

Becoming Free Support/Recovery Group elected topics –

Differing perspectives on religious abuse and recovery – are varied and include four basic approaches: Thought-Reform, Deliberative/Conversionist, Psychosocial needs and Dynamic-systems perspective. Identifying the strengths and weakness of each can help build appropriate expectations of understand and recover from religious abuse.

Seven-Stages of Recovery – provides an improved understanding of the healing process. Being able to differentiate between the various stages can give hope to all of those effected by religious abuse. Knowing the stage that a former member is presently in can help identify the appropriate recovery topic(s) to consider and the varied sources and activities for each of the distinct stages. Having a well-informed insight in the various stages can reduce needless frustration and bring more productive results in the recovery journey.

Recovery needs – are identified in the acronym ASCRIBED. These include the eight most common needs of the religiously abused and how they might creatively be met to bring deeper levels of healing. We place an emphasis on the various and creative ways and resources to best accomplish meaningful healing and redemption.

Marriage – following religious abuse, marriages are never the same. Typically, the marital bond grows, stagnates, or completely dissolves. Education is offered to support and build a safe and secure relationship between couples capable of ongoing recovery from the mutually experienced abuse.

Troublesome families – can greatly help or hinder recovery from religious abuse. Understanding the birth-family influence can greatly enhance authentic healing. The topics explored are the dynamics of family rules, roles and boundaries and how new and healthy relational practices can be applied.

Identity – typically needs to be rediscovered following an imposed perspective from a religiously abusive group. Supportive exploration is encouraged and building of one's unique character and gifting is important for ongoing recovery.

Developing a life of the mind – or understanding the value of education, both formal and informal can result in a better-informed holistic belief system with improved thinking skills. Various educational methods can be identified, existentially explored and integrated into one's personality and life goals.

Grief and Loss – is nearly always a process of reflecting on loss of relationships, educational prospects, self-directed identity, self-worth, and life opportunities. Working through these losses takes time, support, and reframing for recovery to best occur.

Stress management – Often unhealthy groups teach their members a denial of self that in counterproductive to recovery. Over time this twisted teaching can have long-term adverse effects on the body, emotions, and the mind. Following involvement in a religiously abusive environment requires an understanding of the abuse, the authentic needs involved and some deliberate self-care strategies.

Safe Spirituality – is not easily obtained. Learning the basics of what healthy spirituality might look like requires a careful and broad examination of core beliefs resulting in self-directed decision-making. This includes relational and educational supports providing education in a non-judgmental format.

TACO – is an acronym describing the most common religiously abusive environment. This stands for **T**otalist (all controlling), **A** aberrant (off centered), **C**hristian (appealing to the Bible) and **O**rganization, experienced on a broad spectrum from minor to severe. Included in this category are both communal and non-communal groups.

Gender roles – are often poorly and rigidly defined in unhealthy religious systems. This is particularly the case in aberrant forms of Christian fundamentalism that encourage male patriarchy (domination). Sometimes, this is disingenuously referred to as complementarianism.” The necessity of unpacking false notions of male and female roles are important to recovery.

Healthy and unhealthy churches – defining the differences are challenging but necessary to the course of healing from religious abuse. This involves looking closely at both behaviors and beliefs of any group, along with guidelines for choosing healthier options for future connections.

Untwisting scripture – can build a better understanding of the Bible. Included are the important considerations of the original historical context, the type of genre being read and the basic accepted common principles of biblical interpretation. Unraveling a group’s twisted and limited view of scripture can be both challenging but beneficial at the same time. We provide strategies to appropriately understand scripture and its positive benefits.

Evaluating religious systems – requires identifying evaluative standards for determining the viability of new and differing beliefs. This needs to occur in a safe and open environment that is offered within our life-coaching.

Co-dependency cycles – are learned behaviors that can be passed down from our birth-family. People with codependency issues often form and maintain relationships that are one-sided, emotionally destructive and/or abusive. The goal is learning to unhook from these destructive patterns, then learning to live with relational respect while taking care of our needs.

Theological issues and questions – are identified and applied to spiritual or religious abuse recovery. Addressing specific troublesome doctrines (leadership, gender roles, child-rearing and conflicting spiritualities) are also considered.

Worldviews – are always present in any belief systems. We all have a worldview that effects our beliefs and if held consistently result in particular behaviors. Various worldviews are identified and evaluated for consistency, viability, logical cogency, and ethical adequacy.