

Biblically Informed Trauma Counseling

Definition

Trauma-informed care shifts the focus from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” A trauma-informed approach to care acknowledges that health care organizations and care teams need to have a complete picture of a patient’s life situation — past and present.

<https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma-informed-care/>

Eight Components of Clinically Informed Trauma Counseling

1. Clinically informed— Understanding Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart with all diligence, from it flow springs of life.
- Matthew 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander.
- Proverbs 28:26 He that trusts in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.
- Romans 12:1-2 Choose transformation over conformation.

2. Identifying Anxiety Triggers

- This is typical of a BC procedure.
- When first experienced? Is associated with what event?
- Historical pattern of experiences
 - Keep an anxiety journal

3. Challenging Negative Thoughts

- This is typical of a BC procedure.
 - When first experienced and associated with what event?
 - Historical pattern of experiences
 - Keep an anxiety journal

4. Relaxation Techniques for Anxiety Management

- BC points to Jesus setting aside time to pray and time alone with his disciples to disciple and support them. These may well be utilized without necessarily following a secular modality

5. Behavior Modification Strategies

- This is BC's bread and butter, guided by Scripture and empowered by the Holy Spirit at the heart level.
- Modification by prescription based on revelation,
- Homework strategies to facilitate modification.

6. Developing Coping Skills

- While not using the contemporary “coping skills” language, BC certainly helps counselees develop godly self-management skills.

7. Setting Realistic Goals

- BC assists counselees in embracing biblically prescribed and realistically achievable goals through the power of the Holy Spirit.

8. Maintaining Healthy Lifestyle

- Healthy for BC is holistic Christian living. It begins with maintaining the right relationship with God, which is the basis for healthy self-relationship and other relationships.

Biblical Counselor’s Task

Remember, our tool kit is extracted from the all-sufficient Revelation, and any research tool used must be under its authority and consistent with it.

We should prepare to rest in God’s competence and equip ourselves by learning to use God’s tools. Having done numbers one and two:

- a. Engage tenderly, gently, but firmly (speaking the truth in love), walking with the traumatized.
- b. Engage in teaching /training others by counseling with you on how to engage others to handle trauma.

Bring Biblical Counseling from the Bible to the Brain—Nine Steps to Reframing Thinking

1. Stop waiting for an outside influence to change your mind for you.
2. Stop accepting that you are incapable of controlling your thoughts.
3. Do a U-turn—remember, if you put garbage in, you will get garbage out.
4. Speak what you believe, not what you feel.
5. Focus on right thinking, not wrong thinking.
6. Like Nehemiah, focus on the good hand of God on you.
7. Rehearse the basics of being transformed.
8. Go forward into your future on this foundation of the past.
9. Remember those who have gone before you.

Being Clinically Aware, Not Clinically Informed

I am writing this on Memorial Day; hence, an illustration of history is appropriate. D-Day 1944, when the King of England finished his radio broadcast speech with these words. "This historic moment, surely not one of us is too busy, too young or too old to play a part in a nationwide, perchance a worldwide, vigil of prayer as the great crusade sets forth. If from every place of worship, from home and factory, from men and women of all ages and many races and occupations, our intercessions rise, then, please God, both now and in a future not remote, the predictions of an ancient Psalm may be fulfilled: "The Lord will give strength unto his people: the Lord will give his people the blessing of peace."

As you read about this event, remember there was another call to prayer in May 1940.¹ The Lord brought weather conditions that grounded the German Luftwaffe and made the evacuation of 340,00 troops by a ragtag armada possible. You will also learn something that no one was able to discern why, but Hitler held back his tank assault. Hence, this event has been called the Miracle of Dunkirk.

With all the best equipment at their disposal, the Allies were not able to stop Hitler's war machine. But when the King was humble enough to call for prayer, the people humbled themselves and prayed God saved the troops and ended the war.

In my opinion, we are at a Dunkirk in biblical counseling.

In the second half of the 1960s, an eastern Bible College hired me to teach Christian Education and serve as Dean of Men. During my first year as the Dean, it became apparent that further education in counseling would be a helpful asset. At the end of the second semester, I enrolled in a master's program at a local university. As we completed the last exam and walked out of the classroom together, a fellow Christian commented, "See you in two weeks when we start the next class." I responded, "No, I'm done! And here is why. I put everything I read and heard into my theological sift, and everything ran out on the ground. There must be a way to do this consistent with our theology. Thus began my journey into the world of biblical counseling.

At that juncture, I was committed to the sufficiency of Scripture and unconsciously used that commitment to sift what I'd read and heard. Walking away from that program was more a matter of having a sense that it did not jive with biblical theology.

¹. The Dunkirk evacuation, codenamed Operation Dynamo and becoming known as the Miracle of Dunkirk, was the evacuation of more than 340,000 Allied soldiers from the beaches and harbor of Dunkirk in the north of France in 1940 when Allied troops were surrounded by German troops during the six-week Battle of France. <https://robertsloan.com/2013/03/11/but-if-not-the-miracle-of-dunkirk/> cited 06-01-24.

Subsequently, another friend asked me the same question, and I responded similarly. “You need to read this book that just came out. A professor from Westminster wrote it. It is titled, *Competent to Counsel*.” I got it. I read it and told my wife, “I want to study with this guy. He has worked out what I’m thinking.” Eighteen months later, I entered the training program offered by Dr. Adams.

Since those early days, the sufficiency of Scripture has become a very conscious tool for paring away the presuppositions of the myriad new clinical theories.² In the late 1990s, I coauthored a book with Ed Hindson titled *Totally Sufficiency* to help fellow believers in every walk of life see that the Scripture is sufficient for their discipline.³ The volume is still in print.

So why this blog today? While somewhat cliché, I am glad you asked. There are folks in biblical counseling camp today who desire to retain the moniker Biblical Counselor while at the same time arguing that a person who is not “clinically informed,” a somewhat nebulous term that on the surface sounds relatively harmless when, in fact, in effect is ripping the heart out of the concept of the sufficiency of Scripture.⁴ Scripture is no longer the authority. In this espoused view, the biblical counselor lacks the necessary information to assist the hurting and must seek assistance from the clinical. Please do not misconstrue my words. I have read widely in the world of psychology at the doctoral level and have tracked ongoing developments. So, I am not saying don’t read the other guy!

In several weeks, I am presenting a workshop at our Overcomers Conference titled Biblically Informed Trauma Counseling to alert our constituency to this grievous error.

I have not cited the names of those teaching this error. I am not currently interested in engaging in a public debate, and I consider several of these my friends. I hope something as simple as this blog may be a wake-up call. Brothers and sisters, there is a canyon gap between being clinically aware, which implies knowledge, and being clinically informed, which implies necessity, a.k.a. integration. The Scripture is rich in practical data that is theologically grounded. I encourage you to mine the endless treasure of the Word of God to determine theory and practice in your counseling ministry.

² Eyrich, Howard, *A Layman’s Guide to Counseling Theories* available fall 2024 on Amazon.

³ Eyrich, Howard, and Ed Hindson Focus Publishing

³ I do not think this is the intent of these brothers and sisters. Instead, with a sincere desire to enlist every possible help and maintain credibility for Biblical Counseling, they believe they are embracing the best of two worlds. Unfortunately, they have not perceived the inconsistency of their thinking and actions. This is a situation ripe for Occam’s razor.

Just A Few Veins of God's Gold from God's Mine

These veins must be worked (that is, you must study them, pray over them, and prepare yourself with a heart full of empathy and support to help your counselee benefit from them. Good biblical counselors do not just tell the truth to the abused counsees; they facilitate the counselee understanding truth by engaging them in thinking through passages.

I will give you one approach to doing so using the case of Jeremiah. Remember, Mr. Question is your best friend. He assists you in two ways. First, he helps you understand your counselee by carefully clarifying their self-reporting. Second, by asking and posing questions, you facilitate creating a framework that precipitates an activity thinking process.

Jeremiah Example 38

There are three primary questions to be asked, followed either by questions or assertions.

Question One: Who was Jeremiah?

- He was a human being.
- He was a God's child.
- He was a servant of God.
- He did not deserve to be abused.
- He did not cause his abuse.
- He was the victim of those with power.
- His abuse did not devalue him.

Question Two: What did God do about his abuse?

- He sent a rescue team for him.
- He preserved him to continue to live and serve.

Question Three: Why did King Zedekiah go along with abusing him?

- There were multiple voices of power speaking to him. This is often the case when people abuse other people. They are often egged on by other children or by porn to which they have been exposed. It does not excuse them, but the abused begin to realize that they are not responsible for their abuse. It is the wickedness of sin played out in the lives of others.
- As observed in the case of Jeremiah, God allows the wickedness of the sin nature to play out, but He provides a way of escape. Their escape may not be immediate but abused who trust God and His word not only find an escape from the abuse but become stronger believers and effective servants.

Joseph Example Gen. 37 and 39

Job Example: The Book of Job

Job teaches the abused by example how to maintain love for God and trust in God through abuse and errant counsel by being in honest communication with God, which includes expressing confusion and affirming trust in God.

Psalms

While numerous Psalms could be cited, four I find particularly helpful.

- Psalm 107
- Psalm 73
- Psalm 52
- Psalm 34