

The Balancing Act: Psychological implications for Pastors/Leaders & Ministry Workers and their Families

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Purpose

- To understand patterns of thought that lead to unhealthy behaviors for Leaders
- To understand the nature of the work of the “spiritual health professional”
- To identify psychological distresses and disorders to which Pastors/Leaders are prone
- To learn tips for a healthy mind-body, ministry, and family balance

First things first!

“But unto every one of us is given GRACE according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Ephesians 4:7

- With every calling and commission comes the GRACE to fulfill said call!
- Without an authentic call and commission, one is forced to work without the grace to work, ALREADY setting him or herself up with no defense against psychological distress.

Things to note and remember...

1. Comparison is an ENEMY of peace!
2. Consider the health and stability of your VALUE SYSTEM!
3. With whatever you are called and commissioned to do, BE CAREFUL how you are defining “success.”
4. Be sure that your identity is not wrapped up in WHAT you do and that your ego/self-worth are not attached to SUCCESS OF WHAT you do

The Nature of the work of Pastoring, Leading, and Ministry

- Ministry = Service
- The work of the ministry is, at its foundation, a human service profession.
- Pastors, Leaders, and Ministry workers serve God and SERVE PEOPLE
- As a result, for [this group of individuals], there is an INCREASED LIKELIHOOD of experiencing certain psychological distresses.

Caretaker Stress

- Stress associated, oftentimes, with the long-term care of other individuals. Sometimes these individuals have chronic or terminal illnesses.
- Can lead to what's called "caregiver burnout"
 - Becoming sick more frequently
 - Exhaustion
 - Impatience and Irritability
 - Feelings of helplessness and/or hopelessness
 - Neglecting one's own needs

Compassion Fatigue

- Fatigue, emotional distress, or apathy resulting from the constant demands of caring for others.
- What happens when one wants to care, but doesn't look like he or she cares or are unable to be present with people?

Vicarious Traumatization

- The indirect experiencing of trauma.
- How do spiritual health professionals PROCESS this type of trauma?

Generalized Anxiety (GAD) and Panic Disorder (PD)

- GAD is marked by excessive worry across multiple contexts that leads to daily dysfunction and inability to effectively perform.
- PD is marked by brief, almost unexpected episodes of physical and cognitive symptoms eg., hyperventilation, racing heart beat, shortness of breath, tightness of chest, sweating, dizziness, nausea, and irrational thoughts [usually of worst case scenarios].

Depression

- Sadness
- (Anhedonia) Loss of interest in what you USED to enjoy doing
- Changes in sleep pattern
- Loss of energy
- Changes in appetite
- Feelings of low self-worth
- Slowed down or fidgety
- Difficulty with concentration
- Suicidal Ideation

Rest: Easier said than done!

- Rest is both an active and a passive process.
- One's external environment can be conducive for rest eg. Tropical Beach
- However, if one's internal environment is not conducive for rest, one can lay down, close his or her eyes, turn out all lights, and “sleep” all night and wake up just as tired/exhausted as he was when laid down!

Tips for Balance

1. Understand your OWN limitations. Learn how to say “no” without feeling guilty. Don’t work outside your scope of expertise. Ask for help.
2. Set FIRM boundaries with individuals and with ministry work. Be careful of DUAL RELATIONSHIPS. Be careful with face-to-face time; phone time; personal disclosures; giving money, opposite sex interactions; and family interventions.
3. Carve out self-care time WEEKLY! Model the sacredness of self-care to your leaders and people in your life.
4. Delegate responsibility where you can. Identify individuals with pastoral/leadership abilities and train and use them
5. Seek out a PROFESSIONAL individual eg., therapist or another Pastor/leader, that you can process with, vent to, be vulnerable with, and from whom you can gain insight and self-awareness.

Always Remember!

- ✓ Your family is your first ministry after God
- ✓ You are not a Pastor/Leader who happens to have a family; you are a family man or woman (spouse and parent) who happens to Pastor/Leader.
- ✓ There is a MIND-BODY connection; in order to be healthy physically, one must be healthy mentally and vice versa.
- ✓ Lack of balance with ministry will render you ineffective at home
- ✓ You may be gifted with the grace to do [it], but it's going to take WISDOM to do [it] successfully.
- ✓ Success of Pastor's/leader's ministry is positively correlated with the health of his or her home.

Questions?????



God Bless!

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