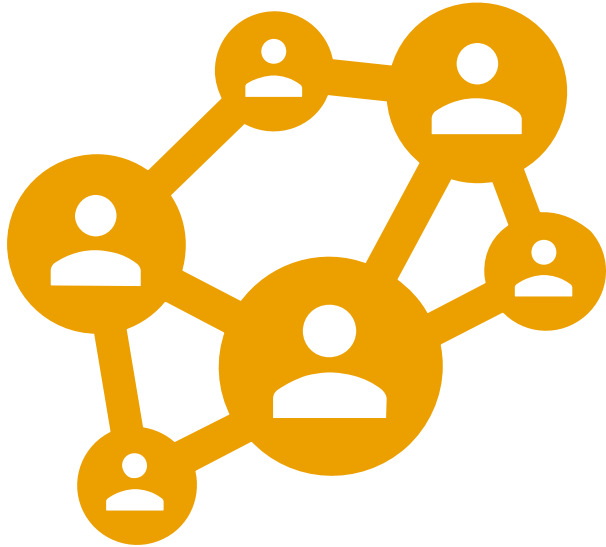




Practical Strategies for Muslim Chaplains

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Ziyara Muslim Spiritual Care
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Introduction

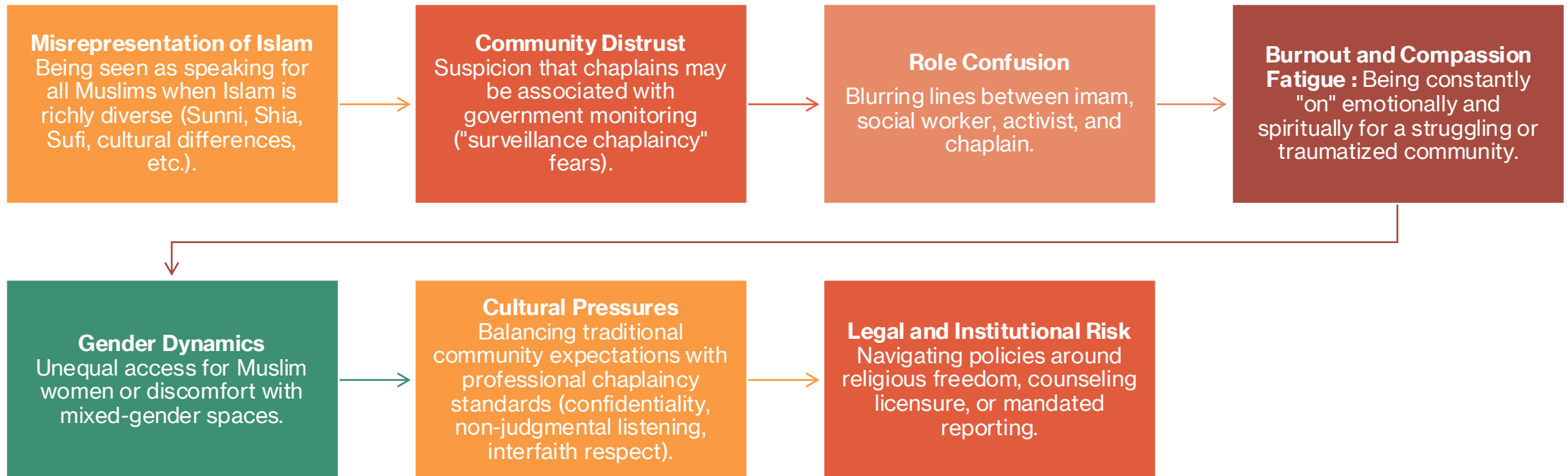


Chaplains offer spiritual care and counseling, religious guidance, emotional support, and advocacy and interfaith engagement

Key responsibilities:

- Build trust and maintain boundaries
- Offer non-judgmental presence
- Provide culturally and religiously sensitive care
- Prevent harm and encourage wellness

Risks Involving the Practice of Spiritual Care



Consequences

Alienating community members who don't feel represented.

Reduced trust, reluctance to seek spiritual support.

Overextension, ethical missteps, or burnout.

Emotional exhaustion, loss of personal faith energy.

Unmet needs among women, youth, or other marginalized groups.

Getting stuck between elders/traditionalists and younger or more secular Muslims.

Potential legal issues or institutional conflicts.

Muslim Identity

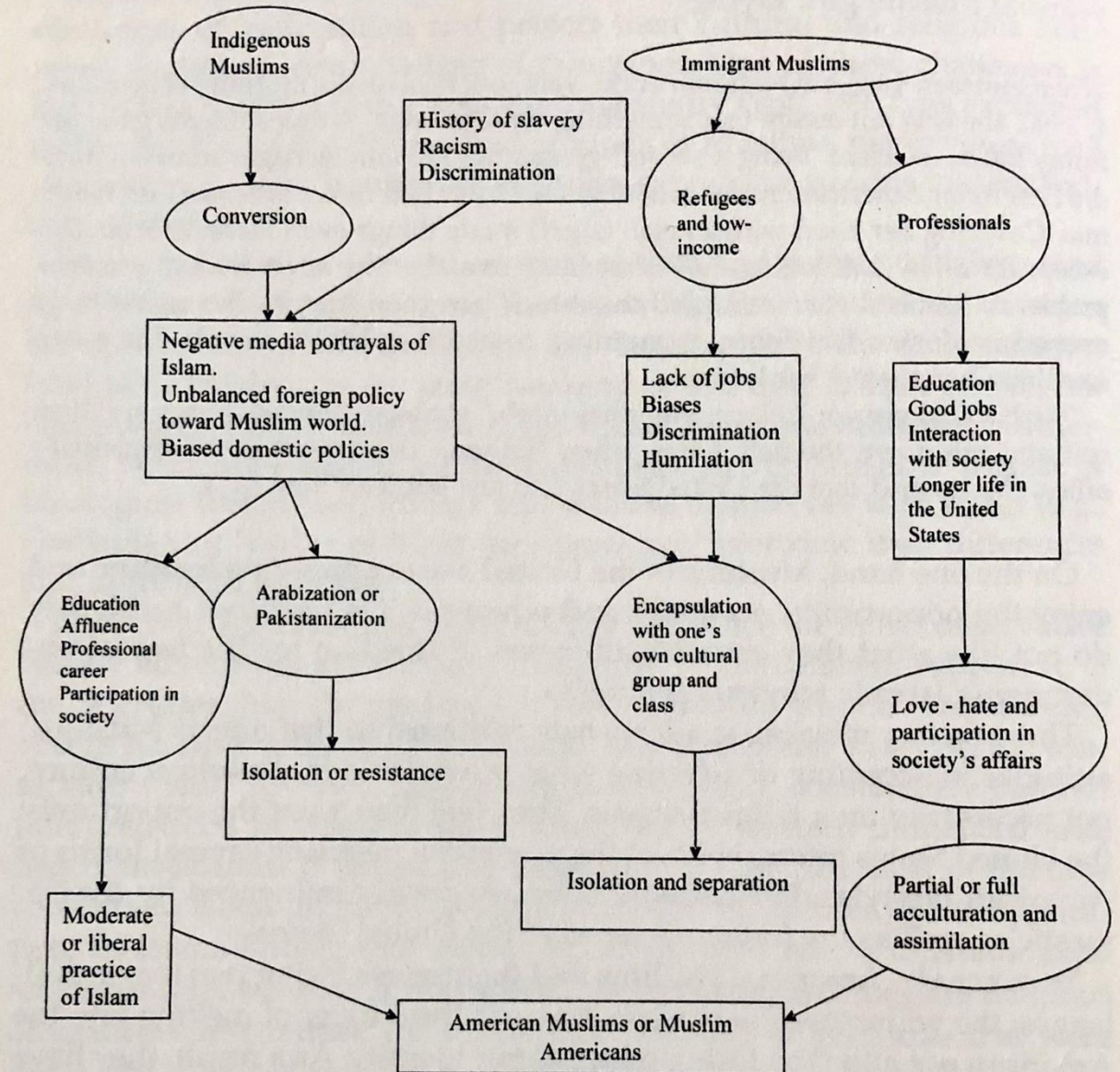
History & development of Islam in US

Trauma

Narratives

Barriers to healing

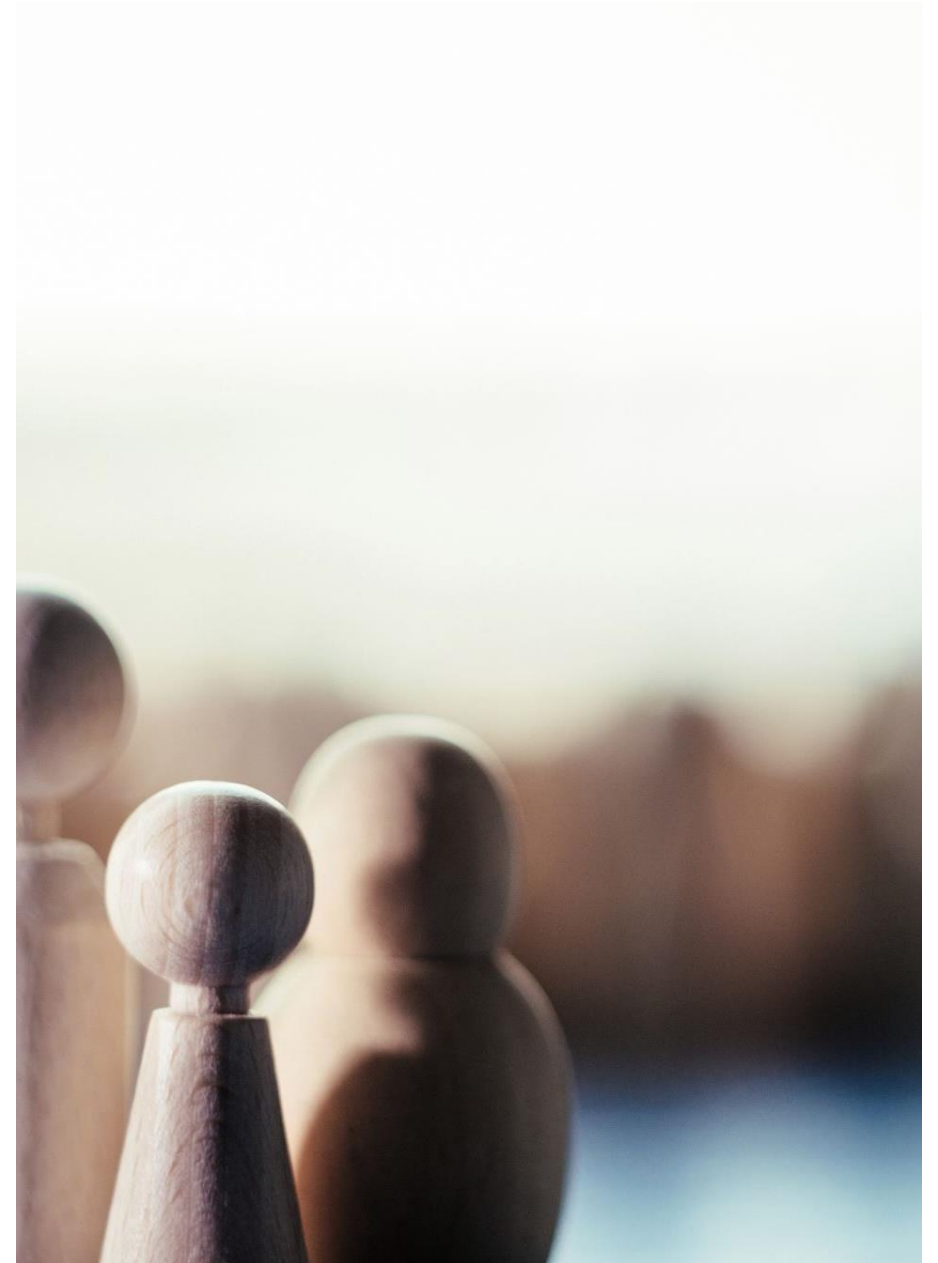
Figure 2.12
Patterns of identity formation among American Muslims



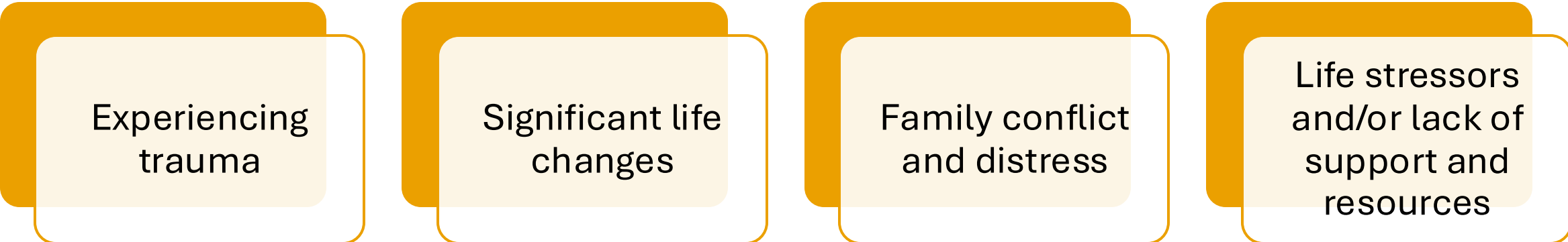
Chaplaincy in Prophetic Model

Chaplains must reflect on the Prophetic model in both word and action. The Prophet (PBUH) was:

- Approachable but respectful of boundaries.
- Listened attentively and never mocked or shamed.
- Protected the vulnerable and stood against oppression.
- Balanced spiritual care with practical support.



Vulnerability



Experiencing
trauma

Significant life
changes

Family conflict
and distress

Life stressors
and/or lack of
support and
resources

Maintain Clear Boundaries

Know

Know your role: spiritual care, not psychological therapy or fatwa-giving.

Do not
give

Do not give personal gifts or accept private favors.

Avoid

Avoid dual relationships and conflicts of interest.

Practice Trauma-Informed Care

Recognize	Recognize signs of trauma and avoid religious clichés.
Do not minimize	Do not minimize suffering with “just have sabr” or “pray more.”
Allow	Allow space for grief, anger, and healing.

Gender Sensitivity

Use	Use proper hijab of interaction (professional, respectful, and distant).
Avoid	Avoid alone time with vulnerable individuals of the opposite gender.
Involve	Involve trusted third parties if needed (e.g., female chaplain or assistant).

Uphold Confidentiality & Integrity



Never share personal information unless required to prevent harm.



Follow both Shariah ethics and institutional privacy policies.

Refer When Beyond Scope



Work alongside psychologists, counselors, imams, and legal experts.



Know your limits and never pretend expertise you don't have.

Healthcare (Hospitals, Hospices)

Risks:

Emotional
dependency

Religious
misguidance
under pressure

Breaching
confidentiality
with staff/family

Strategies:

Follow
institutional
privacy and
HIPAA policies

Enhance your
skills of giving
spiritual comfort

Use clear Islamic
ethics around
pain, death, and
end-of-life care

Avoid
overstepping into
personal space
unless invited

Document
interactions when
necessary

Prisons / Correctional Facilities

Risks:

Power imbalances

Emotional
manipulation
(from either side)

Conversion
pressure or
religious coercion

Strategies:

Provide group and
individual services
transparently

Collaborate with
mental health and
security staff

Set clear emotional
and physical
boundaries

Avoid exclusive
favoritism or
language of “saving”

Emphasize
transformation,
accountability, and
forgiveness in Islam

Academic Institutions (Schools, Universities)

Risks:

Blurred student-chaplain roles

Crossing age or gender boundaries

Ideological imposition

Strategies:

Be a mentor, not a parental figure

Avoid private, closed-door settings

Encourage critical thinking, not just religious conformity

Refer to professional counselors when needed

Be inclusive, especially with students exploring faith identity

Military Chaplaincy

Risks:

Religious freedom
conflicts

Hierarchical
pressure

Ethical dilemmas
in combat or
trauma situations

Strategies:

Understand both
Islamic principles
and military
protocol

Serve with
neutrality while
honoring Islamic
values

Create space for
Muslims to
practice freely

Be a moral voice
of peace and
dignity

Support trauma
care with religious
grounding without
justifying harm

Fostering Health – An Obligation

Physical health: diet and exercise, regular MD checkups, and hygiene

Mental health: Our thoughts. Are they positive, realistic, and functional? Are they helping us complete our day-to-day goals and tasks?

Emotional health: Awareness of feelings—both positive and negative—and the ability to regulate them in a healthy manner

Social/behavioral health: Our relationships and interactions with others are healthy and functional. The ability to accept and enjoy happiness, as well as recognize and resolve conflict

Spiritual health: Our connection and relationship with Allah, *dhikr* (remembrance of Allāh), *duā*, as well as completing our mandatory obligations to Allah such as prayer and fasting.

Coping

01

Turning to God
in prayer, dua,
and worship

02

Turning to loved
ones for support

03

Gaining
awareness and
understanding
of intrapsychic
struggles

04

Changing
routine, diet, or
exercise.