

SATURDAY 2/12/22  
Rev Tracy Lewis



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# 10 Points to Ponder About Mental Health

Rev. Tracy Lewis

Mental health includes our **emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act.**

Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry.
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse.
- Family history of mental health problems.

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CDC online survey indicates that young people between the ages of 18-24 are more likely to suffer mental health problems during the pandemic than any age group.

Richard Weissbourd, a psychologist and senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated **that 63% of young people reported experiencing substantial symptoms of anxiety and depression.**

**4.58% of adults report having serious thoughts of suicide.** The **national rate of suicidal ideation among adults has increased every year** since 2011-2012.

**15.08% of youth experienced a major depressive episode** in the past year

Over half of adults with a mental illness do not receive treatment, totaling **over 27 million adults in the U.S. who are going untreated.**

**Anxiety disorders** are the most common mental illness in the U.S., **affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population** every year.

Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet **only 36.9% of those suffering receive treatment.**

**Stress is a response to a threat in a situation. Anxiety is a reaction to the stress.**

“People in psychological distress are more likely to engage a clergy before they engage a mental health care provider or physician. Data indicates that the people seeking assistance are not necessarily associated with the church.” - Matthew Stanford (Church Leadership Magazine 4/2021)

## **10 Points to Ponder About Mental Health & What to Do**

### **1. Why is addressing mental health important in the church?**

When church leadership publicly proclaims that church is a safe place to express emotions, have feelings, and even discuss mental health issues, their churches become places of support.

Positive mental health allows people to:

- Realize their full potential
- Cope with the stresses of life
- Work productively
- Make meaningful contributions to their communities

**Prov 11:14** Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. KJV

- **Prov 11:14** Without good direction, people lose their way; the more wise counsel you follow, the better your chances. **THE MESSAGE**

**Prov 12:15** The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise. NKJV

Does mental and spiritual health affect each other? There is a direct correlation between mental health and spiritual health. We can find many things in Scripture that directly tie with some of the areas that were talking about.

WHAT in the therapy field would be called **cognitive distortions** - mind reading, negative filtering, catastrophizing, “what if’s”, “shoulds” etc...

- **EFFECT** - anxiety, anger, frustration, even depression.
- **Example** - Most anxiety comes from trying to live in the future or the past, instead of living in the moment.
- **Matthew 6:34** “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” **KJV**
- **Matthew 6:34** “Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.”

## **2. What is the church’s role in supporting mental health in the church?**

The church must be a place of love and support for all, including those struggling with mental health issues.

*Dr. Cloud - “Rarely do isolated people feel as if God loves them. People who feel unloved in their human relationships feel unloved by God. Since one of the ways God loves us is through his body or believers, those who are cut off from that body can’t feel his love. Isolated people usually do not have a lot of warm, loving experiences of any kind to draw on.”*

## **3. What are some ways church leadership can foster mental health in the church? In their community?**

Outside of clinical and physiological considerations, one of the biggest threats to mental health is isolation — something that society has had plenty of in the last few years thanks to COVID-19. Isolation can lead to all sorts of ill mental effects, including anxiety and depression.

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The church can foster mental health simply by being the church —by being a group of people living in real community and seeking to grow connections within their broader geographical community.

Dr. Cloud on the need for community: *“We really do need relationship, and we cannot live very well without it. We have already seen what happens when it’s absent. Remember what God said in the Garden of Eden: “It is not good for man to be alone.”*

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**Proverbs 12:25** identifies as a solution to anxiety: “Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.”

- A kind word — from someone in a person’s life and community — is one antidote to anxiety.

## **Philippians 4:6-9**

**6 Be careful for nothing (... do not fret or have any anxiety about anything... AMP);** but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

- **Supplication – to be supple, to be flexible, to be pliable, to be submissive.**

**7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

- **Phil 4:7 And God’s peace** [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all **understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**

AMP

**8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.**

- **Phil 4:8-9** I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious — **the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.** MESSAGE

**9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.** KJV

## **4. What are the biggest challenges facing church leadership when it comes to mental health in the church?**

One significant challenge is a **lack of resources** in this area.

A great need for church mental health programs that **serve both mind and spirit, addressing the spiritual and the clinical** — and identifying when a particular issue needs professional referral.

## **5. How can church leaders apply a faith-based approach to mental health issues?**

The Scriptures do have plenty to say about our emotions and feelings, and they provide divinely inspired guidance for all sorts of issues — including mental health issues.

**Philippians 4:6-7**, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and repetition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

And beyond the Scriptures themselves, people need people, too...

**James 2:15-16** ‘Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?’

Church leaders, then, can apply a faith-based approach to mental health issues by reinforcing these truths: that people need the Scriptures and other people.

### **It’s also important to communicate the touch points within the church.**

- Do you have **support groups**?
- Are you **talking about the support groups**?
- Have you **had someone give a testimony of how the support groups have been effective and helpful** for them?
- Do you have **specialized ministries like addiction ministries and homeless ministries**?
- Are you communicating to the church that those exist, how people get into those programs, how they work?
  - CELEBRATE RECOVERY
  - DIVORCE SUPPORT GROUP

## **6. What stops people in the church from seeking help with mental health issues?**

Often, it’s a **sense of self-sufficiency**.

Dr. Cloud:

“Troubled times, sickness, and other struggles require answers and support outside of ourselves. **We are not intended to go it alone**, and we will ultimately fail if we do not reach out. We were made to take in and use grace, love, and truth from two external sources: God and other people... The Bible teaches that we need both the divine and the human, both God and community.”

## **7. How can a pastor or church leader teach about mental health if they’re struggling with it?**

A sermon series on mental health issues or on particular biblical characters that struggled with mental health.

Self awareness and our personal biases, or frustration. Frustration can be

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misplaced or wrongly projected onto those we minister to.

## Luke 6:36-42

36 Therefore **be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.**

37 "**Judge not, and you shall not be judged.** Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

38 **Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."**

39 And He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?"

40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

41 And **why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye?**

42 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, **let me remove the speck that is in your eye,**' **when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye?**

Hypocrite! **First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck** that is in your brother's eye. NKJV

Healthy self-love - loving your neighbor as yourself. Without self-care, how can we be ready and/or able to help somebody else?

- physical and spiritual
- Also, mental and emotional health.

God wants to heal, what shame has tried to hide!

Pastors struggling with mental health also must get help themselves.

- CAC
- Daystar Counseling
- AMP

## How can we seek mental health and other practical applications...

Ways to maintain positive mental health include:

- Getting professional help if you need it
- Connecting with others
- Staying positive
- Getting physically active
- Helping others
- Getting enough sleep
- Developing coping skills

## 8. What does the Bible say about mental health?

**Psalm 34:18** "The Lord is **close to the brokenhearted** and **saves those who are crushed** in spirit."

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**Ephesians 3:17-19** “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

**Proverbs 12 25** “Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.”

**Proverbs 16:24** “Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

**Philippians 4:6-7** “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and repetition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

**1 Peter 5:7** “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

## **9. When do you know it’s time to refer a church member to a professional?**

In any situation where the church member appears to be a danger to themselves or others, referral to the appropriate party or authority is critical. State laws vary, so be sure to follow them as you err on the side of caution.

**Matthew Stanford:** We think of a mental-health-equipped church as one that can or does perform the “Four R’s.”

1. They **RECOGNIZE** when an individual is struggling with a mental health care problem.
2. They are able to make a professional **REFERRAL** and connect the individual to a mental health care provider.
3. Trained to **RELATE** to individuals with mental health problems and/or their families in a compassionate and grace-filled way.
4. **RESTORATIVE** programs that can meet the special needs and problems of individuals and families struggling with mental health problems.

## **10. How do I refer a church member to a mental health professional?**

Be sure to **check with the church member about health insurance coverage**, which may dictate or limit which counselors would be covered.

Churches would benefit from creating a list of vetted counselors and other mental health professionals. Feel free to contact these professionals (in a non-crisis moment) to ask about methods and relation to faith communities.

**Resources** – Prepare enrich (trained facilitators), Setting boundaries – Dr. Henry Cloud book, AMP, Daystar ministries, CAC.

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