

Healthy cultures and spiritual abuse

Session 1



1

Introductions



2



3



2.5 hours
short break



Link for slides and
handbook



Webcam and
microphones



Sensitive and
confidential

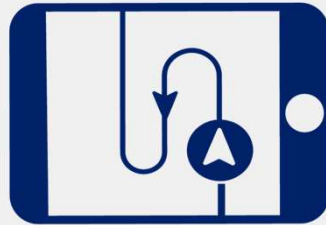


Get support



Chat facility

4



0303 003 1111 - Option 2
helpline@thirtyoneeight.org



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Module 1

Healthy Christian Cultures

One end of the spectrum

Module 2

People, policies, practices

Culture: Built by all, supported by frameworks

Module 3

Preventative. Restorative.

The key benefits of healthy cultures

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Module 4**Spiritual abuse**

The opposite end of the spectrum

Module 5**Responding well**

Appropriate responses, pathways for referral

Module 6**Openness, awareness and process**

Culture is never static

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Spiritual Abuse: Why it matters

“...abuse that occurred in a religious context reported that it had led to a loss of faith or a loss of trust in a religious organisation.” IICSA, 2022, p.121

- Form of emotional/psychological abuse
- Occurs in religious/faith-based contexts
- Unhealthy/harmful behaviours supported or justified by faith or holy texts (i.e. the Bible or Qur'an)

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Module 1:

Healthy Christian Cultures

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In this module:

- Understanding culture
- Defining healthy cultures
- Myth of homogeneity



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Understanding culture

What we believe

How we express ourselves

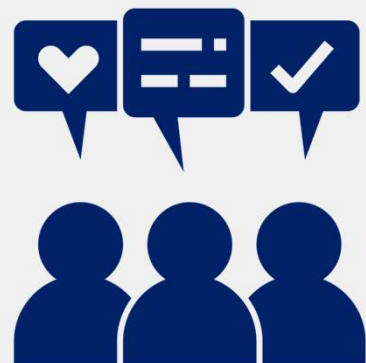
How we behave towards each other

It's our normal

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Understanding culture

Marks of a healthy culture



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Understanding culture

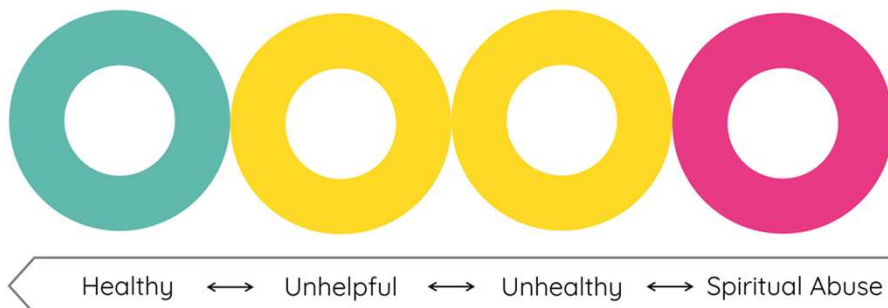
‘In order to explore the issue of healthy culture in a balanced way, we need to consider how good things can be and at the same time be honest about when things go wrong and what that looks like’

Taken from: **Escaping the maze of spiritual abuse: Creating healthy Christian cultures**, Oakley & Humphreys, SPCK, 2019

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Understanding culture

A spectrum of behaviour



by Lisa Oakley, Professor of Safeguarding and Knowledge Exchange at University of Chester

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Defining healthy cultures

A healthy faith culture is one that provides emotional/psychological and physical safety.

It both offers guidance and accepts a person's right to choose.

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Defining healthy cultures

Establish good governance

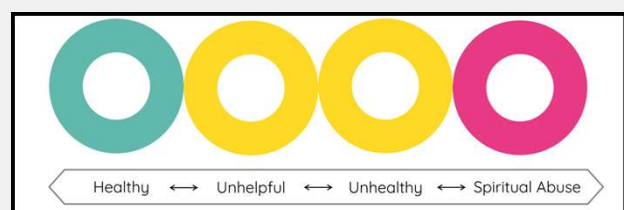
Listen well

Build effective structures

Manage power

Model safe behaviours

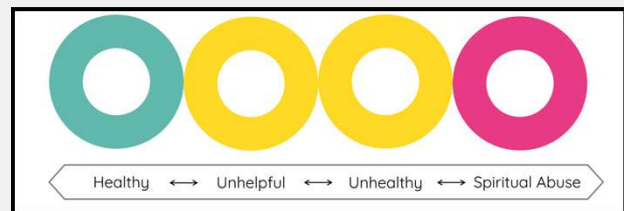
Communicate well



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Defining healthy cultures

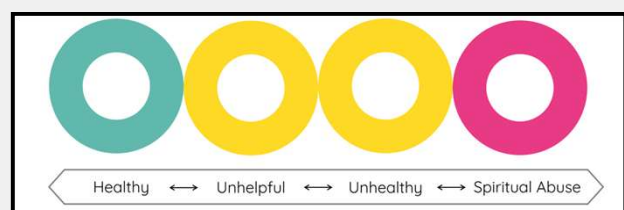
Establish good governance



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Defining healthy cultures

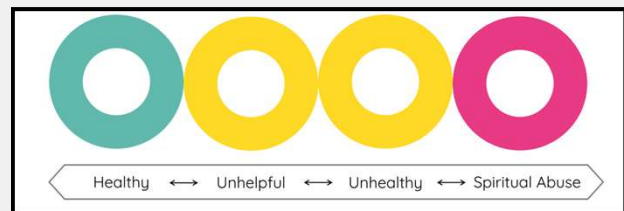
Listen well



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Defining healthy cultures

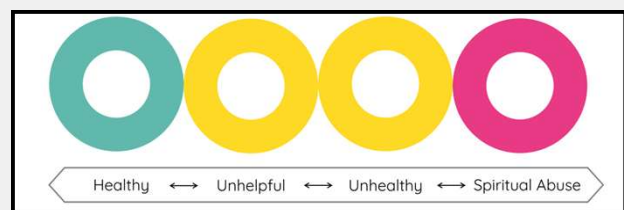
Build effective structures



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Defining healthy cultures

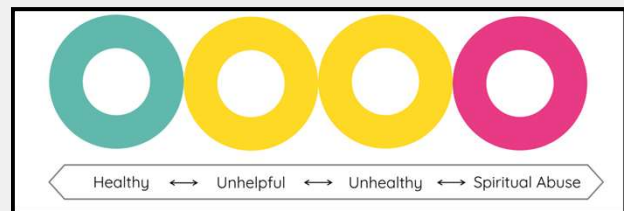
Manage power



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Defining healthy cultures

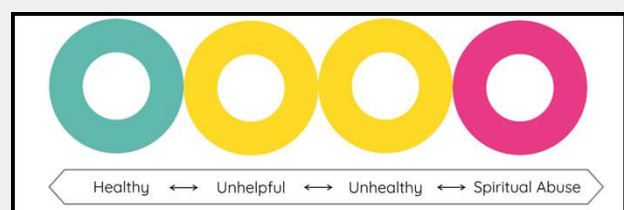
Model safe behaviours



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Defining healthy cultures

Communicate well



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Defining healthy cultures

Of the 6 components;

- Which is your strongest?
- Which is weakest?
- Are any unhealthy or harmful?



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Break

24

Coffee break

5:00

25

Survivor/victim voices

“I do not think that the idea of church being a safe place would be discussed when [individual] was Vicar.”

Taken from: **Final Report – Independent Lessons Learned Review for Emmanuel Church Wimbledon**, Thirtyone:eight, 2021

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The myth of homogeneity

People with positive characteristics
can still act in abusive ways

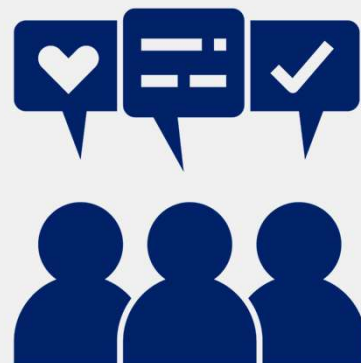


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The myth of homogeneity

Case Study:

Newspaper reports from the Nine O'clock
Service, Sheffield



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Any questions?



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Module 2: People, policies & practices

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In this module:

- People, empowered.
- Policy as a framework
- Intentional practices



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People, empowered.

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.”



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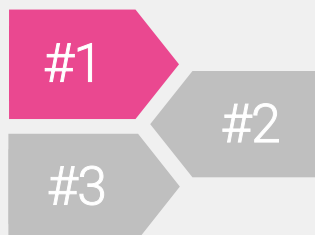
People, empowered.

- Inclusive approach
- Sit with opposites
- Unconscious bias
- Opposite exercise



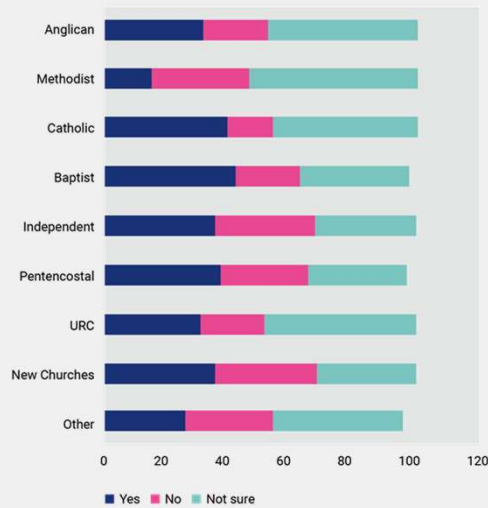
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Poll



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Policy as framework



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Policy as framework

- Spiritual abuse in Safeguarding Policy
- Whistle blowing policy
- Bullying policy
- Reporting a concern

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Break



37

Coffee break

5:00

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Intentional practices

- Governance
- Visibility
- Humility
- Training

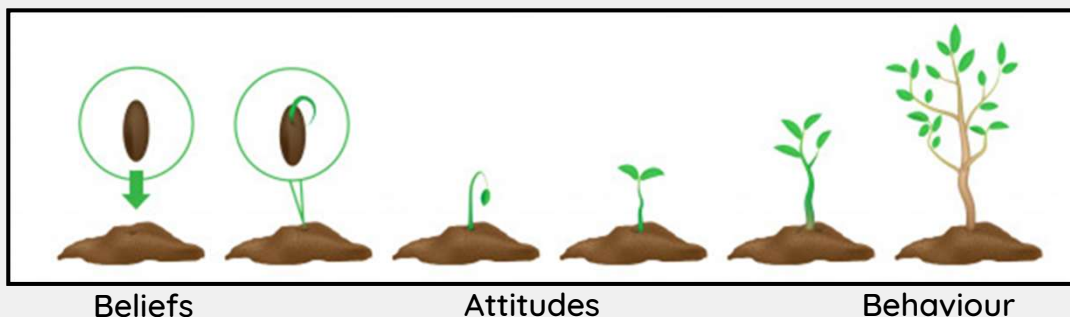
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People, policies, practices: Planting in fertile ground

Policy

Procedure

Training



Beliefs

Attitudes

Behaviour

Safer, Healthier Culture & Systems

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Breakout rooms



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Survivor/victim voices

“...the power, authority and reverence bestowed upon religious institutions and the individuals working within them meant that the conduct of perpetrators went unquestioned.”

Taken from: **Final Report – Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse**,
October 2022, p.384

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Any questions?



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Module 3:
Healthy cultures:
Preventative.
Restorative.

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In this module:



Prevention



Restoration



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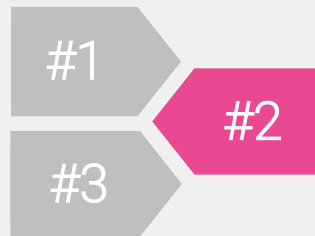
Healthy cultures: Preventative

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

— Frederick Douglass

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Poll



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Healthy cultures: Restorative

“A caring and compassionate response underpinned by pastoral and spiritual support, if requested by survivors, can support recovery and healing.”

Taken from: [Safeguarding eManual, The Church of England](#), online, 2022

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Healthy cultures: Restorative What about pastoral care and prayer?

- Be guided by the individual
- Give choice, don't coerce
- Allow for the spectrum of emotion

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Any questions?



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Healthy cultures and spiritual abuse

Session 2



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Module 1

Healthy Christian Cultures

One end of the spectrum

Module 2

People, policies, practices

Culture: Built by all, supported by frameworks

Module 3

Preventative. Restorative.

The key benefits of healthy cultures

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Module 4**Spiritual abuse**

The opposite end of the spectrum

Module 5**Responding well**

Appropriate responses, pathways for referral

Module 6**Openness, awareness and process**

Culture is never static

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Is it redeemable?



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Module 4:

Spiritual Abuse

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In this module:

- Defining spiritual abuse
- The perpetrators and settings
- Key characteristics



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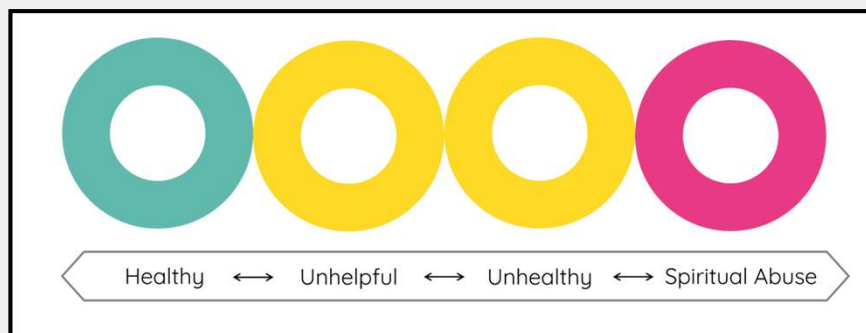
Defining spiritual abuse

- Form of emotional/psychological abuse
- Occurs in religious/fait-based contexts
- Unhealthy/harmful behaviours supported or justified by faith or holy texts (Bible)

(Oakley and Humphreys, 2019)

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Defining spiritual abuse: A spectrum of behaviour



by Lisa Oakley, Professor of Safeguarding and Knowledge Exchange at University of Chester

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The perpetrators and settings

“Jesus isn’t the problem but rather those who use his church as a staging area for abuse.”

Dr. Erik L. Strandness, Premier Unbelievable, 2022

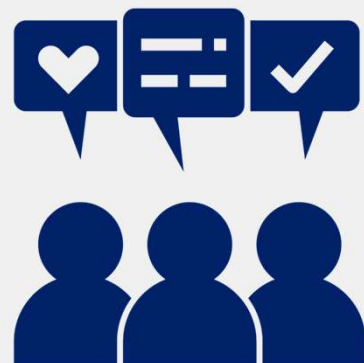
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The perpetrators and settings

Who are the perpetrators?

When does it become harmful?

Helpline case study



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The perpetrators and settings

- Across faiths
- Across denominations
- Across positions
- In the UK

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The perpetrators and settings

Spiritual abuse at home: Intimate partner relationships

“It can be so difficult to feel torn between one’s religious beliefs and the desire to live free from abuse.”

National Domestic Violence Helpline, Website, 2022

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Break



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Coffee break

5:00

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Survivor/victim voices

“...take[s] the place of God in their lives.”

“...church leaders are often not very protected from being abused themselves...”

Taken from: Understanding Spiritual Abuse in Christian Communities, Bournemouth University & CCPAS

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Key characteristics

- Coercion and control
- Manipulation and exploitation
- Enforced accountability
- Requirement for secrecy and silence
- Pressure to conform

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Key characteristics

“...victim-blaming, shame and honour, abuse of power by religious leaders, gender disparity, mistrust of external agencies and pressure on victims to ‘forgive’”

Taken from: IICSA, 2021

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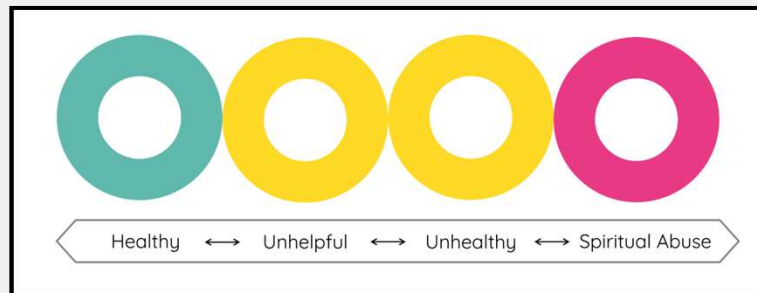
Key characteristics

"...‘accountability’ involved a hard hand." (Uni. Of Bournemouth, 2017)

"Keep your head down, and your mouth shut." (Uni. Of Bournemouth Uni, 2017)

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Key characteristics: Case study Financial giving



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Breakout rooms

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Any questions?



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Module 5: Responding well

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In this module:

- Responding appropriately
- Referral pathways



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Responding appropriately

The impact may not be visible

"This experience is the equivalent of someone **depth**
charging our insides."

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Responding appropriately

Main impacts:



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Responding appropriately

Listen to the statements –
were responses helpful or unhelpful?



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Responding appropriately

- Safe
- Serious
- Active listening
- No minimisation or blame
- Bible and prayer
- Confidentiality
- Support & refer



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Responding appropriately

Church leaders
Thirtyone:eight
Friends and family
Church safeguarding officer
Statutory agencies
Counselling
External support



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Break



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Coffee break

5:00

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Referral pathways

“A clear policy, with precise steps on what should be done”.

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Survivor/victim voices

“As a society we embraced ... control which was so damaging. What was so very striking was the absence of basic kindness.”

Ireland's Taoiseach

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Referral pathways

- Statutory agencies: Children and Crime
- Charity regulators
- Umbrella organisations/denomination
- Support networks

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Breakout rooms

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Any questions?



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Module 6: Openness, awareness and processes

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In this module:

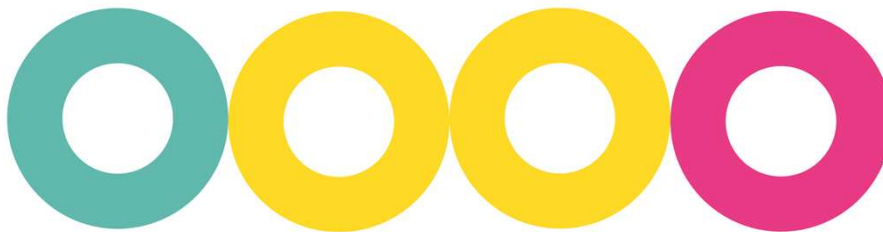
- Openness
- Awareness
- Processes



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Understanding culture

A spectrum of behaviour



Healthy ↔ Unhelpful ↔ Unhealthy ↔ Spiritual Abuse

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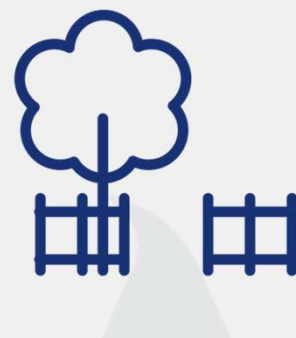
Survivor/victim voices

“...he was ‘a Christian man and Christian men don’t do that.’ ”

Taken from: IICSA Experiences Shared, online, 2022

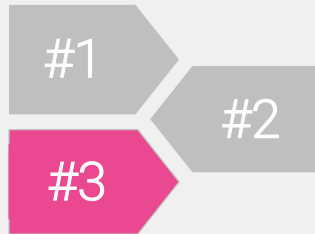
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Openness



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Poll



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Awareness



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Breakout rooms



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Processes



Getting the whole organisation on board!

95

Any questions?



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I have learnt.....



97

Your feedback
is important to
us.



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Creating safer places. Together.