

SHARING THE JOURNEY - A PLAN FOR MENTAL WELLNESS MINISTRY



Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. Lao Tzu

Spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health are interdependent. We cannot fully meet a person's spiritual needs unless we see them as a whole person. When someone is experiencing the disorientation and isolation of a mood or thought disorder like clinical depression or bi-polar disorder, they need someone to come along side them- someone who cares enough to see that they get the medical attention they need. Faith communities can play a vital role in sharing the journey with those who have a bio-chemical brain disorder. One of the first steps is educating the staff and congregation to recognize the signs and realize that treatment works. Building awareness in a congregation takes time, but it brings hope to some of the loneliest, most marginalized individuals and families in our communities. Start by selecting one idea from one category below. Just one or two people in a congregation who care deeply enough to share the journey with

those touched by mental illness can become the catalyst for change in a world that often ignores the needs of its most vulnerable men, women, boys and girls. Will you come along and the share the journey?

INCLUDE AWARENESS & EDUCATION AS PART OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

- a) During Services: sermons, prayer concerns, songs, scriptures; special speakers
- b) Newsletters, bulletin inserts and bulletin boards, articles and lists of resources
- c) Adult and youth education: book study or DVD with facilitated discussion
- d) Library books, DVDs, videos

GATHER REFERRAL INFORMATION: PROVIDE COPIES TO STAFF & LAY LEADERSHIP

- a) Contact information for mental health advocacy and education organizations like NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and Mental Health America
- b) Contact information for mental health providers and counselors in the community
- c) Mental Health crisis information

ONE-ON-ONE FRIENDSHIP, INCLUSION & SUPPORT MINISTRIES,

- a) Become an accepting, informed friendly, one who shows genuine interest, but learn your own limits.
- b) Visit those with a mental illness who are receptive to building a relationship; find

out who they are as a person, their dreams & needs.

- c) Invite them to church activities, small groups, family gatherings, to an evening out, bowling, a movie, or walk in the park.
- d) Offer transportation and other reasonable help within your own limitations.
- e) Send cards, listen, encourage, assure.
- f) Share your own humanity, but not your opinions or advice.
- g) Ask if they mind having a hug, but don't be solicitous.
- h) Earn their trust over time; expect ups & downs.

CHURCH-SPONSORED FRIENDSHIP INCLUSION & SUPPORT MINISTRIES

- a) Train greeters & ushers how to welcome persons with disabilities of all types.
- b) Sponsor a small group or drop-in center for persons with disabilities.
- c) Offer assistance in finding needed support services - (transportation, legal, medical, financial assistance, food, or housing).
- d) Provide support groups for persons or families that want to connect with others in similar situations.
- e) Offer volunteer work that is realistic but meaningful, with supervision, if needed.
- f) Offer suitable volunteer or employment opportunities in the church tailored to the strengths and gifts of individuals.
- g) Provide opportunities to serve & contribute their talents: on committees, in music groups, as an usher, read scripture, participate in drama, or contribute their art work.
- h) Offer respite care to families who cannot leave their loved one alone.

- i) Open your doors to local NAMI support groups or other support organizations.

RESOURCES FOR MENTAL WELLNESS MINISTRY

American Psychiatric Association - Resources for Faith Leaders www.psychiatry.org/faith-community-partnership

Interfaith Network on Mental Illness - www.inmi.us

Interfaith Dialogue on Suicide Prevention - www.suicidefindinghope.com/content/role_of_faith_communities

National Alliance on Mental Illness - www.nami.org

NAMI FaithNet –the National Alliance on Mental Illness www.nami.org/faithnet

Mental Health Grace Alliance - www.mentalhealthgracealliance.org

Mental Health Ministries - www.mentalhealthministries.net

Mennonite Media- www.mennomedia.org

Pathways to Promise – www.pathways2promise.org worship resources and training materials

The Episcopal Mental Illness Network - www.eminnews.org/

United Church of Christ Mental Illness Network (UCC MHN): www.mhn-ucc.blogspot.com

