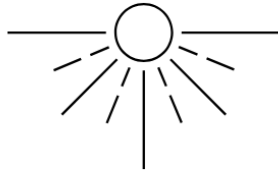


THE HOLISTIC COUNSELOR PODCAST



A LEARNING & REFLECTION GUIDE

Understanding Religious Trauma

Exploring harm, personal beliefs, and the path
toward support.

READ / LISTEN / REFLECT

Diana S. Rice

LMHC, CIMHP, QS

FROM THE MIC TO THE COMMUNITY

UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Begin where you are.

Harm connected with religion can bring complicated questions about trust, belonging, and belief. There is room to explore what happened while deciding, in your own time, what faith and support mean to you now.

Listen alongside this guide

Conversations from The Holistic Counselor Podcast to explore with these pages.

EPISODE 66

Spiritual abuse and recovery with Sowania Germain

Sowania Germain discusses spiritual abuse and high-control religion.

[Listen or read the transcript](#)

EPISODE 90

Spiritual abuse, purity culture, and recovery

Hear a lived-experience conversation about spiritual abuse and recovery.

[Listen or read the transcript](#)

IN THESE PAGES

Understanding the topic / Make room for your questions / Keep learning. Find support.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Understanding the topic

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.

Belief and harm are not the same thing

Faith can bring comfort and community. People or groups can also use religion to control others. Understanding the pattern of behavior and the use of power helps distinguish disagreement from coercion or abuse.

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 and 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.

Can I seek support while I am still unsure what I believe?

Yes. You can look for a clinician who respects that uncertainty and ask how they approach religious or spiritual harm. Support can begin with your present concerns and safety. You do not have to settle your beliefs or make a decision about returning to a community first.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Make room for your questions

Choose a question that feels useful today. A few notes in your own words can be enough. Your reflections stay with you; this website does not collect them.

Type in the spaces below, or print and write by hand.

What do I need someone to understand without debating me?

What would make a conversation about faith feel safer?

What boundary or source of support would help right now?

Questions for a conversation

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?

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.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Keep learning. Find support.

OPTIONAL FAITH REFLECTION

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

Sources and further reading

Editorial revision: October 13, 2026. The linked authorities provide current rules, services, and evidence.

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

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

Wherever you are reading from, your culture, language, beliefs, access needs, and daily circumstances belong in the conversation. Professional titles and services vary between countries. Sources and directories identify their own regions; a local health service or professional regulator can explain the options where you live.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

These guides offer general education for adults. They do not provide personal therapy, diagnosis, medical advice, or a professional relationship with Diana. A qualified professional who can practice where you live can help you apply information to your circumstances. Changes to prescribed care belong in a conversation with your treating professional.

[Read the full educational disclaimer](#)

FROM THE MIC TO THE COMMUNITY

Keep exploring.



Read, listen, and return
at your own pace.

Scan for this guide and its episode links.

theholisticcounselor.com/resources

Diana S. Rice, LMHC, CIMHP, QS

Podcast host, educator, and psychoeducational trainer

IF YOU NEED URGENT SUPPORT

If you need urgent emotional support in the U.S. or its territories, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers phone, text, and chat support. For immediate danger or a medical emergency, use your local emergency number (911 in the U.S.). Elsewhere, contact a crisis service in your country. The podcast and its messages are not monitored for urgent care.

988lifeline.org/chat/

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