

*Here consult (1) your own betrayals and (2) the Christian teaching on the Cross.

Biblically, and I think humanly, the deepest psychospiritual suffering is betrayal-suffering--the fact, or at least the belief, that one has been betrayed, and the feelings arising from this fact or belief. Further, the God-question and the suffering-question are bound up together, each both illumining and darkening the other (and together leading to secularism, the nihilistic conclusion from the apparent impenetrability of the tandem questions--acc. to Harry J. Ausmus, THE POLITE ESCAPE: THE MYTH OF SECULARIZATION, Ohio U.P./83: hope was the only cure offered for suffering, and now hope has died--because suffering, the fundamental human puzzle-problem, has not been plausibly explained by theologians, sociologists, philosophers, historians).The simple aim of this thinksheet is to help official and unofficial counselors help sufferers sort out the three dimensions of suffering so they can think/act vis-a-vis them "bite-size":

1. YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM WHAT THE (SUPPOSED OR ACTUAL) BETRAYER HAS DONE TO YOU. Can you describe this part of your suffering? It's not easy! It's far easier to tell me about the betrayal and the traitor --but that's only preliminary to the possibility of my helping you. If I am to do that, I must hear from you your feelings about being betrayed. (The Bible elaborately describes God's feelings about our betrayals of God and of each other, our covenant-breakings. Emotional freedom and self-awareness are the precondition: Amos and Hosea were able to become aware of God's anger and love, respectively, because they were in touch with their own feelings. If you are going to stonewall and play it cool, biblical religion--and I as a counselor committed to the biblical God--cannot help you)...A further distinction: inner/outer sufferings from, caused (?) by, the traitor. Feelings of depreciative self-reflection; shame at "What are the neighbors thinking?" The child-betrayed parent weeps "What did I/we do wrong?" Parents for whom social sanctions are heavy rage against the child, "What right have you to drag our family's good name in the mud?" All remedial action begins with accurate situation-definition: What, as precisely as you can manage, are your first-level feelings?

2. YOU ARE SUFFERING--OR ARE YOU?--FOR THE ONE WHO'S BETRAYED YOU (OR AT LEAST WHO YOU BELIEVE HAS BETRAYED YOU). Can you sort out these second-level feelings, the feelings that center not in you (as do the first-level feelings) but in the traitor? It's terribly difficult! Look at the hurdles you have to leap over: your wounded ego, bruised pride, self-pity, diminished self-regard (or, as reactive, raging self-righteousness and innocence), personal self-in-world, human dignity. Agap'e--love centering not in yourself but in the beloved--is what the New Testament calls the kind of love which alone can enable you to shift from first-level to second-level suffering-analysis.* Imagine yourself in the traitor's skinbag: what is s/he feeling/thinking? Can you think of any way(s) you might help the human thing to happen in that person's inner/outer life? What indirect action(s) might you take in love for that person (e.g., prayer, conversations with others who might help)? What direct actions (e.g., letters, phonecalls, visits, invitations to participate with you in some new activity that might provide one or both of you with fresh perspective)?

3. The third level may be the toughest. You are certainly suffering from the traitor, and you may have sorted out some ways you are suffering for him/her: ARE YOU, IN ANY WAY, SUFFERING WITH THE TRAITOR?*