

Equipping the Local Church to Support Mental Health

Presented By:

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Mental Health Stigmas

- When you hear the phrase “Mental health”, what are the first things that come to mind?
- Stigmas are perpetuated by misinformation. (Hosea 4:6)
- The more we know about mental health, the better our communities, congregations and families will be.
- “Mental health is for everyone.”
 - We should all be concerned about our mental health just as we are concerned about our physical and spiritual health.

Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

- **Mental health:** satisfactory adjustment to the ordinary demands of life, such as stress. In summary, mental wellbeing as defined by 2 Timothy 1:7.
 - Mental health deals with the care and maintenance of the human soul. (3 John 2:1, Mark 8:37)
- **Mental illness:** a brain disease that impacts your ability to adjust to or handle the ordinary demands of life. It is a disorder that impairs thinking and behavior.

The World Health Organization

Health is defined as, “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

The Mental Health Continuum



The Mental Health Continuum



The Mental Health Continuum (continued)



Soul Healing Theory

“Not taking care of your mental health is an open door to mental illness.”

Mental Health in the End Times

- We are in a time where mental health is being challenged in a way that it never has before.
 - “Pray for the mental health of the Saints!”
- Jesus’ words: Luke 21:26
 - This is the psychological pressure of the end times.
 - It will impact the human heart.
 - The enemy is after your mental health, and the mental health of your congregation!

”Men’s hearts will fail them because of fear...”

- 'Fail' means, to cause to faint; to be discouraged or disheartened.
- What is the heart?
 - The center and core of who we are.
 - The source through which blood and oxygen flow to the rest of the body.
 - Heart and soul are interchangeable in Hebrew (Proverbs 4:23)
- In psychology, the heart is not just a bodily organ, but it is the seat of thought and emotion
- As it relates to the thoughts of our heart, Scientists now believe that the heart has its own brain. It's called the “heart-brain”.
 - The heart's brain is an intricate network of several types of 40,000 neurons, neurotransmitters, proteins and support cells similar to those found in the brain. (Proverbs 23:7)

First Responders

- The way we think, perceive and what we feel is under attack; the thinking and nervous system of the brain will be under attack in the last days because of fear.
- This is the mental health crisis that the church must be on the frontline of and ready to respond to as first responders.
- So how do we support mental health in the church? The answer goes beyond prayer...

Four Equipping Strategies

- Educate yourself as a leader.
 - Formal and informal education.
- Change the language.
 - No more calling people “crazy” from the pulpit...
- Community partnerships.
 - “When in doubt, refer out.”
- Take care of your own mental health.
 - As you actively take care of your mental health, you are in a better position to help others who are struggling with their mental health.

Recovering & Healing from Church Hurt

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What is church hurt?

- Church should be a safe place. What happens when it is not?
- This is where the term “church hurt” comes from.
- “Church Hurt is a newer term referencing the pain, sadness, emotional scarring, or abuse experienced in a church context. Church Hurt can be inflicted, intentionally or unintentionally, by laity or religious leaders.” (Source: TheosU.ca)
- Church hurt is a real thing.
 - Since the phrase “church hurt” usually gets a bad wrap, I want to rephrase this phenomenon if I can and call it “church trauma”.

What is trauma?

- Trauma is a deeply disturbing and distressing experience.
- Deeper than the experience itself, it is the person's physical and psychological response to the distressing experience.
 - “Trauma is in the eye of the beholder.” ~JPS
- The Greek word trauma means “wound”.
- You can be wounded by anyone, anywhere; even in church.
 - Zechariah 13:6
 - Psalm 41:9

Take Responsibility

- We must take responsibility as an institution when someone is wounded and not ignore them.
- We can't ignore it when people are wounded in the house.
- In Luke 17:1, Jesus warned us that offenses would come.
 - Church hurt/trauma is usually rooted in some kind of offense.
 - That makes church hurt highly subjective.
 - As long as we live and interact with people, there is always the opportunity to be offended.
- What are your ministry's protocols when someone expresses that they have been hurt? I recommend using a [grievance form](#) that will open an "investigation" into their concerns. This is standard practice for most organizations. (Luke 16:8)

How to Recover from Church Hurt

- **Strengthen your relationship with God.**
 - Psalm 62:5
- **Talk it out.**
 - Proverbs 11:14
- **Forgive.** (a decision and a process)
 - Matthew 18:22

Wounds do heal but it takes time and intentional effort!

How to Handle A Hurting Soul

- Handle with care!
 - 1 Thess. 5:14
- Be spiritual about it.
 - Galatians 6:1
- Hear them out.
 - When you posture yourself to hear people out, it creates that psychologically safe environment. You can create that type of environment that is trauma-informed.

A Trauma-Informed Church

- When you're trauma-informed as a church, a school, an organization, etc., you go into every situation with the assumption that everyone you come in contact with has experienced some type of trauma.
- With the numbers as high as 70% of people will experience a traumatic event in their lifetime, and 50% of women and 60% of men who will develop PTSD because of that traumatic event, you can safely make that assumption.
- We must “preach like there is a hurting person on every row!” ~JPS
- Only when are trauma informed will there even be a desire to create psychologically safe environments.

Souls

- In Acts 2, God did not add “spirits” to the church; he added “souls”.
- This means everyone had their own mind, will, emotions, personality and trauma history. It is the job of the pastor to bring all of these souls together to go in the direction of the vision.
- Note: Where there is trauma, there are triggers. Many in our congregations are triggered.
 - Triggers reveal what need to be healed.

Signs of A Triggered Soul

- Souls who are triggered do the following:
 - Act out.
 - React emotionally. (outbursts)
 - Shut down.
 - Isolate.
 - Run.
 - Cut people off.
 - Try to control others.
 - Blame/injure people who did not wound them.

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