

Community Care

CREEK HELP ACADEMY
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CHURCH

Fun Opening Question

When someone says, “Can I please set up a meeting with you?”

How do you feel and what is your gut response?

Goals

This course will help you navigate caring for members of the church who are experiencing personal loss, financial crisis, physical pain, and/or spiritual issues. We will discuss how to best care for hurting people, what to say, and how to avoid some of the common pitfalls. Our desire to help everyone that asks for it while still maintaining good personal and professional boundaries. We'll cover benevolence requests, executing care meetings, hospital visits, when/how to refer, and other best practices.

What can trigger a life crisis?

Have you ever went through a period of personal crisis? It's not uncommon for people to become overwhelmed with any number of life's difficulties such as:

- Death of a loved one
- Loss of employment
- Marriage strife
- Divorce
- Child acting inappropriately
- Financial struggle
- Physical illness/pain
- Spiritual issues

You want to talk to... me?

- As a staff person at a church, people may reach out to you for help... whether you feel qualified or not!

Also, often times the request will come at an unexpected and inconvenient time. It's easy to be thrown off guard and not know how to respond when someone asks for financial help, advice, or simply just for someone to listen to them.

You only get one chance to make a good first impression when someone asks for help! Our hope is to prepare you as much as possible for that “out of the blue” opportunity to care for someone in crisis down the road.

I Need to Talk to a Pastor

People, even non-Christians, will intuitively reach out to a Pastor in their time of need. There is something about talking to Pastor which brings warmth and comfort. People assume you've got an "in" with the Big Man, so if they don't feel comfortable talking with Him directly, a pastor is probably the next best thing.

Even if you're not a pastor at CedarCreek, people will likely assume that you're a safe person to talk to! They may share things with you that they aren't comfortable sharing with family, friends, medical professionals, etc.!

Get ready! You never know what someone might share!

Access

One of the most rewarding and difficult things about working for a church is access. Because of your job title, a good number of people are automatically going to trust you (some won't...for sure... but a lot will) Because of this, you'll have access to the deep recesses of people's lives. This is both humbling and potentially a little shocking. It also may give you a unique opportunity to share Christ's love with someone that is hurting and desperately needs it!

Access

When someone looks to you for help, there is really good news. You do not do any of the heavy lifting! In fact, offering a quick fix or giving unsolicited advice can actually be very damaging.

The goal is to allow Christ Jesus to work and speak through you to help the person pick up the broken pieces of their shattered lives. In the end, Jesus does the saving!

So what might a crisis look like?

What does a life crisis look like?

- □ A general feeling of being overwhelmed or panicked
- □ An incapability to cope with basic everyday tasks
- □ Constant irritability and angry outbursts
- □ Crying easily, and seemingly endlessly, at the drop of a hat
- □ Constant upset stomach – the mind makes emotional pain physical
- □ Panic, fears, and phobia
- □ Irrational behavior that puts the person and his/her family at detrimental risk
- □ Thoughts of suicide or self-harm

Setting up a Care Meeting

If someone is in crisis, a private meeting shows care but there is a lot to consider!

Ask the nature of the meeting before you meet!

Look for the story beneath the story.

Bring in a second staff person if you sense the meeting is going to be difficult. CC a second staff person on “care” focused emails.

Setting up a Care Meeting

Give another staff member the heads up that you're having a care meeting. Ask them to stick close by.

Try to meet in a private place where you won't be interrupted. A workspace that is shared by multiple staff members is not a good place to meet with someone who is hurting.

If the door doesn't have a window, then don't close it completely.

Have tissues available.

If you need to set a timer on your phone, you may do so. Set a timer for a 5 minute warning and another for a hard stop time.

Maintaining Good Boundaries

People will try to make their emergency your emergency. They will run you over if you can't establish good boundaries.

It's ok to schedule a meeting with someone a future date. You don't need to immediately drop everything.

Make sure you have the time to meet. Don't check your phone for the time, read text messages, etc.

Your meeting is confidential BUT you will most likely be required to get help for anything shared that could potentially harm the person or others.

Maintaining Good Boundaries

Touch is powerful but can be easily misconstrued. Even if it's well meaning, you're putting yourself at risk by holding hands, giving a hug, or putting an arm around the person you're meeting with. If they initiate it's probably ok but be smart.

You may want to refer back to the 10 Staff Points of Accountability (The Staff 10 Commandments)
<https://creekhelp.com/wp-content/uploads/Staff-10-Points-of-Accountability.pdf>

Live out in the open, don't give the devil a foothold.

How to Help

Because we are not trained counselors, our best play is to meet one time, listen, pray, and point them to a next step. This is usually CR or a trusted professional Christian counselor.

You will need to use intuition when hearing someone's story. Always lead with love, care, and compassion. Jesus had the gift of listening but also seeing the heart. Jesus told us to be as wise as serpents and gentle as doves. Not so we can judge others so that we can be protected.

Be caring. John Maxwell says, "People don't care what you know until they know that you care."

Be slow to share your story. Keep the focus on them. You may have the opportunity at some point to share yourself and establish a connection, but focus first on being a good listener.

How to Help

Be an active listener. Give good non-verbal cues. Don't keep checking your phone or watch. Look the person in the eye. Ask them follow up questions.

Don't stop people from crying or being emotional. They are trying to process and this is actually helpful. It's ok to be emotional yourself too if that happens during your meeting.

We always point people back to Jesus. We can't heal anyone, Jesus does the healing. Don't try to be a fixer. Take in the data, listen carefully, be caring, and then remind people that Jesus is the great healer. Jesus wants to be in control of their life... not for control sake but for the sake of grace. Jesus wants to know them intimately and do the healing work on their hearts which needs to be done.

How to Help

You can try to give practical advice and that's certainly within your right to do so. But, it's always best to point the person back to scripture. God's wisdom is far superior to human wisdom!

Statements push and questions pull. The last thing people want is to be given clichés or pushy advice.

Cliché Phrases to Avoid:

God won't give you more than you can handle

You'll be stronger for this

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger

Think of how many people have it worse than you

Cliché Phrases to Avoid:

Everything happens for a reason (This implies that God has some divine lesson for us every time we experience suffering. God CAN use our worst moments for good but it doesn't mean He's actively causing them. Sometimes the "reason" we experience suffering is because other people have free will and are jerks)

God has a plan for you (this is true but not helpful for someone trying to come to terms with a horrible event in their life)

I see so much strength in you right now.

God doesn't close a door without opening a window. (What does this even mean?!?)

What to say:

I'm so sorry you're going through this

I'm heartbroken for you

Thank you for sharing openly and trusting me with this

As your church family, we care about you

Let's pray

End in Prayer

When you sense the meeting is nearing an end, ask if you can pray for the person. Take some time praying for the individual elements of the story they just shared with you. Use the person's name and ask God to remind them just how much He loves them.

Ask God to intervene in the situation(s) they just shared and help the person in their time of need.

Give a Next Step

Always try to leave the meeting giving the person a next step. We all have a Next Step we need to take. Giving someone a next step gives them direction on what might be next for them. It leaves them feeling hopeful about the future.

Next step could be for them to take a week and pray on the subject.

Next step could be FPU or joining a group.

Next step could be to reflect on a passage of scripture.

Next step could be seeking out wise Christian counsel in their life

Where do I find the CedarCreek endorsed counselor referral list?

- Creekhelp.com → Quick Links → Guest Services → (scroll down to) Care → Counseling Referrals

[Counseling Referrals](#)

Financial Requests

Sometimes people will come right out and ask for financial help. Other times, you may want to offer applying for financial assistance as a next step.

Feel free to refer them to your Campus Pastor or your Next Steps Pastor designated to receive these types of requests. (especially if you're unsure or don't handle many of these)

Ask the person to go through the process here and never give out cash. Keep in mind that we do not work through third parties... so if someone asks for help for their friend, we will need the friend to apply.

These links are not on our website (that's intentional) but you can feel free to pass them along:

Financial Requests

There are three forms that could potentially be utilized...

- Financial Aid – [Guest](#) (First time guest or attending less than 1 month)
- Financial Aid – [Regular Attender](#) (Attending CedarCreek a month or more. Hopefully the person will have verifiable attendance in Rock because of something like checking in kids)
- Financial Aid – [Active Attender](#) (Involved beyond just attending such as serving or actively participating in a group)

Financial Requests

These forms will route to the correct person or people at your campus! The Campus Pastor or assigned Next Step Director can then take over and determine what's the best course of action.

Celebrate Recovery and Freedom Groups

A next step could be Celebrate Recovery or Freedom groups happening at your campus! More info on CR can be found at:

www.CedarCreek.tv/CelebrateRecovery

It's wise to know your CR contacts and/or your freedom group leaders at your campus.

Who do you have confidence in that you can make a handoff to and the person will feel cared for? You may want to keep some of their business cards handy.

Mandatory Reporter

Know that as a pastor or church staff person, you are a mandatory reporter and must report child abuse/neglect by law. If you have not completed the Child Abuse/Neglect Training, talk to your supervisor about doing so (Required for all campus staff but all staff welcome to take it). You can also contact your children's director at your campus if you have questions about what this means.

Suicide and Self Harm

- If the person admits that they are suicidal, it's important to tell your supervisor about this right after the meeting. If you think that person is an immediate threat to themselves or others, call 911 as soon as the meeting finishes and the person has left the meeting place. If the meeting took place during the weekend, go immediately to one of the officers in your building and discuss the situation.

It's generally a good idea to err on the side of caution. They may be upset with you for revealing info about suicide to others, but it's best to treat every mention of suicide as a real threat.

Suicide and Self Harm

One good resource that can be utilized for those dealing with suicidal or destructive thoughts is a website called “Death2Life”.

Link found here: <https://d2lrevolution.com/>

There is a number the person can call, you can live chat with someone there, and there are plenty of other resources as well.

Evangelism

At some point, the Holy Spirit may prompt you to ask a person about their relationship with God.

You can say, “Can I ask you something? Where do you stand with the concept of “God” and “Jesus”? Have you accepted God’s grace into your life? Tell me about that.”

Be ready to lead that person to faith in Christ if they have never crossed the line of faith and want to.

Scripture verses to lead someone to Christ: Romans 3:23, 6:23, Ephesians 2:8, Romans 10:9-10

Hospital Visits

When people go through intake at a hospital, they are usually asked “Do you have a church you attend and do you want us to make them aware that you are being checked in here today?”

If people say yes, the hospital will then typically call the Perrysburg front desk DreamTeam member with the patient’s information so that a pastor or care team member can come visit them.

Hospital Visits

Obviously, with small churches, this works a little differently than it does at CedarCreek. You may be asked to pay a hospital visit with someone that you've never met before. When doing this, you are representing yourself, CedarCreek, and Jesus Christ too. So, it's important to go into these hospital visits mentally and spiritually prepared.

If you have time to dress nice, this is usually a good idea. People will naturally want you to look a little pastoral. You don't need to wear a full suit but gym shorts and a backwards ball cap are probably not advised.

Rick Dushane Hospital Visits Best Practices

- Here are a few guidelines that have been useful for me when visiting a patient.
- Never visit someone when you are sick or not feeling well.
- Always pray before entering the patient's room, asking the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart and to give you guidance.
- If the patient's door is closed, knock before entering.
- When you enter, introduce yourself and let them know you're from CedarCreek Church.

Rick Dushane Hospital Visits Best Practices

- Always wash your hands before and after the visit.
- MRSA is very hard to control, and to treat. In fact, if you take a Bible in with you, and you lay it down while praying, be sure to wipe it off too when you leave.
- Never wake a sleeping patient.
- Instead, leave a card or handwritten note with the date and time you were there. Sometimes a written prayer is good.

Rick Dushane Hospital Visits Best Practices

- Keep visits brief, 10–20 minutes is good (unless you know them personally).
- Patients tire easily, and it is draining for them to have to entertain visitors.
- Avoid inappropriate questions, and don't be nosy.
- Do not force the conversation, and avoid topics that are upsetting (politics, money, or if it's obvious they're a Buckeye fan, never say anything about Michigan).

Rick Dushane Hospital Visits Best Practices

- Before leaving, read a Scripture and offer to pray with the patient. If anyone else is in the room, they may want to pray along with you too.
- You may even ask the patient if there is anything specific they would like you to pray for.
- If the end of life is coming, you may want to ask, “How are you doing with all of this? Are you prepared for what’s ahead?”

Rick Dushane Hospital Visits Best Practices

- Pro Tip – If a medical procedure needs to happen while you are visiting, step outside immediately. If you don't, it will appear that you believe your visit is more important than what the doctors and nurses need to accomplish.

If you need to go and don't have time to wait, leave a note. You can get pen and paper at the nurses' station. Ask them to deliver to the person later in the day.

Ben Snyder's best tips on hospice:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxGZItVNsfsg&feature=youtu.be>

Family Strife

Crisis brings out the best, and worst, in people, and it accentuates family dynamics. Family strife is a common occurrence in the hospital setting. Again, it represents an opportunity to minister and model godly behavior. All families are different, but in general, there a couple of things that can help redirect inappropriate behavior.

First, exercise pastoral authority: assume an attitude of emotional stability and control and expect that from those in your presence. Show respect to each of the parties present (strife is often a struggle for respect within the group), and include all members in your conversation as if all were of equal importance.

Family Strife

- Verbalize a lot of the obvious: “I’m hearing a lot of pain coming out in ugly ways.”
“Everyone’s emotions are on edge. I would hate for any of *us* to say something we later regret.”
“I would like to talk about how we can honor [your mom]. Could we focus our conversation on how each of us can honor [mom]?”
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- Family dynamics theory suggests that the leader of the pack be identified and then the counselor work through that individual. Unfortunately, in the case of a hospital visit, hospice, or a funeral, the leader may be incapacitated and now various factions are vying for the role.

Final Thoughts

You are a wounded healer. To borrow an analogy from the airline industry, remember to “put on your own mask before tending to the needs of others”. God must be the genuine source of your own comfort before you try to show it to others!

Final Thoughts

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NLT - ³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴ He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

Final Thoughts

If you do not do this, you are going to become irritable, cynical, and very likely burnt out!

Love people, point them to Jesus, and help point them to a next step! If you do that, you've succeeded in successfully administering the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Q & A

(If Time Permits)

Send questions to
LukeS@CedarCreek.tv

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