session by the Bishop
- Offer counselling
- Tap into a local chapter of the Maria Goretti network: www.mgoretti.org
- Create a community for victims/survivors.
- Weekly Closed Support Groups: These groups usually meet throughout the Pastoral Year. Members have the option to join the new pastoral year's support group where new members are also welcomed at the start of the year.
- Parenting Groups for Survivors: These are parenting group for survivors to address the unique issues that arise when one is a survivor of child sexual abuse and a parent. The group is co-led by two licensed social workers and held over twelve meetings. This is a safe avenue to begin bringing survivors together since it was related to sexual abuse, but with the

focus on parenting, creating some distance from the sexual abuse for those who were for the very first time going to identify themselves in a group setting as a survivor of sexual abuse.

- Survivors Advisory Committee: This group meets monthly to bi-monthly to plan activities throughout the year for survivors. They requested that the diocese offer support groups, as well as our yearly Healing Mass, prayer groups for survivors and more. One suggestion was to hold a retreat for survivors and have expressed wanting to meet with the clergy in the diocese who have been very supportive of the ministry to victims, to thank them, encourage them, and meet with them more personally. With this goal in mind Survivors had planned an afternoon BBQ with them for the clergy in the summer. This is a major step for some of the Survivors who have struggled with how they view clergy due to the abuse they have experienced, yet the fact that they have requested this is indicative of the progress they are making in their healing.
- Yearly Mass of Hope and Healing: this Mass is completely planned by the Survivors Advisory Committee. Those invited are welcomed to remain anonymous or meet with someone (Victim Assistance Coordinator or a member of a Healing Intervention Team) after the Mass. Some Survivors travel each year from other states to be part of this Mass. All those who came from out state had an opportunity to bring up the gifts during the offertory should they wish. And all those who came from out of state, provided feedback of how healing the experience was for them.
- Include the spouse or other family members in the care of the Survivor can be very helpful (of course at the consent of the Survivor and with direction of the counselor).
- One diocese formed a Clergy Abuse Panel. This panel consisted of 5 people. The Archbishop, the Vicar for Priests, the Chair of the Independent Review Board, the Victim Assistance Coordinator and a moderator, who was a licensed therapist. Clergy abuse panel discussions were held throughout the diocese. The locations were chosen mostly by the amount of abuse that occurred in that area.

The Clergy Abuse Panel Discussions were advertised as a non-media event. All of the discussions were 3 hours. After people arrived the moderator notified the audience that no news media were allowed and everyone must put their phones away. There was not to be any filming or note taking.

- Express an apology at the time of the interview of those who have come forward through lawyers seeking financial assistance. It is very important and powerful to offer an apology in person. This has been a turning point in the path to healing for some of the Survivors. Developing a trusting relationship with the Survivor is important.
- Promptly respond to those who report having been abused is essential. Not to do so, implies their abuse is not important and the Church does not care. Action have always spoken louder than words.

Below is a quick list of do's and don'ts for the effective pastoral care for adult survivors of abuse or trauma.* *Copyright © T. Pitt Green 2014. Reprinted by Permission.*

What NOT TO DO when working with Survivors

What TO DO when working with Survivors

Don't talk	Listen
Don't know	Learn
Don't defend	Acknowledge guilt of abusers and enablers
Don't minimize	Recognize the burden
Don't intellectualize	Permit strong feelings
Don't launch a pep talk	Know that if it was possible, the survivor would be over it already
Don't be impatient	Remember healing is on God's timing
Don't be directive	Follow the survivor's lead. Help them follow God
Don't be linear	Appreciate healing in circulative; repetitive
Don't wing it	Be prepared and knowledgeable
Don't be goal-orientated	Be God-orientated. His presence is enough.
Don't judge or shame	Offer radical respect for a humiliated person
Don't talk to a diagnosis	Talk to the survivor about the diagnosis
Don't own	Respect the boundaries of the survivor's feelings and story
Don't fix	Encourage
Don't fuel a focus on the past	Care for need here and now
Don't push	Accepting healing as a process
Don't expect efficiency	Simplify, repeat, confirm and repeat
Don't expect reliability	Expect no-shows, late arrivals
Don't personalize	Depersonalize anger and reactions
Don't assume responsibility	Set firm boundaries softly
Don't analyze	Affirm mystery and grace in this life
Don't shift into therapy	Know how to refer for professional help
Don't be manipulated	Live the boundaries you set
Don't feel responsible	Let the Holy Spirit do the heavy lifting

LET GO AND LET GOD