



At MyCounselor.Online, we understand the profound challenges and emotional turmoil that accompany the revelation of a moral failure within your leadership. In such times, it is crucial to navigate the situation with utmost sensitivity, empathy, and clarity. Our guidance is designed to help you communicate effectively with your staff, normalize their emotions, condemn inappropriate behavior, and provide a supportive environment that fosters healing and trust. We are committed to assisting you through this difficult period. Below are best practices to guide you in supporting your staff and congregation during this time.

Normalize the Emotions the Staff are Feeling

Best Practice: Acknowledge that a range of emotions is normal and acceptable.

Example Statement: "It's completely normal to feel a range of emotions including anger, sadness, confusion, and betrayal. Everyone processes this kind of news differently, and all of your feelings are valid."

Condemn the Inappropriate Behavior

Best Practice: Clearly and unequivocally condemn the inappropriate actions.

Example Statement: "We condemn the actions unequivocally. Such behavior is completely unacceptable and goes against everything we stand for as a church."

Support the Staff

Best Practice: Offer emotional and practical support to all staff members.

Example Statement: "We are here to support you. If you need to talk, process your feelings, or seek advice, please reach out to your supervisors or use the counseling services provided."

Regulate Emotionally

Best Practice: Help staff members manage their emotional responses.

Example Statement: "It's important to take care of your emotional well-being. If you're feeling overwhelmed, please reach out for help and take the time you need to process your emotions."

Help Staff Feel Safe

Best Practice: Ensure that staff members feel safe and secure within the church environment.

Example Statement: "Your safety is our priority. If there are any concerns about safety, whether emotional or physical, please let us know immediately so we can address them."

Encourage Open Communication

Best Practice: Foster an environment where open and honest communication is encouraged.

Example Statement: "We encourage you to speak openly about your feelings and concerns. Our door is always open for you to share what's on your heart."

Facilitate Grieving

Best Practice: Provide space and opportunities for grieving the situation.

Example Statement: "We recognize that this is a time of deep grief for many. It's important to take the time to mourn and to support each other in this process."

Acknowledge How Triggering This May Be

Best Practice: Recognize that this situation may trigger past traumas for some staff members.

Example Statement: "We understand that this news may be particularly triggering for those who have experienced abuse. Please reach out for support; you are not alone."

Work Towards Establishing Trust in Leadership

Best Practice: Take steps to rebuild trust in church leadership.

Example Statement: "Rebuilding trust is a priority for us. We are committed to transparency and accountability as we move forward together."

Encourage Use of Counseling Services

Best Practice: Promote the counseling services available to staff members.

Example Statement: "We have partnered with MyCounselor.Online to provide free counseling services to all staff. Please visit [MyCounselor.Online](https://www.mycounselor.online) and click 'Get Matched,' mentioning you are staff at our church to receive support."

What Not to Do or Say

Do Not Downplay the Incident

- **Avoid Saying:** "It's not as bad as it sounds."
- **Reason:** This minimizes the severity of the situation and can invalidate the feelings of those affected.

Do Not Shift Blame

- **Avoid Saying:** "The victim should have come forward sooner."
- **Reason:** This places undue blame on the victim and can discourage others from coming forward in the future.

Do Not Make Excuses for the Offender

- **Avoid Saying:** "They were under a lot of stress."
- **Reason:** Excusing the behavior can be seen as condoning the actions and undermines the seriousness of the offense.

Do Not Promise Uncertain Outcomes

- **Avoid Saying:** "Everything will be back to normal soon."
- **Reason:** Healing and rebuilding trust take time and promising quick resolution can lead to further disappointment.

Do Not Provide Excessive Details

- **Avoid Saying:** "Here are all the specific details of what happened."
- **Reason:** Sharing explicit details can cause additional trauma and might not be appropriate for all listeners.

Do Not Gossip or Speculate

- **Avoid Saying:** "I heard that there might be more to this story."
- **Reason:** Speculation and gossip can spread misinformation and harm the integrity of the communication process.

Do Not Ignore the Incident

- **Avoid Doing:** Failing to address the issue with staff.

- **Reason:** Ignoring the incident can lead to rumors, increased distrust, and a perception that the leadership is indifferent or complicit.

Do Not Isolate the Victim

- **Avoid Saying:** "Let's not talk about the victim to respect their privacy."
- **Reason:** While respecting privacy is important, isolating the victim can make them feel unsupported and ignored.

Do Not Dismiss Emotional Reactions

- **Avoid Saying:** "You need to get over it."
- **Reason:** This invalidates the emotional responses of the staff and can hinder their healing process.

Do Not Force Forgiveness

- **Avoid Saying:** "You need to forgive and move on."
- **Reason:** Forgiveness is a personal process and should not be rushed or coerced.

Do Not Use Religious Platitudes to Bypass Pain

- **Avoid Saying:** "Just pray about it and everything will be fine."
- **Reason:** While prayer is important, using it to bypass addressing the real pain and emotions can seem dismissive and unhelpful.

Do Not Discuss Legal Actions Publicly

- **Avoid Saying:** "We are pursuing legal action and here are the steps we are taking."
- **Reason:** Legal matters should be handled confidentially and discussing them publicly can compromise the process and confidentiality.

Do Not Dismiss the Impact on Staff

- **Avoid Saying:** "This only really affects the victim, so the rest of you should be fine."
- **Reason:** This ignores the broader impact on the staff and community and can invalidate their feelings.

Do Not Ignore the Need for Professional Help

- **Avoid Saying:** "We can handle this internally without outside help."
- **Reason:** Professional counseling and support are crucial for effective healing and recovery.

Do Not Create an Atmosphere of Fear

- **Avoid Saying:** "If anyone speaks out of line, there will be consequences."
- **Reason:** This creates a culture of fear and silence, which can prevent open communication and healing.

By avoiding these statements and actions, church staff leaders can foster a more supportive, transparent, and healing environment.