

Religious and spiritual harm

Protecting Choice After Spiritual Harm

Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Harm in a religious or spiritual setting may affect trust, belonging, identity, or access to community. You may want to keep your beliefs, change them, or leave questions open. Support does not require returning, forgiving, defending the group, or abandoning faith.

Focus on present needs rather than recounting events. Consider who could access this page and use a private format if needed.

Name the impact

Identify a current effect such as fear of disagreement, pressure to disclose, loss of community, or uncertainty about whom to trust. You do not have to settle a theological question first.

Choose independent support

Consider a clinician, advocate, trusted person, or spiritual support you freely choose. Clarify their relationship to the harmful setting before sharing details or agreeing to contact.

1. What current effect of the experience needs attention?**2. What boundary or choice has been pressured or ignored?****3. Who could support me without directing my beliefs or reporting back to the group?****4. What safe next step would protect my autonomy or practical needs?****Clinical use and adaptation**

Assess coercive control, abuse, threats, housing dependence, and current safety. Do not contact religious leaders without informed consent or assign reconciliation. Avoid pathologizing belief or nonbelief and use appropriate trauma care when indicated.