

A GUIDE FOR CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ABUSE



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Lead to Connection

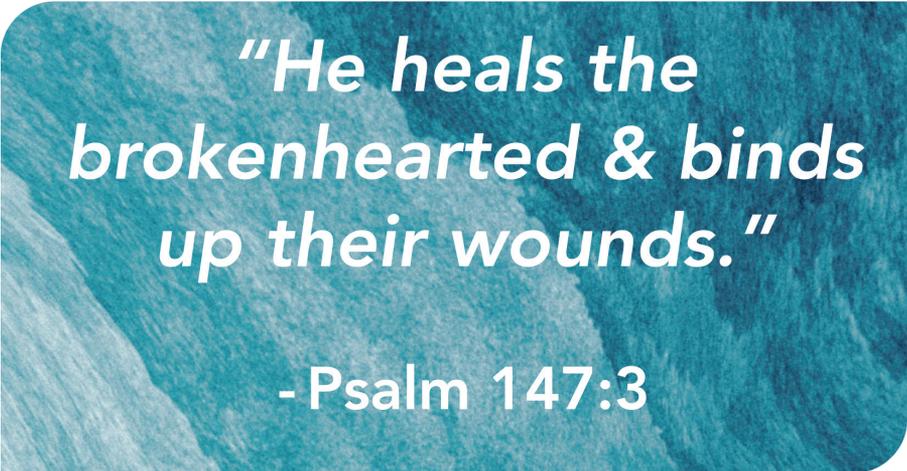
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*“He heals the
brokenhearted & binds
up their wounds.”*

- Psalm 147:3

A Guide for Conversations About Abuse

Abused wives, husbands, girlfriends, boyfriends, and children walk through the doors of churches every week. With a pastoral coaching mindset, you can meet them in the present with the power of the Holy Spirit and empathy, then help them create a game plan to move forward.

When interacting with individuals, be aware of your local policies or guidelines for reporting and what is consistent with local, state, or federal laws. When it comes to situations of abuse, we defer all expertise to counselors and law enforcement. In this guide, we will be sharing three mindsets for conversations you may enter into.

There are three key mindsets that can be leveraged when leading through these conversations:

1. Lead with **CURIOSITY**
2. Lead to **CONNECTION**
3. End with **COMMITMENT**

When there is a reasonable belief that someone has experienced abuse, you will need to follow any policies or guidelines that our church leadership recommends for reporting and that is consistent with local, state, or federal laws. If you have questions on policies or guidelines please reach out.

Lead with Curiosity

Listen and only ask open-ended questions when clarification is needed. Focus on creating a safe space for the individual to express what they are comfortable with expressing. If you see or hear any signs of abuse, ask open-ended questions.

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Are they currently in an abusive situation or are they seeking healing from past trauma and abuse?
- How long has this been going on?
- Who is the abuser?
- Where did it happen?

Trust the Holy Spirit.

Continually pray throughout your conversation and allow the Holy Spirit to guide your questions. What could begin as a simple, "Can you pray for me?" through a posture of curiosity can lead you to discover much more about an individual and their situation.

Be supportive, stay calm, and remain non-judgmental. Put your own feelings aside and try not to communicate shock, disgust, embarrassment, or disbelief.

Be aware of signs of abuse.

The victims of abuse can be characterized by low self-esteem, depression, and a variety of stress-related disorders. He or she can feel trapped and vulnerable, confused and uncertain.

Lead to Connection

Someone Currently in an Abusive Situation

Connection to safety. Create a safe space so the individual is protected from disclosing in public. Pull in a staff member for support. Connect them to resources. Know the resources available near you to offer support for people escaping abusive situations.

Connection to Christ. It takes a lot of courage to seek help during an abusive situation. You may take a moment to pause and pray with the individual to intentionally acknowledge the need, strength, wisdom, and guidance you need from the Holy Spirit in this moment.

Connection to truth. The abuse is not their fault. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life..." Victims of abuse can find themselves living within lies that have trapped them into their situation. You get to speak the truth over them and their situation, helping them find a way out.

Connect with your leader or a staff member for support in guiding the conversation once abuse has been disclosed.

Lead to Connection

Seeking Healing from Past Trauma & Abuse

Connection to Christ. Share the hope of the Gospel with them, and encourage them to spend time in prayer.

Connection to truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life..." Victims of abuse can find themselves living within lies that have trapped them into their situation. You get to speak the truth over them and their situation, helping them find a way out.

Connection to community. Connection is an incredible opportunity to help people find hope and move forward together. Abuse can lead to isolation and the vague hope that someone will soon come to help get me out of this.

Connection to counseling, if needed. When it comes to working through deep issues of trauma, you aren't the expert; counselors are. If you refer someone to counseling, stay committed to following up and continuing to care for them on their journey. Counseling is one tool that they may use, but they will still need Christ and community for long-term, sustainable healing.

Connect with your leader or a staff member for support in guiding the conversation once abuse has been disclosed.

Resources Helpful for Someone...

This resource is helpful for someone...	Resource:
who wants to move toward healing after sexual abuse.	Bible Plan: Born to Bloom, Heal From Sexual Abuse 
finding faith after sexual abuse.	Article: Questioning Your Beliefs? Here's How to Find God Again 
who needs encouragement to seek professional counseling for past abuse.	Article: Sexual Abuse Counseling Was Really Helpful—So Was This Healing Moment 
who needs a reminder of the worth in Christ.	Bible plan: Near to the Brokenhearted: How to Heal From Heartbreak God's Way 

Local Resources

Resources:	Contact Information:
Sunnybrook Revive Counseling Ministry	Francine Holtzen Phone: 712-259-0387 Email: mfrancine114@gmail.com
Sunnybrook Sexual Assault Support Group	Rachel Potter Phone: 712-276-5814 Email: rachelp@sunnybrookchurch.org
Sioux City CAASA - Center Against Abuse & Sexual Assault	24 Hour Crisis Line Number: 1-877-362-4612 Office Phone: 712-225-5003
Sioux City Safe Place	24 Hour Crisis Line Number: 1-800-982-7233 Office Phone: 712- 258-7233

Child Abuse

Listen and only ask open-ended questions when clarification is needed.

- What happened then..?
- Where did this occur...?
- What I'm hearing you say is...?

Do not...

- Do not ask leading questions or investigate the validity of the disclosure. Diving too deep could compromise criminal or other related investigations.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Do not find yourself on an island. Involve your leadership when appropriate.

- Do not press the issue but instead build trust with the child and let them know you are a safe person to talk openly when they're ready. Sometimes, a child will drop hints or make extremely vague comments indicating something might be happening. Be honest about not keeping secrets and involving others that will help, at the appropriate time.

Connect with your leader or a staff member for support in guiding the conversation once abuse has been disclosed.

End with Commitment

End every conversation with clarity of how you are committed to serving them and what next steps they are committed to taking. When there is a reasonable belief that someone has experienced abuse, you will need to follow any policies or guidelines that your church leadership recommends for reporting and that is consistent with local, state, or federal laws.

What are some next steps you can commit to?

- **Reassure and encourage the individual.** He or she did the right thing by telling you about what is happening. Never tell the victim that you do not believe her/him.
- **End the conversation in prayer and continue to pray for them.** Pray for strength and understanding, committing the abused person to God's special love and care.
- **Follow up** with them.
- **Explain the need to report** if they are currently in a situation of abuse.

What are some next steps they can commit to?

- **Connect to one of the resources you shared.**
- **Commit to coming back to next week's worship service.**
- **You may make suggestions, but it is up to the individual which next steps to take.** There can be times when an abuse victim shares but is not yet ready to leave or take action against the abuser. This can be difficult but don't get frustrated. The abuse victim is showing you great trust through their willingness to share their pain with you.



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