

A Framework for Pastoral Conversations

One of our tasks is to create safe places for people to talk – safe for the client and safe for us. Conversations should be private, that is, not able to be overheard, but also in a place where we can be seen. If the conversation occurs in an office, the door should be open and ideally in view of a third party. If the third party is close, playing background music can help to safeguard privacy while ensuring transparency. A male chaplain should only ever meet with women in public or with a second person present.

This list of standard questions is adapted from *Foundations of Chaplaincy* (Baker, 2021, p. 20). These questions are not necessarily in order and not every question needs to be asked. Many people will address multiple questions in one answer. Questions six and seven only apply when we are aware of a shared faith. The aim of a structured conversation is to empower and support a client in taking action to enhance their own well-being.

1. Why are *YOU* telling me this?

Personal significance. Why is it important for you to tell me this information?

2. Why are you telling this to *ME*?

Why did you choose me to talk to? Are you telling me this because I'm your chaplain? Trust? Accessibility? Are you telling everyone this? Confidentiality?

3. Why are you telling this to me *NOW*?

Urgency. Why did you pick this time to talk about this? Is there an emergent crisis?

4. Now that you've talked with me about this, what do *YOU* need to do?

Empower others by placing responsibility back on them.

5. Now that you've talked to me about this, what do you expect *ME* to do for you?

How can I support you in taking action?

6. With all of this going on, how are things with your soul, or how are you within yourself? If you know they are a believer, you could ask, "Where are you seeing God in this? How is your connection with Jesus impacted by your situation?"

7. Would you like me to pray with you?

8. What are you going to do now?

This turns question 4 into an immediate action step.

Baker, A. T. (2021). *Foundations of chaplaincy: A practical guide*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.