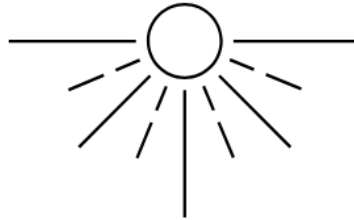




THE HOLISTIC COUNSELOR PODCAST



From the Mic to the Community

What is religious trauma?

Explore harm connected to religion while making room for your beliefs.



Diana S. Rice

Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC)
Certified Integrative Mental Health Professional (CIMHP)
Qualified Supervisor (QS)

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[THEHOLISTICCOUNSELOR.COM/RESOURCE](https://theholisticcounselor.com/resource)

A little clarity.

Understand the topic. Find words for your questions.

Something can have happened in a religious setting and still be hard to name. You may value your faith and also need to talk about the harm you experienced.

1 A description of experience

People use religious trauma to describe lasting distress linked to harmful experiences with religion. This may involve threats, shame, control, or abuse tied to religious power. The phrase is not a separate Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders diagnosis.

2 Belief and harm are not the same thing

Faith can bring comfort and community. People or groups can also use religion to control others. A disagreement on its own does not prove abuse. Look at the pattern, the use of power, and what happened.

3 You can choose the pace

A helpful conversation should allow uncertainty. You do not have to decide what you believe, confront a leader, forgive, or return to a community before seeking support.

Research & perspective

Research on religious and spiritual harm uses different definitions. Safeguarding guidance identifies coercion and control as important concerns. An individual assessment can explore distress without assuming every painful religious experience causes post-traumatic stress disorder.

General education for adults. This is not therapy, diagnosis, or an individual treatment plan. Sources and helpful links are on page 4.

Let's pause and reflect.

Your answers can stay private. Take this at your own pace.

Choose one question or explore all three. Skip anything that feels like too much. You do not need to revisit painful details to use this guide.

1 What do I need someone to understand without debating me?

2 What would make a conversation about faith feel safer?

3 What boundary or source of support would help right now?

Optional faith reflection

What parts of my faith feel supportive, and what questions need room without pressure?

One next step

Consider a licensed clinician with relevant experience and support outside any group involved in the harm. If abuse is ongoing, prioritize safety and local professional support.

If reflection brings up too much, pause. Reach out to someone you trust or a qualified professional. You do not have to do all of this today.

Continue the conversation.

Bring your questions. Learn more. Reach for support.

QUESTIONS TO ASK A PROFESSIONAL

- ☐ How do you work with religious or spiritual harm?
- ☐ Will you respect my choice to keep, question, or change beliefs?
- ☐ How do you assess safety and trauma symptoms?

Listen with curiosity

[Episode 66 - Sowania Germain discusses spiritual abuse and high-control religion.](#)

[Episode 90 - Hear a lived-experience conversation about spiritual abuse and recovery.](#)

Selected conversations are starting points, not an exhaustive list or treatment recommendations. Guests share their own perspectives.

Sources & useful resources

[Church of England: Understanding spiritual abuse](#)

[Research: Spiritual abuse in Christian faith settings](#)

Confirm services, credentials, location eligibility, and fees directly. Linked organizations operate independently.

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United States and territories: the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline supports people in emotional distress or a suicidal crisis. [Call 988](#) · [Text 988](#) · [Chat online](#)

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