

# How to Keep Your Sanity as a Pastor's Wife!

As a pastor's wife (and now missionary) for 25+ years, I am finally learning the keys to maintaining my emotional health. Yes, you heard me right . . . **myself**. I have tried to keep the pastor (my husband), his kids, the deacons, their kids, and pretty much everyone else in the church happy at times. If you are already a pro at taking care of your own heart, pass this article on to another friend, but if not, maybe something in here will help you.

As a counselor, I have found an excellent process that leads to emotional wellness when I am triggered and I give it to EVERY client because no one "makes it through childhood unscathed." While not all your craziness can be blamed on your mom ☺ (I already told my kids I would pay for their therapy!), at some point everyone has been wounded by another human being. It is inevitable. These wounds create buttons that get bumped into by those around us. I hear women say, "Well, if my husband would just \_\_\_\_\_ . . . then I would be OK." I am proposing that you can be OK whether or not your husband does \_\_\_\_\_.

**Your heart—Your responsibility.** This article contains five steps for caring for your heart. An excellent team of therapists at The National Institute of Marriage developed these steps. ([www.nationalmarriage.com](http://www.nationalmarriage.com)). Let's get started!

You have dinner almost on the table and your husband calls to say he will not be home again because of an "emergency" with a church member. As you feel the steam rising from your ears – stop. Take space and work through the following steps in a quiet place with your journal. I have clients take a picture of the steps and keep it on their phone for use at all times (in traffic, in Wal-Mart, with children).



## 1 Become **Aware** of My Feelings (not usually too hard!)

- What is going on physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally?
- Identify my feelings. Be curious rather than judging them. A judged heart will immediately shut down whereas curious attitude promotes openness.
- "Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." James 1:19

## 2 **Accept** My Own Feelings

"My husband makes me so angry!" Really?

You just gave him power over your emotional wellness – You can **choose** to be angry or not.

- Own your thoughts, feelings, actions, and beliefs, through personal responsibility:

- I am **responsible for my own** Thoughts, Feelings, Actions, or Beliefs.
  - I am **not responsible for another's** Thoughts, Feelings, Actions, or Beliefs.
  - In relationships, I recognize I contribute a positive or negative influence, but **I cannot control or determine another's** Thoughts, Feelings, Actions, or Beliefs.
- Accept the job to exercise personal care.
  - “Search me, O God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts.” Psalm 139:23

### 3 Allow God to Enter

- Pray.
- What does God say to me about His comfort, His truth, His conviction, my value and my worth?
- What is the TRUTH?
- “God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

### 4 Attend to My Thoughts

- Are there negative messages/beliefs I might be feeling from my past?
- Did I do anything to contribute to my feelings?
- Could I possibly have misunderstood? Am I mind reading?
- “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?” James 4:1
- “Above all else, guard your heart, for from it flow the springs of life.” Proverbs 4:23

### 5 Act in Integrity

- Will my response create safety **within me**?
- Will my response create safety **for my relationship**?
- How does God want me to **respond**?
- Maintain and respond with integrity.
- “If it is possible, as far as it depends upon you, live at peace with everyone.” Romans 12:18

**If you need help learning to care for your heart and respond in integrity instead of reacting, please give me a call.**



Rachelle's passion is to see people live abundant grace-filled lives with an undercurrent of joy, peace, and purpose. She believes relationships should be authentic and connected. Rachelle helps couples and individuals discover the reasons their relationships are unsatisfying and partners with them on the journey of rediscovering health and hope. She specializes in couples work including affair recovery, infidelity issues, and sex therapy. With many years of ministry experience, Rachelle has a unique perspective into the struggles of ministry families and has a passion to help them live full, satisfying lives.

Her education includes an undergraduate degree in elementary education and a master's degree in professional counseling. Rachelle and her husband have two sons and reside in Nixa, MO.