

Pastoral Vulnerability: Navigating the Nuance of Disclosing Clergy Mental Health Challenges

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Importance of Clergy Disclosure

- **Validates the experience of others**
- **Creates safe space for healthy vulnerability**
- **Builds foundation for true community**
- **Supports clergy authenticity and integrity**
- **Helps humanize clergy**
- **Supports teaching and modeling**

Barriers to Clergy Disclosure

- **Misconception that mental illness is a sign of spiritual weakness, failure, or demonic possession**
- **Misunderstanding of what vulnerability is**
- **Stigma: Mental illness requires a “whisper”**
- **Disclosure has potential to be used against us and our professional competency**
- **Lack of knowledge and education about mental health and illness**

The background of the image is a teal-tinted photograph of dandelion seed heads and stems. The seed heads are in various stages of maturity, with some showing the characteristic umbrella-like structure of the seeds. The stems are dark and extend upwards from the bottom of the frame. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, with a focus on natural elements.

THEOLOGICAL BELIEFS

Sharing When in Need

1. Feeling Forsaken

2. Dark Night of the Soul “Jesus as Light”

- Spiritual crisis as normal
- Trust vs. understanding

3. Theology of the Unknown

- Felt experience vs. yearning

4. Grace, Blame, and Causality

- Understanding cause for treatment vs. blame

Sharing When in Service

1. Power of Testimony

- Story of healing that brings healing

2. Humanization of Clergy

- Allowing clergy to be more human than divine
- Teaches healthy expectations

3. Modeling/ Spiritually Edifying Congregation

- Using your platform of influence
- Setting tone for healthy expectations



SHARING WISDOM

Sharing Pyramid



Closing and Q&A

Thank You!

Resources

NBA Mental Health Initiative

www.nbacares.org

Duke Divinity Clergy Health Initiative

<https://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives/clergy-health-initiative>

***Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* by Henri Nouwen**