



Mental Health Awareness Day

How do you discuss mental health issues with your family and friends? What are you doing to take care of your own mental health? Ten years ago the Presbyterian Church (USA) started an initiative called “Comfort My People” to encourage congregations to talk more openly about mental health.

The Mission Commission, in response to this, wants to explore this initiative in our church. The commission has been working to gather resources that can be helpful for talking about mental health with family and friends as well as a ministry of our church. Today we will lift up Mental Health Awareness. Resources are available to the congregation in the Gathering Space at the new welcome desk. We are also working with the Education Commission to have an Adult Ed book study in the spring. The Mission Commission welcomes your ideas on how we can talk about mental health in open and supportive ways. Please contact Jennifer Burns or Jeff Kephart.

Here are some interesting facts...

1. “Statistics from the National Institute of Mental Health indicate that approximately 26% of American adults suffer from a diagnosable mental illness in any given year.” - www.pcusa.org/today October 2012
2. “At any given time, about 6% of Americans are depressed, but because of a mix of factors, including fear of stigma and a sense of isolation, fewer than half of them seek treatment.” - *Better Homes and Gardens magazine*, May 2019 issue.
3. “College presidents and deans tell repeatedly that they’ve had to make managing students’ anxiety and other mental-health issues a priority. They’re overwhelmed with the demand for mental-health services on their campuses. I hear this again and again. It’s really striking.” - *Wall Street Journal*, 5/11-5/12/19 issue
4. “The job of the church is to run to chaos, not run away from it.” says Rev. Dan Milford of Covenant Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, as quoted in an *Outlook* article on the Presbytery mental health initiative.
5. Mental health issues are at the heart of substance abuse, violence/gun, homelessness, and imprisonment. These are issues the church already addresses. Good mental health is at the heart of living at peace with yourself, living peacefully with others, working for self-sufficiency and providing for families. These are goals already the church works toward.
6. When initiating conversations, IWillListen.org states that “identifying yourself as someone who will listen in a non-judgmental way is important, so that when people want to communicate, they know it’s OK.” Executive Director Wendy Brennan says, “Instead of focusing on a person with the issue, focusing on family members has a lot of resonance because the whole issue of mental illness is about, not just the person who is affected, but rather the whole ecosystem.”

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY

Mental Illness Awareness Week

In 1990, the U.S. Congress established the first week of October as Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW). The goal is to end the stigma associated with mental illness and to ensure better understanding and access to diagnosis and treatment.

The first Tuesday of Mental Illness Awareness Week has been designated as the National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Awareness and Understanding. The prayers and actions of both faith communities and secular organizations are needed to restore mental wellness in America. In seeking God's guidance, we can recommit ourselves to replacing misinformation, blame, fear and prejudice with truth and love in order to offer hope to all who are touched by mental illness.

Did You Know?

- One in four persons sitting in our pews has a family member struggling with mental health issues
- One in ten children and youth has a serious mental illness condition
- Fewer than one-third of adults and one-half of children who live with mental health needs receive any level of treatment in any one year
- Many individuals with a mental health issue go first to a spiritual leader for help

Ideas for Faith Communities

Our faith communities **can** be a caring congregation for persons living with a mental illness and their family member. There are many ways to begin an education program with a congregation.

- Invite a speaker or offer a workshop to teach people that mental illnesses are brain disorders
- Get educational material and referral information from groups like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the Depression Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) and Mental Health America (MHA)
- Use bulletin inserts, brochures and handouts to educate about serious mental illness
- Offer a health fair and include education about different mental illnesses
- Use liturgies, prayers and sermons to raise awareness about mental illness
- Participate in an interfaith community event for the National Day of Prayer for Understanding

People with mental problems are our neighbors. They are members of our congregations, members of our families; they are everywhere in this country. If we ignore their cries for help, we will be continuing to participate in the anguish from which those cries for help come. A problem of this magnitude will not go away. Because it will not go away, and because of our spiritual commitments, we are compelled to take action. (Rosalynn Carter)

NAMI FaithNet www.nami.org/faithnet

Mental Illness Awareness Week www.nami.org/miaw

Mental Health Ministries www.MentalHealthMinistries.net

Pathways to Promise* www.pathways2promise.org

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY

Mental Health in Challenging Times

Reports reveal that mental health professionals are seeing an increase in persons dealing with stress, anxiety and fear in our uncertain world. Our country is deeply divided over many issues. Even family relations are being affected by this bitter division. International tension is increasing as we are bombarded by news reports that can be frightening. The events in today's world can be especially difficult and can be triggers for persons who have experienced traumatic experiences in their past. Mental health professionals are seeing an increasing number of persons seeking to find ways to cope with these additional stresses and fears.

But we are all in this together and there are steps we can take to care for ourselves, keep perspective, and cherish all that's good in our life. Mental Health America offers ten tools as a guide to good mental health-even in the face of life's challenges.



Ten Tools to Live Your Life Well

- 1) Connect with others
- 2) Stay positive
- 3) Get physically active
- 4) Help others
- 5) Get enough rest
- 6) Create joy and satisfaction
- 7) Eat well
- 8) Take care of your spirit
- 9) Deal better with hard times
- 10) Get professional help if you need it



Faith Communities Can Be a Source of Support and Hope

- Address stress and mental health in worship and newsletters
- Provide opportunity to reevaluate the priorities in our lives
- Be aware of signs and symptoms of persons who need support
- Offer support groups or one-to-one mentors
- Be knowledge of referral resources in your community
- Provide opportunities to volunteer to help others
- Use the rituals of your faith for comfort, strength and hope



Mental Health America www.mentalhealthamerica.net

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Mental Health Ministries www.MentalHealthMinistries.net