

Guidelines for Verbatim Exercise

adapted from *The Practice of Pastoral Care*
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What Is a Verbatim

"A verbatim is a reconstructed script of a pastoral or spiritual care conversation." Verbatims are extremely useful in the training of pastors, as it helps them reflect on how a conversation unfolded and what was going on when it did.

How to Do It

1. Over the next few weeks, try to have a caring conversation with someone. You can set up a coffee date to check in with someone, or it can be an exchange you have during coffee hour.
2. As soon as possible after the conversation is over, take down as many notes as you can detailing the flow of the conversation, key words or phrases you remember, and especially the points at which there seemed to be a disconnect, the focus shifted abruptly, and/or when you felt it went deeper.
3. When you get a chance to sit in front of a computer, type up a script of the conversation using your notes. Don't wait too long, though, before your memory fades.
4. Add other details:
 - Describe the physical location.
 - List what you knew about this person before the conversation.
 - In the script, note any changes for you or the other in body language, posture, vocal tone, volume, etc
 - Add any emotions you remember feeling at different points in the conversation.

Confidentiality

1. Please maintain the person's confidentiality by not writing their name on your script. Use a single letter.
2. We will not share these verbatims directly with each other. Instead, I ask you to bring them on Week 5 so that we can reflect generally on them together in light of that week's reading.
3. If you want to reflect in more depth your Verbatim, I'd be happy to do so with you individually.
4. Even with the person not identified on the script, please do not leave your verbatim lying around for others to see. If you need it shredded, I can take care of that for you.

Example

Have a look at the example attached about Rev Sam Lee.

In this chapter we explored and illustrated more foundational aspects of care—radical respect for alterity, theological accountability and reflexivity, and the ways intersecting social systems shape lived and intentional theologies. The next chapter outlines how to practice intercultural care by monitoring relational boundaries and power dynamics.

Chapter 2

Basic Ingredients of Caregiving Relationships

The Rev. Sam Lee arranged a meeting with a middle-aged woman of Korean heritage who attended worship at his Korean Methodist Church for the first time. She asked whether she could come and see him about a family problem. Afterward, Sam Lee tried to recall the conversation, writing it as a *verbatim*, a reconstructed script of a pastoral or spiritual care conversation, so that he could reflect on it in a peer consultation group.¹

Mrs. Wood (1): A few weeks ago, I was upset about my mother. She's Korean; my dad met her when he was a soldier in the Korean War. Mom cut herself off from her past when she married and moved here. We've never been part of a Korean-American congregation like yours, so visiting here was new for me. I usually go to First Congregational Church on Main Street with my husband, Tom. We've gone there for years.

1. A verbatim is a tool developed in clinical pastoral education in which caregivers re-create a care conversation from notes they have taken immediately afterward (Burck, 1990). The verbatim is invaluable for experiential learning and reflexivity using psychological, theological, and cultural perspectives (a fuller description will be provided at the conclusion of this chapter).

Rev. Lee (1): I'm glad you visited. (Brief silence)

Mrs. Wood (2): I wanted to come to find out more about Korean women my Mom's age, and I thought of this church. Mom's in her late seventies and still going strong. My father died about a year ago. (Brief silence.) They didn't have a very close marriage.

Rev. Lee (2): Not a close marriage?

Mrs. Wood (3): They didn't have much in common. Mom looked after the house and didn't go out much. Dad's whole life was his work until he retired; then it was his garden. Now she's almost a recluse. It's been hard to get her to travel to see us and her grandchildren. We decided that we'd set up visits and make her get out of that empty house sometimes.

Rev. Lee (3): You've been concerned about her.

Mrs. Wood (4): Yes, I have been. She's always been a mystery to me. But she's beginning to tell me more about her past. (Brief silence.) If she came here and people knew about her past, they would judge her.

Rev. Lee (4): How so?

Mrs. Wood (5): She told me last week that she met my father when she worked in a bar. She left home when she was fourteen because there wasn't enough food for the family. She said men picked her up at the bar; that's how she made money.

Rev. Lee (5): That sounds very difficult.

Mrs. Wood (6): Yes! I was blown away. I can't believe my Mom was like that. But it makes sense in a terrible way. I was so naive; I had no idea. I wonder if other people guessed.

Rev. Lee (6): You probably have a lot of questions about your mother now.

Mrs. Wood (7): Yes, I've always wondered why Mom never spent any time with other Koreans.

Rev. Lee (7): I've known women who met their husbands in similar ways. Would it be helpful to hear a little about my experience as you try to make sense of this?

Mrs. Wood (8): Yes, that would help.

Rev. Lee (8): The women I've known don't talk about their past because many feel ashamed. Some in the older generation make assumptions about a Korean woman of her age married to a veteran. I am concerned about this kind of prejudice. We have tried to create a place here where everyone feels welcome.

Mrs. Wood (9): Yes, I can sense that. I certainly felt welcomed here. (Brief silence.) I had no idea about my mother's past when I was growing up. I feel so stupid that I never suspected anything.

Rev. Lee (9): I'm sorry you feel stupid now; there was so much you didn't know.

Mrs. Wood (10): You know, I almost didn't come today. I thought you might judge her because you're a Korean minister.

Rev. Lee (10): I'm glad you came and appreciate your saying that you hesitated. It sounds like it was hard to imagine talking to me about this.

Mrs. Wood (11): I'm so glad I did! I've been in a fog and it's lifting a little. You've been very kind. I would like to come back for worship. But it's hard. Some of those women in the choir are Mom's age and they look so stern!

Rev. Lee (11): Yes, I can appreciate that.

Mrs. Wood (12): Perhaps we could meet again after I've been to worship. Even though I'd like to just ignore what Mom said, I can't. (Brief silence.) Do you usually pray now? I feel like I should have you say a prayer, but I just don't feel comfortable with that right now. I hope you don't mind my saying that.

Rev. Lee (12): Not at all; I appreciate your candor. I hope to see you again on a Sunday morning, and you can always call the office and arrange another conversation.

Mrs. Wood (13): Thank you so much. Good-bye for now.

Rev. Lee (13): Good-bye.

Mr. Lee attends to what goes on within him, identifying his reactions. At moments he feels like giving advice; at other moments he feels like withdrawing. He explores his reactions in terms of his own story. He also pays attention to larger cultural stories connected with being a Korean immigrant. Later in this chapter, I will describe his reflections in more detail. But first we will examine concepts and strategies concerning what it means to practice intercultural empathy.

INTERCULTURAL EMPATHY AND COMPASSION: MONITORING RELATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Intercultural empathy and compassion play a central role in pastoral and spiritual care. Empathy involves imaginatively stepping into another person's emotional experience while remaining aware of and anchored in one's own emotional state. Empathy has several components: