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Theoretical Orientation Assignment

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Individual & Family Issues in Pastoral Counseling

by

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Contents

Part I

Introduction.....	1
Strength-Based Counseling.....	2
Emotional Freedom Technique.....	2
Spiritual Direction.....	3
Brain Health Coaching.....	3
Biblical Principles.....	5
Integration of Theories into Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocols.....	6
Integrating Strength-Based Counseling.....	6
Integrated Emotional Freedom Technique.....	7
Integrated Spiritual Direction.....	8
Integrated Brain Health Coaching.....	8
Integrating Biblical Principles.....	9
Tenants of Comprehensive Pastoral Counsel Protocol.....	9

Part II

Strengths and Weakness.....	11
Specific Components in Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol.....	12
Components of Strength-Based Counseling.....	12
Components of Emotional Freedom Techniques.....	13
Components of Spiritual Direction.....	14
Components of Brain Health Coaching.....	15
Biblical Integrative Factors.....	18

Part I

Introduction

Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol uses a combination of biblical principles, counseling theories, spiritual direction, life coaching, and medical evaluation to develop a custom program to support those who have mental illness and their families. This author argues treatment protocols should consider physical, psychological, spiritual, and relational needs. With the looming medical and mental health crisis, the Church has an excellent opportunity to step in and lead the way to revolutionize treatment for those who have a mental illness.

This protocol is a multi-theory approach. Strength-Based Counseling, Emotional Freedom Technique, Spiritual Direction, Brain Health Coaching, which includes nutrition and wellness Coaching, and Biblical Principles found their way into this work. It is also a team approach. The Pastoral Counselor utilizes a network of Licensed Counselors, Physicians, Psychiatrists, Massage Therapists, Acupuncturists, Spiritual Directors, Bible Study Leaders, and community services to address needs outside the scope of practice.

Strength-Based Counseling

Strength-based theory helps the client focus on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. They recognize the value of using "strengths, assets, skills, talents, abilities, and competencies to confront their challenges."¹

The Book *Soaring with Your Strengths* (Clifton & Nelson 1992) introduced the concept of identifying and utilizing strengths. In 2001 Clifton partnered with Marcus Buckingham to author *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. This book had such a positive effect in the corporate world, the field of Psychology noticed. Positive psychology made its debut in the late 1990's as

¹ Dr. Tim Clinton and Dr. Ron Hawkins, , *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, (Eugene, Harvest House Publishers, 2011), , 493.

Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalya introduced their new approach "that helped to redefine strengths in new ways by studying what has gone right rather than wrong in both individuals and societies."²

Emotional Freedom Technique

Gary Craig founded Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), in 1990. He worked for Dr. Roger Callahan, the founder of Thought Field Therapy.³ EFT is a novel therapy that combines both cognitive and somatic elements.⁴ Clinical EFT is an evidence-based practice combining elements of cognitive and exposure therapies with the manual stimulation of acupuncture points (acupoints).⁵ Studies show EFT to boost performance. One study concluded players who received eft intervention improved an average of 20.8%.⁶

Brenda Sebastian and Jerrod Nelms analyzed seven randomized controlled trials. They concluded, "the analysis of existing studies showed that a series of 4–10 EFT sessions is an efficacious treatment for PTSD with a variety of populations. The studies examined reported no adverse effects from EFT interventions and showed that it could be used both on a self-help basis and as a primary evidence-based treatment for PTSD."⁷

Dawson Church offers live and internet trainings for therapists to be certified as EFT practitioners. Many leaders utilizing this technique can be found on his website.

² Ibid., 493

³ Craig, Gary. *The EFT manual*. Elite Books, 2011.

⁵ Nelms, Jerrod A., and Liana Castel. "A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized and nonrandomized trials of clinical emotional freedom techniques (EFT) for the treatment of depression." *Explore* 12, no. 6 (2016): 416-426.

⁶ Church, Dawson. "The effect of EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) on athletic performance: A randomized controlled blind trial." *The Open Sports Sciences Journal* 2, no. 1 (2009).

⁷ Sebastian, Brenda, and Jerrod Nelms. "The effectiveness of Emotional Freedom Techniques in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder: A meta-analysis." *Explore* 13, no. 1 (2017): 16-25.

Spiritual Direction

"Spiritual direction took many forms in early Christianity. The criteria by which Christian authorities selected their successors and the pastoral techniques they passed on to these men varied widely, especially in the period after Constantine's conversion."⁸ George E.

Demacopoulos in *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* names five influencers of Spiritual Direction; Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine of Hippo, John Cassian, and Pope Gregory. Spiritual direction in many forms weaved its way through history. In the 20th century protestant approaches allowed laypersons to receive and be trained to give spiritual direction. Seminaries and contemplative churches embraced the ministry of companioning. Henri Nouwen's literature is found in many curriculums. Wendy J. Miller developed the Spiritual Formation Track for Eastern Mennonite Seminary and brought contemplative practices for students to learn and experience. Seminaries throughout the world train pastors and counselors in the Ministry of Spiritual Direction.

Brain Health Coaching

Physical health must always be the starting point in treating mental health conditions. "Many associations exist between mental illness and cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and arthritis to name a few. Depression is found to co-occur in 17% of cardiovascular cases, 23% of cerebrovascular cases, and with 27% of diabetes patients and more than 40% of individuals with cancer."^{9,10}

⁸ Demacopoulos, George E. *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 169.

⁹ American Heart Association. Depression and Heart Health Web Site; http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/MyHeartandStrokeNews/Depression-and-Heart-Health_UCM_440444_Article.jsp. Accessed May 2, 2021.

¹⁰ . Lasser K, Boyd JW, Woolhandler S, Himmelstein DU, McCormick D, Bor DH. Smoking and mental illness: a population-based prevalence study. JAMA. 2000; 284(20):2606-10

"SPECT (single-photon emission computed tomography) is a nuclear medicine study that evaluates blood flow and activity in the brain. It shows three things; healthy activity, to little activity, or too much activity."¹¹ High-Resolution Brain SPECT Imaging shows improvement when EMDR is used to treat PTSD. "Our findings of the specific increases and decreases seen on SPECT are consistent with many etiological improvements, including depression^{41–43} and general affective disorders.^{44–48} These analyses find EMDR to be associated with significant changes in brain function as measured by SPECT, and that the emergent post-EMDR pattern of brain activity is consistent with changes that may be mitigating PTSD."¹²

Daniel Amen believes mental illness is a result of brain health issues. In his book, *The End of Mental Illness*, he introduces a bright minds approach to illuminating mental illness. B is for blood flow, R is for retirement and aging, I is for inflammation, G is for genetics, H is for head trauma and T is for toxins, M is for mind storms, I is for immunity and infections, N is for Neurohormone issues, D is for diabetes and S is for sleep. Each chapter includes a prescription for addressing the issue.¹³ He uses a combination of nutrition, supplements, medicines, exercise, Hyperbaric Oxygen, and therapy to treat mental illness. This holistic approach shows promise for those who have PTSD. "Most psychiatrists never look at the brain and can only make their assessment based on symptoms, which is why people often go undiagnosed or are misdiagnosed and given the wrong kind of treatment. Brain scans can be beneficial in getting a PTSD diagnosis."¹⁴

¹¹ <https://www.amenclinics.com/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/#:~:text=Two%20studies%20published%20by%20the,they%20are%20imaging%20their%20symptoms.>

¹² Lansing, Karen, Daniel G. Amen, Chris Hanks, and Lisa Rudy. "High-resolution brain SPECT imaging and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing in police officers with PTSD." *The Journal of neuropsychiatry and clinical neurosciences* 17, no. 4 (2005): 526-532.

¹³ Daniel G. Amen, *The End of Mental Illness*, Carol Streams, Tyndale, (2020), 101-275.

¹⁴ <https://www.amenclinics.com/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/#:~:text=Two%20studies%20published%20by%20the,they%20are%20imaging%20their%20symptoms.>

Dr. Daniel Amen, in his book, *The End of Mental Illness*, devotes a chapter to how food affects one's health. His chart, *Bright Minds Food Stars*,¹⁵ foods to eat vs. foods to limit for specific conditions.

The Amen University provides online training for therapists that want to learn more about his work and receive a brain coaching certification. He partners with them to provide the medical support needed in the treatment of PTSD. The Amen Clinic has multiple locations. SPECT scans, Quantitative EKG, psychological testing, and other medical testing assist in diagnosis and treatment. Books and courses educate on healthy lifestyle, including nutrition, supplements, exercise, environmental awareness, medical testing and treatment, and psychological protocols. This holistic approach has enabled him to help many who had fallen through the cracks in traditional treatment protocols.

Biblical Principles

This personal theoretical orientation sets on the foundation of biblical principles. Healing comes from God alone. The therapist collaborates with the Holy Spirit to bring healing, wisdom, and freedom to clients and their families.

Integration of Theories into Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol

Integrating Strength-Based Counseling

¹⁵ Ibid., 338-342

Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol breaks from traditional counseling by assuming the responsibility of a general practitioner like one's primary care physician in the medical field. Referrals are made to specialists when necessary.

It also breaks from the medical model focusing on "weakness, pathologies, mental illnesses, problem behaviors, and deficits."¹⁶ It borrows from the wisdom of Strength-Based Counseling that focuses on "strengths, assets, skills, talents, abilities, and competencies to confront their challenges."¹⁷

Multiple assessment tools assist when appropriate to guide the client in discovering their talents, skills, personality styles, and purpose. These assessments serve to help the client know themselves better. It also is a change of focus. They now have something positive and praiseworthy to consider. They begin to grasp God created them with a specific purpose in mind, strengthening both connection and a sense of purpose to God and others.

Don Clinton in *Now, Discover Your Strengths* writes, "Guided by the belief that good is the opposite of bad, mankind has for centuries pursued its fixation with fault and failing. Doctors have studied disease to learn about health. Psychologists have investigated sadness to learn about joy. Therapists have looked into the cause of divorce to learn about happy marriage. And in schools and workplaces around the world, individuals have been encouraged to identify, analyze and correct their weaknesses to become strong."¹⁸ Comprehensive Pastoral Counselors and many others strive to change the conversation concerning mental health to embrace a holistic, empowered, positive approach to treatment.

¹⁶ Clinton, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, 493.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 493.

¹⁸ Don Clinton, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, (New York, Gallup Press, 2020), 5.

Discovering one's DISC style also assists in the effort to help them understand themselves and others. Rosenberg in *Taking Flight* provides information that helps understand why one reacts the way they do to family, friends, and co-workers. It brings understanding to what drives decisions and actions in yourself and others.¹⁹

Integrating Emotional Freedom Techniques

Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol agrees with the large body of research that identifies associations between physiological and psychological symptoms. Authors of Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) *Improves Multiple Physiological Markers of Health*, conduct "A systematic review of 31 studies, including 16 922 patients, found that objective physiological measures of health, as well as medical diagnoses, were strongly correlated with anxiety and depression.²⁰ A meta-analysis of 244 studies found an association between psychological symptoms and somatic syndromes.²¹ A large-scale international study of 25 916 patients at 15 primary care centers in 14 countries on 5 continents found a significant association ($P = .002$) between depression and somatic symptoms in 69% of patients.²² Many other studies of specific conditions identify links between levels of psychological well-being and physiological measures of health."²³

¹⁹ Merrick Rosenberg & Daniel Silvert, *Taking Flight, Master the DISC Styles to Transform Your Career, Your Relationships, Your Life*, (Upper Saddle River, FT Press, 2013), 3.

²⁰ Katon W, Lin EH, Kroenke K. The association of depression and anxiety with medical symptom burden in patients with chronic medical illness. *Gen Hosp Psychiatry*. 2007;29:147-155.

²¹ Henningsen P, Zimmermann T, Sattel H. Medically unexplained physical symptoms, anxiety, and depression: a meta-analytic review. *Psychosom Med*. 2003;65:528-533.

²² Simon GE, VonKorff M, Piccinelli M, Fullerton C, Ormel J. An international study of the relation between somatic symptoms and depression. *N Engl J Med*. 1999;341:1329-1335.

²³ Bach, Donna, Gary Groesbeck, Peta Stapleton, Rebecca Sims, Katharina Blickheuser, and Dawson Church. "Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) improves multiple physiological markers of health." *Journal of evidence-based integrative medicine* 24 (2019): 2515690X18823691.

EFT adds value in that it has been shown effective in brief treatment time frames ranging from 1-10 sessions, can be delivered in groups, and participants maintain their gains over time.²⁴ Participants can also self-administer EFT as part of at-home self-care protocol.

Integrating Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction looks for and listens for the presence and guidance of the Spirit of God within the person sharing his or her story. The term director is one who points or directs a person's attention to the presence and guidance of the Spirit of God.²⁵ "The purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of a man's life, to get behind the façade of conventional gestures and attitudes which he presents to the world. And to bring out his inner spiritual freedom, his inmost truth, which is what we call the likeness of Christ in his soul."²⁶ This purpose encompasses all work done within the Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol. Ultimately, healing comes from aligning one's life with Creator God. This alignment will lead to becoming the version of ourselves, which reflects the glory of God.

Integrating Brain Health Coaching

Dr. Daniel G. Amen empowers therapists and clients with knowledge and instruction to end mental illness as we know it. To help integrate his research into Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocols, Dr. Amen offers a 10% discount on referrals made by Certified Brain Health Coaches. The Certification classes equip the therapist to work holistically on brain health issues even in the absence of SPECT scans. This protocol helps the client understand and implement brain health strategies that are within the client's control. This therapist evaluates the

²⁴ Bach, Donna, Gary Groesbeck, Peta Stapleton, Rebecca Sims, Katharina Blickheuser, and Dawson Church. "Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) improves multiple physiological markers of health." *Journal of evidence-based integrative medicine* 24 (2019): 2515690X18823691.

²⁵ Wendy J. Miller, *Jesus Our Spiritual Director, A Pilgrimage Through The Gospels*, (Nashville, Upper Room, 2004), 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

client's willingness and ability to become a part of the holistic treatment approach. Small changes over time could lead to significant breakthroughs in health and wellness.

Integrating Biblical Principles

Biblical principles are taught throughout treatment when appropriate. Solid working knowledge of the biblical tenets assists the Comprehensive Pastoral Counselor in integrating biblical principles, counseling theories, spiritual direction, and brain health coaching.

Tenets of Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol

Cindy H. Carr developed the Comprehensive Pastoral Counselor Protocol over time as conventional methods failed to help clients and parishioners thrive. This protocol was successfully implemented with parishioners and clients but needed additional research to gauge the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Model.

Carr enrolled in her Doctoral of Pastoral Counseling in January 2021 to research what she was doing intuitively. She desires to train others to approach mental health issues from a holistic physical, psychological, spiritual, and relational context. There is nothing new in this protocol; it blends evidence-based counseling theories with biblical principles and leading medical research. Research supports each component as an effective treatment, but the effectiveness of the combined treatment needs scientific studies to support its claim.

The current state of mental health treatment is inadequate and often re-traumatizes the client. Insurance companies regulate treatment protocols, and government agencies hold licenses for the professionals who seek to treat this complex problem.

The Church has an opportunity to stop following the medical and scientific communities and lead the way with cutting-edge research and development to show the world that true healing comes from God. We are Christ's ambassadors; this is our problem. This problem offers great

missionary opportunities as the Church answers the call to partner with God to heal the whole person (spirit, soul, and body).

It is possible that when pastoral counselor's partner with congregations, it will be more effective than inpatient hospitalization, long-term treatment programs, intensive outpatient programs, and weekly therapy sessions. Clients heal in relationships with God and others. More research is needed to support this theory.

One hurdle to overcome with this approach is how to compensate providers for services. Sessions can range from one to four hours, and multiple professionals are involved in the healing process. "In 2019, it was estimated that around 29 percent of those in the U.S. aged 18 to 25 years and 25 percent of those aged 26 to 49 years suffered from some form of mental illness in the past year."²⁷ The COVID-19 global pandemic has only exacerbated this issue. The statistics represent parishioners that come to our churches, co-workers, and neighbors who need help from the Lord. Is it possible to address the global mental health crisis as the next vehicle of evangelism for the Church? When current messaging is falling on deaf ears, solutions to the complex mental health issues are our next evangelistic opportunity. Revival happens when the Church rises up to address problems that society cannot solve. With the proper resources and expertise, the Christian Church with answers that bring healing and revival and make God relevant to a society that continues to write Him out of history and society.

Part II

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol is in the multi-team, multi-theory, approach that focuses on physical, psychological, spiritual, and relational components of

²⁷ Elflein, John, Statista, U.S. Mental Health Issues-Statistics & Facts March 23, 2021. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1298/mental-health-issues/#dossierSummary>.

the person. Opportunity exists for non-professionals to receive training and companion with those suffering from mental illness and their families. Also, when the pastoral counselor, the client, and the treatment team search for the “why” behind the illness, the stigma of mental health is removed. Understanding the driving factors of one’s illness is empowering and gives definitive action step for the client within the program.

One weakness is the success of this protocol heavily relies on commitment of the client and their support team. One must accept some responsibility for life changes that will support mental health. This protocol is not for the client who wants the magic pill or easy way out. It is hard work and encompasses analysis and change to nearly every aspect of one’s life. Comprehensive Pastoral Care Protocol does not exclude the use of psychotropic medications; however, they are only one small part of the treatment plan. Change in lifestyle is critical to optimize the results of this protocol.

Specific Components in Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol

Components of Strength-Based Counseling

Strength-based theory is used in Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling in combination with the biblical principle of, we are created by God, for God’s purpose. “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”²⁸ (Ephesians 2:10). Helping the client connect with God and others brings a sense of belonging and connectedness as they continue their journey. Digging deeper into the counseling

²⁸ All Scripture are quoted from NIV unless otherwise stated.

theory and the scriptures, the client learns what gifts, talents, and passions God placed within their heart. These are pointers to discovering God's purpose for one's life. This discovery of God and self serves as a temporary distraction to what is wrong in their lives. It gives them new things to think about, allowing them to learn the biblical principle of taking captive every thought and lining it up with the knowledge of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:5). The Counselor helps the client to learn to focus on and articulate positive thoughts concerning what they are discovering and what they envision for their future. These biblical principles can be found in Philippians 4:4-8 and Jeremiah 29:11. It is important for the counselor to discern when Strength-Based therapy is appropriate, and when they need to pivot to Emotional Freedom Technique, or Spiritual Direction. Damage can be done if the heart is not given space to grieve when needed. Multiple assessment tools may be used to help identify strengths, personality types, leadership styles, communication styles, etc. As listening skills are developed in the counselor, much of what is revealed through these tests will be discovered as the client processes their story. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45). Repetition is important as one implements strength-based counseling. The Client has identified with failure, weakness, negative self-talk, shame, and guilt for a long time. The principle of renewing the mind is an action that one works at over time. Helping the client pre-plan their responses to self-sabotage, automatic negative thoughts, and negative focus will help them on their journey. Spiritual mentorship is critical at this stage of treatment. Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling differs from traditional counseling in that the counselor takes an active role in pastoral care and advocacy. We work with the client to build a team of support to walk alongside them throughout the healing journey. Ideally the pastoral counselor could also involve the client's pastor or spiritual leader for support, however, church attendance is declining, and many clients will not have a church to pull resources from.

Components of Emotional Freedom Technique

“Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) is an evidence-based technique that has been validated in more than 100 clinical trials.”²⁹

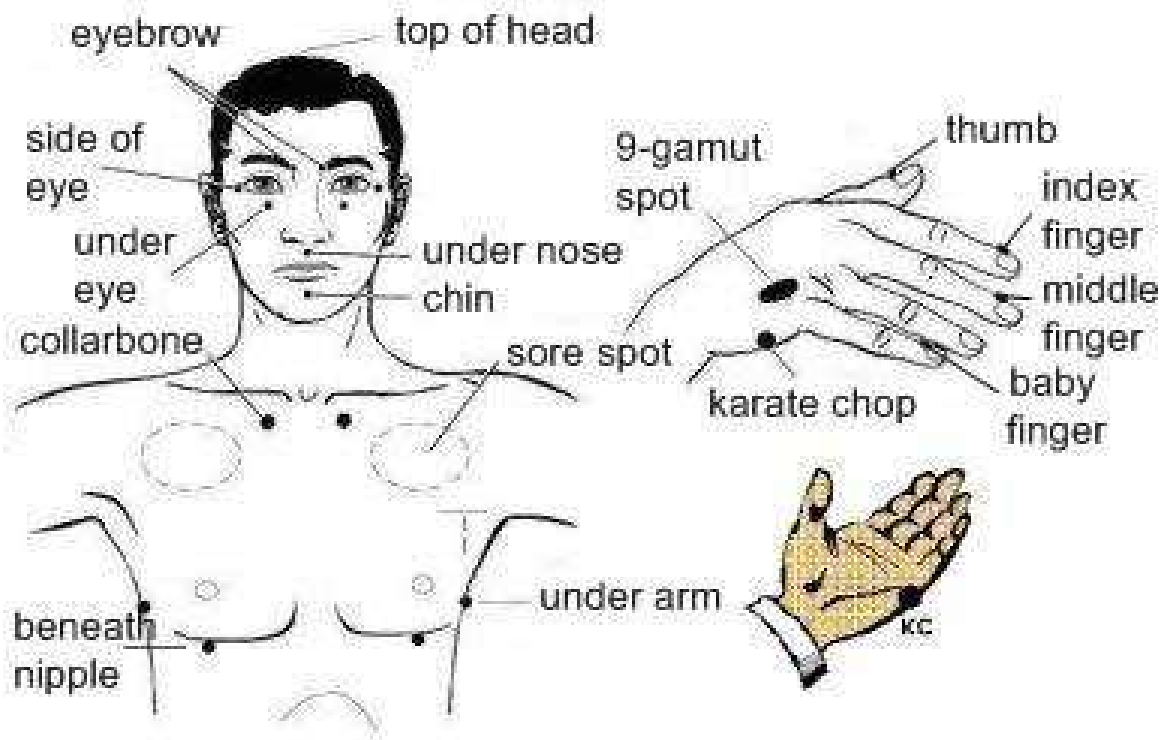
‘EFT is a brief intervention combining elements of exposure, cognitive therapy, and somatic stimulation of acupressure points on the face and body. Participants typically identify a concern or issue they wish to address with the technique and rate their level of distress on a Likert-type scale out of 10 (10 is the maximum amount of distress and 0 represents the minimum or a neutral state). This is called a Subjective Unit of Distress (SUDS) scale and has long been used as a subjective measure of a participant’s discomfort in therapy.³⁰ Participants then state their concern in a “Setup Statement,” which assists in turning them into their level of distress. This is typically stated in this format “Even though I have this problem (eg, anger), I deeply and completely accept myself.” The first half of the setup statement emphasizes exposure, while the second half frames the traumatizing event in the context of self-acceptance. The participant then engages in the somatic tapping process on acupoints on the body while they repeat a shortened phrase to stay engaged (eg, feel angry). This is called the “Reminder Phrase.” The tapping sequence uses 8 acupoints on the face and upper body and is normally repeated until the SUDS rating is very low (1 or 0).’³¹

See Acupressure points below:

²⁹ Bach, Donna, Gary Groesbeck, Peta Stapleton, Rebecca Sims, Katharina Blickheuser, and Dawson Church. "Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) improves multiple physiological markers of health." *Journal of evidence-based integrative medicine* 24 (2019): 2515690X18823691.

³⁰ Resick, P.A.; Monson, C.M.; Chard, K.M. Cognitive Processing Therapy: Veteran/Military Version; Department of Veterans' Affairs: Washington, DC, USA, 2007.

³¹ Ibid., 2.



32

Training on the EFT protocol is easily available for professional and laypersons interested in helping heal through this evidence-based technique.

Components of Spiritual Direction

“Spiritual Direction is a way of listening to another’s story, and it is paying attention to the threads interwoven throughout the narrative. It is a ministry of helping another discover God within their storied experience. It is a ministry of helping people notice God’s presence and invitation in their lives; then helping them discern how they may be responding to or resisting God’s presence and call.”³³ There are many disciplines and techniques within the spiritual direction protocol that assist in this work. Helping the client listen closely, perceive God’s presence, become an active part of biblical narrative, and enjoy silence and contemplation are

³² Life Spirit Healing, <http://www.lifespirithealing.com/EFT.htm>

³³ Wendy J. Miller, Introduction to Spiritual Direction, Companioning Another, Listening for God,

just a few. Lectio Divina is one way of praying scripture and facilitating as the client spends time in God's presence. "The Benedictines were people of God who lived a life of prayer and manual labor. They developed an approach to meditation and prayer that encouraged restful silence and waiting. The approach consists of four movements: Lectio (reading), Mediation, Oratio (personal prayer) and Contemplatio (Contemplation)"³⁴ Introducing the client to this and other spiritual direction techniques will help them become aware of the closeness of God. They will grow in their ability to perceive God, receive comfort from God, and hear His voice.

The Comprehensive Pastoral Counselor needs to be aware of the client's ability to connect with God. One does not want to limit the sphere of influence to only those who have a vibrant faith that can be called upon during times of need. Other tenants of the protocol can be used when spiritual direction does not fit.

Components of Brain Health Coaching

Brain Health Coaching is the most challenging component in the Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol. This part of therapy can only be helpful with the clients buy-in. The assessment phase seeks to uncover the following:

- Medical Conditions that could affect mental health.
- Environmental toxins at home, school, work or other frequently visited places.
- History of head trauma
- Diet habits
- Exercise habits
- Relational issues that could have a negative effect on mental health.
- Stressors both good and bad

³⁴ Miller, Introduction to Spiritual Direction

- Spiritual perspective
- Past experiences in therapy. What worked, what did not work.

This theory assumes physical, psychological, spiritual, and relational components interconnect to produce the mental problem as well as provide keys for the solution to find health. Education is key.

Dr. Daniel Amen in his book, *The End of Mental Illness*, exposes root causes of mental illness that many people are not aware of. When the client is willing and able, this book is part of the protocol that client and counselor review together. Dr. Amen says, “As a psychiatrist, I have seen many patients with depression, brain fog, anxiety, poor memory and concentration, word confusion, headaches, vertigo and cravings who all had the same thing in common: exposure to toxins.”³⁵

His research confirms your brain’s needs must be met to function efficiently. Here is a list he provides of things the brain must have:

- “Healthy blood flow (to deliver oxygen, vitamins, and essential minerals to the brain)
- Proper hydration
- Physical and mental exercise
- Stimulation (new learning)
- Fuel (aka food)
- A strong (but not too strong) immune system
- An efficient waste management system
- Adequate sleep
- Meaning and purpose in your life

³⁵ Amen, *The End of Mental Illness*, 183.

- Being socially connected to other brains.”³⁶

Introducing this knowledge to the client at the right time can promote sustainable improvement. He devotes an entire chapter to food to help the reader understand what foods good, and what foods are bad for your brain.

“Only love foods that love you back.”³⁷ He lists the following nine foods and calls them real weapons of mass destruction:

- “Highly processed
- Pesticide sprayed.
- High-glycemic (spikes blood sugar)
- Low fiber
- Food-like substances
- Artificially colored and sweetened.
- Laden with hormones
- Tainted with antibiotics.
- Stored in plastic containers.”³⁸

Neurosci in his article Brain food: the effects of nutrition on brain function confirms Dr. Amen’s findings.

“Diet, exercise and other aspects of our daily interaction with the environment have the potential to alter our brain health and mental function. We now know that particular nutrients influence cognition by acting on molecular systems or cellular processes that are vital for maintaining cognitive function. This raises the exciting possibility that dietary manipulations are a viable strategy for enhancing cognitive abilities and protecting the brain from damage, promoting repair and counteracting the effects of aging. Emerging

³⁶ Amen, *The End of Mental Illness*, 64.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 318-319.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 319.

research indicates that the effects of diet on the brain are integrated with the actions of other lifestyle modalities, such as exercise (see [BOX 2](#)) and sleep.^{39 40 41}

Additional information can be pulled in as Comprehensive Pastoral Counselor uncover specific issues that could complicate the client's mental health. In the information age, counselors can locate resources for clients to help them integrate these strategies. It is important to not overwhelm the client with too much too fast. The client and the Holy Spirit guide the direction for each session and choose the priority of what needs addressed first.

Biblical Integrative Factors

Strength-Based Therapy is rooted in biblical principles. Humanity is created in God's image with strengths, assets, skills, talents, abilities, and competencies. The therapist helps the client discover those strengths and find hope.

Emotional Freedom Technique combines the use of negative statements (Laments) and positive statements (affirmations) with tapping on Meridian points in the body. Each point attaches to specific organs in the body that hold negative, unprocessed emotion. God's design allows issues deep within the body to be addressed by tapping on the exterior meridian points.

As clients share story, spiritual direction invites them to pay attention to God in the midst of the story. This deepens their relationship with God and enhances their awareness of God in everyday circumstances.

³⁹ Gómez-Pinilla, Fernando. "Brain foods: the effects of nutrients on brain function." *Nature reviews neuroscience* 9, no. 7 (2008): 568-578.

⁴⁰ Vaynman S, Gomez-Pinilla F. Revenge of the "sit": how lifestyle impacts neuronal and cognitive health through molecular systems that interface energy metabolism with neuronal plasticity. *J Neurosci Res*. 2006;84:699–715. [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]

⁴¹ Wu A, Ying Z, Gomez-Pinilla F. DHA dietary supplementation enhances the effects of exercise on synaptic plasticity and cognition. *Neuroscience*. (in the press) [[PMC free article](#)] [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]

Brain Health Coaching teaches the client how to love their body and brain. Scripture and scientific research support this protocol. Life is over once the body is not a fit habitat for the spirit to dwell. Personal responsibility to make right choices that support brain and body health give the client action steps that will have positive effect.

Part III

Practical Application: (Christine)

Christine is a single woman who lost her career due to acts on indiscretion with a student. Prior to accepting the job as a first-year teacher, Christine spent a week in an inpatient hospital where she was prescribed lithium and other psychotropic drugs to treat bipolar disorder. In an episode of mania Christine had a brief sexual encounter with a student. This led to a plea agreement to avoid jail time that consisted of a felony charge, lose of teaching license, and lifetime sex offender registration.

After several months of hibernation, Christine entered into Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling. Strength-Based Counseling was used to help Christine identify and use talents and skills to open new opportunities for the future. This instilled confidence and hope. The pastoral counselor advocated for Christine to be employed by someone in the church who could offer spiritual mentoring and employment opportunities. Emotional Freedom Technique was introduced to Christine to help de-escalate unprocessed negative emotions. Personal EFT techniques were taught to help Christine manage stress and anxiety by taping on meridian points. This technique was life changing for Christine who learned to use tapping to self-soothe. Spiritual Direction protocols were used to help Christine connect with God and deepen her relationship with her creator. Brain Health Coaching strategies taught Christine the value of exercise and healthy eating. Exercise classes became part of Christine's therapy as she participated in daily rigorous aerobic activity. After intense aerobic activity Christine relaxed in the sauna for at least

30 minutes. Additionally, Christine connected with a small church where she was accepted and loved. Connectedness with this group was critical because family and friends did not know how to walk with Christine through the stigma that comes with being charged with a sex crime. Five years later Christine is living an amazing life. She works closely with her psychiatrist to regulate her bipolar disorder. She is married, has a great career, and enjoys helping others find hope when things look hopeless.

Bipolar disorder is complicated to treat. During the past five years Christine has had two setbacks. One setback resulted in multiple inpatient hospitalizations and more criminal charges. Christine was able to recognize each setback traced back to casual use of marijuana. “A 2019 study in *The Lancet Psychiatry* found that potent cannabis may be associated with 10 percent of new cases of psychosis.”⁴² ⁴³

Conclusion

Comprehensive Pastoral Counseling Protocol successfully combines Strength-Based Therapy, Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), Spiritual Direction, and Brain Health Coaching to treat complex mental health issues. The results are sustainable and reproducible. Much of the protocol can be administered by laypersons to keep unnecessary burden off the pastoral counselor. This protocol gives opportunity to those lacking formal education to pursue their calling to companion with mentally ill clients and families. Emotional Freedom Technique and Brain Health Coaching certifications are available to professionals and laypeople. American Association of Christian Counselors have extensive training for professionals and laypeople as well.

⁴² Marti Di Forti et al., “The Contribution of Cannabis Use to Variation in the Incidence of Psychotic Disorder across Europe (EU-GEI): A multicentre Case-Control Study,” *Lancet Psychiatry* 6, no 5 (May 2019): 427-36.

⁴³ Amen, *End of Mental Illness*, 184.

The church is well equipped to lead the way in overhauling the broken mental health system that follows direction from insurance companies and government agencies. This is an opportunity to become missionaries who meet a need and use that as a vehicle to deliver the message of reconciliation.

Bibliography