

A Dozen Discernment Questions

YOU MIGHT ASK IN A PASTORAL SITUATION



EDUCATION-CHECK

1. Does the congregation understand my role?

PROFESSIONAL/PASTORAL-CHECK

2. What are professional/pastoral expectations, boundaries/limits, guidelines, etc. which might affect my response in this situation?
3. Am I aware of the effects of transference and power inherent in my professional/pastoral role?
4. Do I have professional supervision or access to a consultant to discuss this situation?

PROCESS-CHECK

5. Have I resolved the Who, What, When, Where and How questions?
 - a. **Who?** Am I the appropriate person to respond (or should a deacon, a woman/man, etc.)? If I am, should I have someone with me?
 - b. **What** is the issue? Have I asked enough questions to correctly discern the parishioner's needs and resources in this situation?
 - c. **When?** Does this situation merit an emergency response or a scheduled appointment in the near future?
 - d. **Where?** Should the parishioner come to my office instead of my going to the home? Would the parishioner and I be in the office/building alone? Does the design of my office portray an appropriate atmosphere?
 - e. **How?** If this involves counseling, how many sessions do I offer?
Am I comfortable referring this person to another professional?

SELF-CHECK

6. What is my psycho-sexual history of woundedness?
How have I addressed it?
7. What are my ego (emotional/sexual) needs?
What is my motivation in responding?
8. How do I monitor my feelings and/or fantasies, especially concerning inappropriate individuals/desires?
9. What are my personal risks?
10. How do I take care of myself?
Am I meeting my personal needs outside of my pastoral role?
11. Are my personal and intimate relationships solid and appropriate?

SPIRIT-CHECK

12. Where is the Spirit in *this* particular interaction?