

Case Studies Discussion

For each of the cases below, please discuss in small groups the questions that follow. Answer the question assigned to your group—this is the question your group will be asked to present on. If you have time, you can work through one or more of the other case scenarios.

Case study #1

“My mother used to tell me she wished that I had never been born. She said she wanted to abort me but it was too late and the doctors wouldn’t let her. She told me I was ugly and stupid and a drain on her financially. She used to hit me. She also had a lot of boyfriends, and some of them touched me sexually. When I became a teenager, I turned to drugs and alcohol and sex to feed the ache I have always felt inside of me. Now I’m 22, and I’m pregnant, and I’m alone. I don’t want to be preached to. I don’t want to be told about all the things I’ve done wrong. All I want is to find a god, any god, that understands my pain. What do you have to offer me?”

Case study #2

“I’m a 40 year old man, twice divorced with no children. My childhood was filled with violence. My dad often beat up my mom and sometimes he hit me. Mostly, though, I remember my Dad getting drunk and then having sex with me. It started when I was about five and continued until I left for college. I can still remember the smell of his breath as he grunted over me. I suffer from depression, and I drink too much myself. I used to go to shul and, as a boy, I always prayed that God would stop the abuse, but those prayers were never answered. I talked to a religious friend who told me that “sometimes there is pain and suffering in this world even to undeserving good and righteous people. We don’t know why, but God is watching over us and *gam zu l’tova*, everything that happens is for the good.” What ‘good’ has ever come from being a victim of sexual abuse? Where is this ‘good’ in my life? Did God enjoy watching me as I was abused?”

Case study #3

“I’m a 12 year old girl and my grandfather has been touching me sexually for five years now. My family is very religious and active in the shul, with my Dad currently the president of the shul. Grandpa tells me that I’m as much to blame for the sexual touching as he is. He tells me that I am no longer a virgin in God’s eyes and that I have sinned and committed adultery. I don’t think Grandpa is right and I desperately want him to stop touching me. It is true, though, that when he touches me my body sometimes betrays me and becomes aroused. Perhaps Grandpa is right, perhaps there is a part of me that enjoys the sexual touching. Is he right? Am I no longer a virgin in God’s eyes? What do I tell my parents? What will I one day tell my husband? What does God think of all of this? What does God think of me?”

Case study #4

“I’m a 15 year old girl living in a foster home. The authorities took me away because my mother is addicted to meth. I’ve pretty much raised myself the past ten years or so. When my mom uses

meth, she is sometimes awake for several days in a row, and then she sleeps for several days. She will do anything to continue to feed her addiction, including selling me as a prostitute. I have a lot of anger toward a lot of people. I want to hurt somebody, anybody. Is my anger sinful? If I hurt the people who hurt me, is that really my fault? Would it be wrong? Isn't God to blame for allowing this to happen? Is it wrong to hate God as much as I hate everyone else?"

Discussion Questions:

1. From your professional perspective/background – discuss the aspects of the case.
2. Consider spiritual impact and identify what the obstacles are to healing.
3. How do you specifically address spirituality/faith in this case? How would you answer the survivor's question(s)?
4. Who are the other conversation partners that you would need for a holistic approach to the healing of the individual?
5. What resources would professionals need who are working with this individual?