Making Pastoral Care Calls

1. Consider setting up reception of phone call requests to a single phone number at the parish.
   - Communicate the number to parish members through your bulletin.
   - Create a team to retrieve and respond to requests. Provide orientation.

2. Set boundaries on the purpose and the limits of what is being offered. Be accountable.
   - Pastoral Care visits, including those by phone, are done to connect someone who is suffering to the love of God through a personal encounter with the parish community. It is relational.
   - Offer a compassionate, listening, prayerful presence. Make referrals for other needs.
   - Always establish if it is a convenient time for the call receiver: in advance if possible.
   - Limit calls in length to 20 minutes, no more than 2 times a week per person.
   - Calls should be noted and kept in a secure central location by an administrator.
   - All calls are confidential with the exception of indications of harm to self or others.
   - Phoning minors is governed by Safe Environment boundaries.
   - Begin call identifying self as part of a parish ministry to let receiver know that God cares and so does your parish family. We are in this together. Your call reflects on your parish and the Church.

3. First Do No Harm.
   - The call is about the other person—keep that as your focus and let them decide topics. Refrain from talking about yourself, judgment, giving advise, problem-solving, or diminishing feelings.
   - Fear manifests in variations of Fight, Flight, Freeze, depending on personality type. Anticipate.

4. Skills for Effective Communication—Practice with Someone.
   - Pay close attention to your volume, rate of speech and tone of voice.
   - Summarize and reflect back what they say using the feeling words they have used.
   - Be open to silence to allow people to process feelings and form responses. Take a sacred pause before your responses for the same reason. Do not interrupt.
   - Pray using a formal prayer of the Church, spontaneous prayer, or other appropriate prayers.
   - If relevant, share techniques on de-escalation anxiety: Breath Prayers, 3-2-1 Sense Awareness.

5. Be prepared: Spiritually, Emotionally, Physically, Mentally
   - Only make calls if feeling well in all areas.
   - Seek support for your own needs.