

Handouts for Meeting People at the Crossroads of Faith: Suzanne Wolcott, MDiv, LCSW and Kate Vance, T-LMFT

*Religious Trauma Inventory*

Song Lyrics: Maddie Zahn, If It's Not God

[Verse 1]

Be pretty and don't make it look like you're trying

Told to be Esther, when I felt like Goliath

When they were wrong, I could never keep quiet

I searched for the truth, and had faith that I'd find it

[Pre-Chorus]

Set myself on fire

Let myself be the liar

[Chorus]

All the Sundays I worried I'd disappoint my mom

'Cause I never understood some types of love being wrong

Something inside me was always steering left

What Father picks a few just to leave the rest?

I heard a voice inside my head, it disagreed  
So if it wasn't God, well, thank God it was me

Thank God it was me

[Verse 2]

They called me a sinner when I was a saint  
Hiding in her bedroom praying depression away

Killing herself for eternal life

And losing her interest to be a good wife

[Pre-Chorus]

Set myself on fire

I let them call me the liar

[Chorus]

All the Sundays I worried I'd disappoint my mom

'Cause I never understood a type of love being wrong

Something inside me was always steering left

What Father picks a few just to leave the rest?

I heard a voice inside my head, they disagreed

So if that wasn't God, if that wasn't God, it was me

Thank God it was me

[Bridge]

Me

Thank God it was me, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

If it was God, then I don't have to worry  
He'll know why I left, why I ran in a hurry

So either way I choose, I'm not wasting my life

'Cause the voice in my head has always been right

[Outro]

All the Sundays I worried I'd disappoint my mom

'Cause I never understood a type of love being wrong

Something inside me was always steering left

No father picks a few just to leave the rest

## Clinical Questions

- To gain insight:
  1. Could/Can you trust people outside of your religion?
  2. Were you responsible for converting people to your belief system?
  3. Who were the leaders within your religion?
  4. What were the gender roles?
  5. Were you allowed to have relationships with others outside your religion?
  6. What were the consequences, both immediate and eternal, for “sin”?
  7. How did your religion view nonreligious people?
  8. How do they now view you or others who have left that faith practice?

## Questions for assessing for beliefs

1. Are you innately “good” or “evil”?
2. Do you have free will?
3. Is the world safe or unsafe?
4. Is there a higher power?
5. How involved is the higher power in your life and decisions?
6. When will we reach the “end times”?
7. Will there be a rapture?
8. Is there an afterlife?
9. Are people or souls reincarnated?
10. How old is the universe?

## Questions/Thoughts Clients May struggle with:

- Is there a purpose to life at all?
- I don’t know how to make friends or date in the “real world”
- What do I do with all the time I used to spend with my religious community?
- What do holidays look like for me now?
- I no longer know what comes after death and I am terrified.
- Did I make a mistake leaving my group? Was it worth all of this turmoil?
- Was my experience really as bad as I thought it was, or was I just nitpicking?
- How do I shoulder the guilt of being part of a group that harmed others?
- Can I continue on after estrangement?
- Can I trust my own instincts?

## Eight Stages of Leaving

1. Noticing Contradictions
2. Questioning
3. Denial
4. Letting Go
5. “Coming Out”
6. Self-Discovery and Exploration
7. Forgiveness and Reconciliation
8. Integration

BITE Model of Control, Steven Hassan  
Behavior  
Information  
Thought  
Emotion

<https://freedomofmind.com/cult-mind-control/bite-model/>

Resources:

Organizations/Links/Podcasts:

<https://traumastery.com/religious-trauma-quiz>  
<https://www.recoveringfromreligion.org/resources#non%20religious%20resources>  
<https://www.patheos.com/>  
<https://www.journeyfree.org/>  
<https://www.daretodoubt.org/>  
<https://www.religioustraumainstitute.com/>  
[www.divorcing-religion.org](http://www.divorcing-religion.org)  
The Clergy Project- <https://clergyproject.org/>  
Podcast: Exvangelical <https://www.exvangelicalpodcast.com/>  
Podcast: Holy Ghosting <https://www.holyghosting.com/#our-story>  
Podcast: The Therapy Sisters: <https://podcasts.apple.com/dk/podcast/what-makes-a-woman-who-she-is-and-what-to-do-when-it/id1658796859?i=1000593436665>  
<https://empathyparadigm.com/religious-trauma?fbclid=IwAR3el1VIRyxyWHdHNDl0x2maxnZAJAvQL6do6bwyybE2fULzl0nHHBdp5wY>

(Religious Trauma Inventory Printable PDF is available above along with a couple of other printable resources)

TikTok Content Creators:

@TalkPurityToMe  
@youknowthatonegirlrachel  
@evangelicalish

Facebook Groups

Exvangelical  
Religious Trauma Institute  
Room To Thrive

TED/TEDX

"I grew up in the Westboro Baptist Church. Here's Why I Left." By Megan Phelps Roper  
Why I Left the Evangelical Cult by Dawn Smith

From Janice Selbie at Divorcing Religion:

#### RELIGIOUS RECOVERY CONFERENCES

The Conference on Religious Trauma (CORT) takes place online annually. Early Bird ticket pricing is now in effect for CORT2023, being held October 20-22. Tickets available here:

[www.religioustraumaconference.org](http://www.religioustraumaconference.org)

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Session recordings from CORT2021 are available to watch, free of charge, on the Conference on Religious Trauma YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGhyTXTIM9kdTJ1jW-Ckb5g>

Session recordings from the inaugural Shameless Sexuality: Life After Purity Culture conference are available for sale as a Resource Ticket here:

<https://pheedloop.com/SSLAPC2022/site/home/>

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL/INTERESTING SITES for those recovering from religious trauma syndrome:

- [www.Recoveringfromreligion.org](http://www.Recoveringfromreligion.org) 24/7 hotline, online & in person support groups, RfRx podcast
- <https://www.ericasmitheac.com/> (PURITY CULTURE RECOVERY)
- <https://freedomofmind.com/cult-mind-control/bite-model/> & <https://culteducation.com/>
- <https://www.icsahome.com/support>
- Facebook also has many private groups for those recovering from fundamentalist religions
- <https://onlysky.media/latest-stories/>

#### LINKS RELATED TO OVERCOMING FEAR OF HELL

<https://confidentman.net/spirituality/overcome-fear-going-hell>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7l3xUu\\_auVk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7l3xUu_auVk)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOPNvs0LkCw>

#### PODCASTS

Some of my favorite podcasts about religious deconversion/deconstruction and high-demand groups include:

- Divorcing Religion (with Janice Selbie)
- The Influence Continuum (with Dr. Steve Hassan)
- MindShift (with Dr. Clint Heacock)
- IndoctrINATION (with Dr. Rachel Bernstein)
- The Thinking Atheist (with Seth Andrews)
- The Graceful Atheist
- Conspirituality

## BOOKS:

Pure by Linda Kay Klein  
Leaving the Fold, by Dr. Marlene Winell  
Trusting Doubt, by Dr. Valerie Tarico  
The God Virus, by Dr. Darrel Ray  
Sex and God, by Dr. Darrel Ray  
Take Back Your Life, by Dr. Janja Lalich  
Bounded Choice, by Dr. Janja Lalich  
Goodbye Jesus, by Tim Sledge  
Wayward, by Alice Greczyn  
Empty the Pews: Stories of Leaving the Church, Ed. By Chrissy Stroop and Lauren O'Neal

## ARTICLES for those recovering from religious trauma syndrome:

- <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-codependency-5072124>
- <https://www.modernintimacy.com/how-does-purity-culture-trauma-impact-sexuality/>
- <https://valerietarico.com/2010/11/05/getting-god%E2%80%99s-self-appointed-messengers-out-of-your-head/>
- Dr. Tarico also has a fantastic video series on YouTube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL18572A49A5A7EF0C>

The resources below have been informally categorized as faith-based only when explicitly mentioned/implied from the session or presenter details or course comments. Resources collected by Lisa Lowe

## Current Continuing Education Classes for Religious Trauma

### General

- Reclamation Collective offers [continuing education classes on religious trauma](#) (the workshop on Nov 21 is sold out but they will be offering the training 4 times throughout 2022)
- The Institute for Creative Mindfulness offers on demand online CE courses:
  - 4 CEs: [After #ChurchToo: An Introductory Course on Purity Culture for Clinical Professionals - Homestudy](#)
  - 6 CEs: [Healing Spiritual Abuse with EMDR Therapy](#)
- International Cultic Studies Association has a monthly [seminar calendar](#)
- Sunday Jan 30, 2022 12 pm - 7:30 pm EST: 6 CEs Online [Symposium on Death and Bereavement Studies](#) covering how toxic theology impacts our relationship with death, loss and grief
- NetCE 2 CE on demand online course [Understanding and Treating Spiritual Abuse](#)

#### Faith-Based

- Bilateral Innovations 6 CE demand online course [Spiritual Trauma & EMDR Therapy – 7 Steps to Help Clients Heal](#)

#### Past Continuing Education Classes for Religious Trauma

##### General

- [Conference on Religious Trauma](#) May 11, 2021 - May 16, 2021 - attendees eligible for up to 6 CEs
- Dallas Therapy Collective course 3 CE [Working with Spiritual/Religious Abuse in Therapy](#) August 2018 (reaching out to see if they will offer more in the future)
- IITAP 4 CE [Webinar 1: The Trauma of Toxic Faith and Treatment Modalities](#) December 2018 (reaching out to see if they will offer more in the future)
- Religious Trauma Institute online course, unspecified # CE and date: [Adverse Religious Experiences: An Introductory Workshop](#) (reaching out to Brian Peck to see if he will offer more in the future)
- CE Learning Systems: 5 CEs [Understanding and Treating Spiritual Abuse](#) 2014 (Jamie Marich is offering the Institute for Creative Mindfulness classes listed under the current classes section above)

#### Faith-Based

Cascadia Training October 8, 2021 -- Zoom webinar -- 4 CEs [Religious and Spiritual Trauma](#) (this presenter profile mentions they specialize in “integration of spirituality and psychotherapy particularly the Christian faith”)

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#### Resources for Ex- Orthodox

<https://footstepsorg.org>

#### Resources for Ex- Mormons

<https://www.mormonspectrum.org/post-ex-websites-links>

#### Resources for Ex-Jehova’s Witnesses

<https://www.daretodoubt.org/jehovas-witness>

<https://freedomofmind.com>