

Christianity and Mental Health

Foochow Methodist Church
Camp 2026

Date: 13 Jun 2026





Hello, I'm Bonnibel.

I'm a registered psychologist with the Singapore Psychological Society.

I love children and I work with other professionals to support children with developmental delays & their families at KKH.

I'm passionate about mental health awareness, as well as inclusive practices.

|

Table of contents

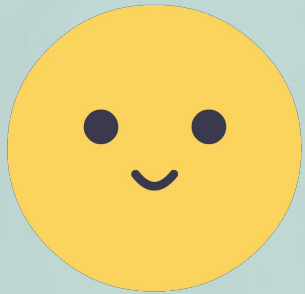
01 Mental Health
Concerns and
their impact

02 God's Kingdom

03 What can we
do as a
Church?

04 Putting it together
through a Support
Framework

How are you today?



A Quick Check-in~!





What is Mental Health?





Definition of Mental

Health

Is more than the
absence of a mental
disorder

Emotional
Well-being

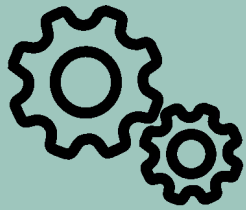
Psychological
Well-being

Social
Well-being



MENTAL HEALTH

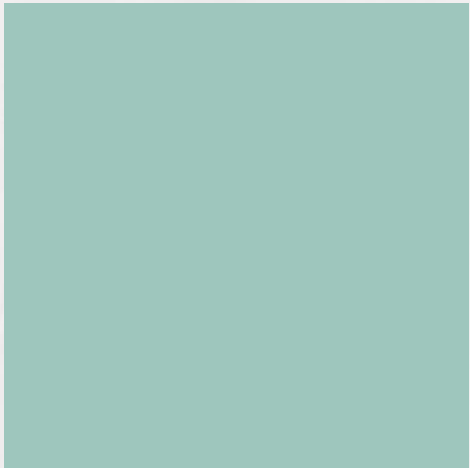
affects how we...



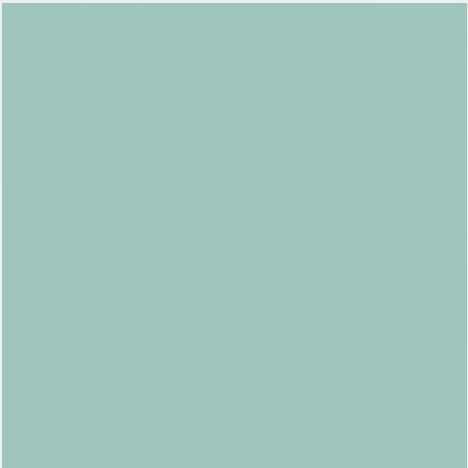
THINK

FEE

ACT



handle
stress



relate
with others

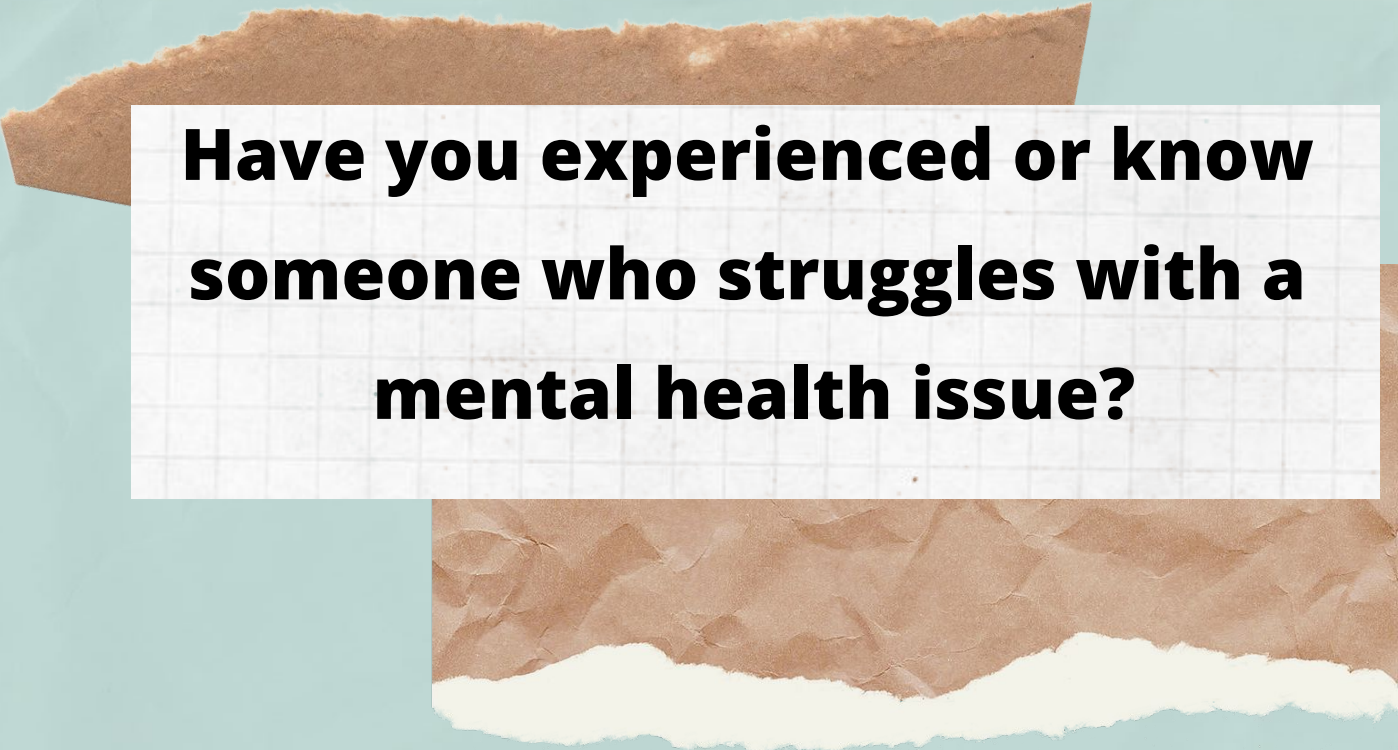


make healthy
choices



**Types of Mental
Health Concerns**





**Have you experienced or know
someone who struggles with a
mental health issue?**

Let's do a Poll!

HEADLINES!

Pandemic's impact on mental health under the spotlight

Task force makes three recommendations to tackle issues like financial stress, work anxiety and loneliness

More than half of the young people polled by the National Youth Council in the second half of last year said mental well-being was a challenge for them, with some citing anxiety over the future, stress over finances, and worries about academic or work performance.

The answers reflect some of the ways in which the pandemic has impacted the mental health of young people.



Mental health awareness, not dismissing concerns the first steps in helping loved ones with suicidal thoughts


File photo of a man sitting in a bedroom in the dark. (Photo: iStock)

SINGAPORE: Awareness of the warning signs and not dismissing concerns are the first steps in helping someone who might have suicidal thoughts, experts have told CNA.

Michael Yong
19 SEP 2023 06:00AM
Updated 19 Sep 2023 06:00AM


Related Topics
Mental Health | Health

What teens wish their parents knew about their mental health struggles



MOE, MSF 'very concerned' about spike in youth suicides; experts say more support and awareness necessary


Teenagers may hesitate to talk to their parents about their mental health challenges because of the stigma attached with it, experts say.



Ang Hwee Nin
08 Aug 2019 09:24AM
Updated 08 Aug 2023 02:28PM

SINGAPORE: The Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) are "very concerned" about a spike in youth suicides, experts say more support and awareness is necessary.

Teen accused of murder at River Valley High School to be remanded further, psychiatric evaluation complete



Ahmad Zaki Abdulla
24 Aug 2023 05:45PM
Updated 24 Aug 2023 05:50PM

SINGAPORE: The psychiatric evaluation for the teenager accused of murdering a classmate at River Valley High School on July 20, 2023, is complete.



Globally...

1 in 7 People

EXPERIENCE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS.



How does Singapore fare?

1 in 7 People

HAD EXPERIENCED MENTAL DISORDER IN THEIR
LIFETIME.

13.9%

LIFETIME PREVALENCE

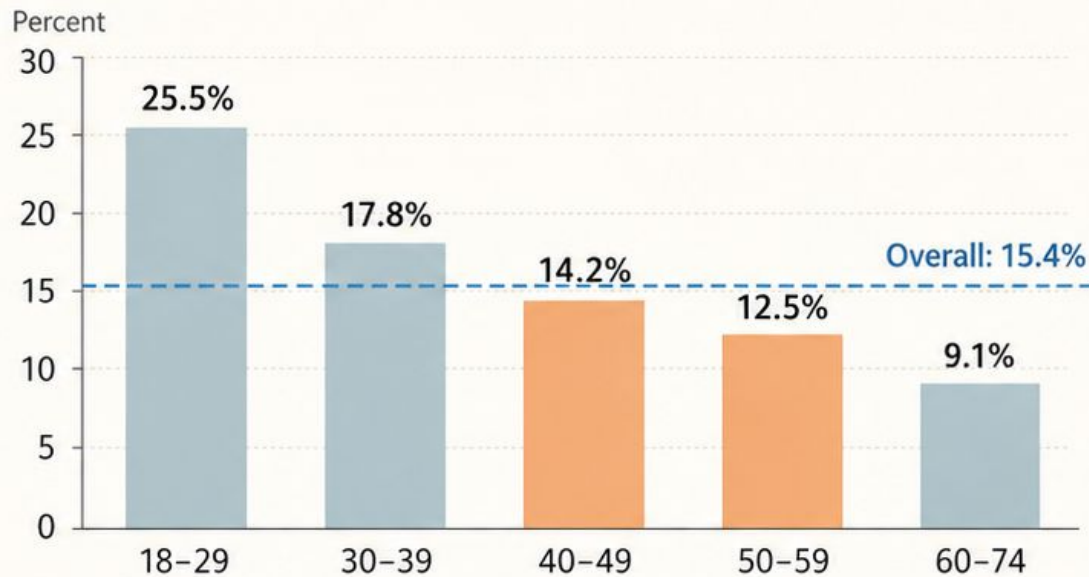
Singapore Mental Health Study (2016)

Depression & Anxiety in Middle Age

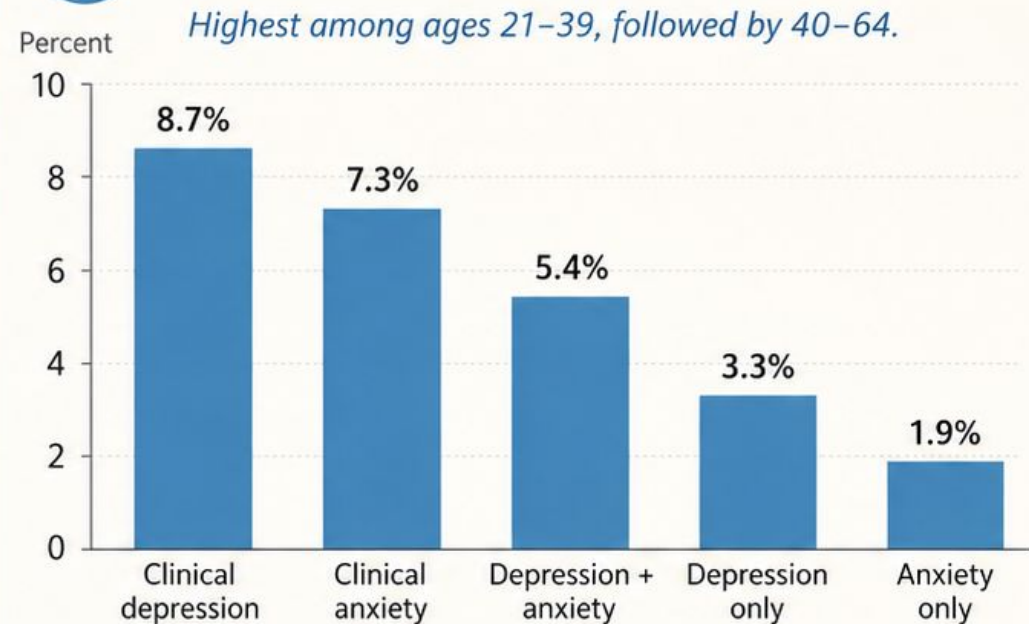
Singapore snapshot



Poor mental health by age group (NPHS 2024)



Primary care screening study



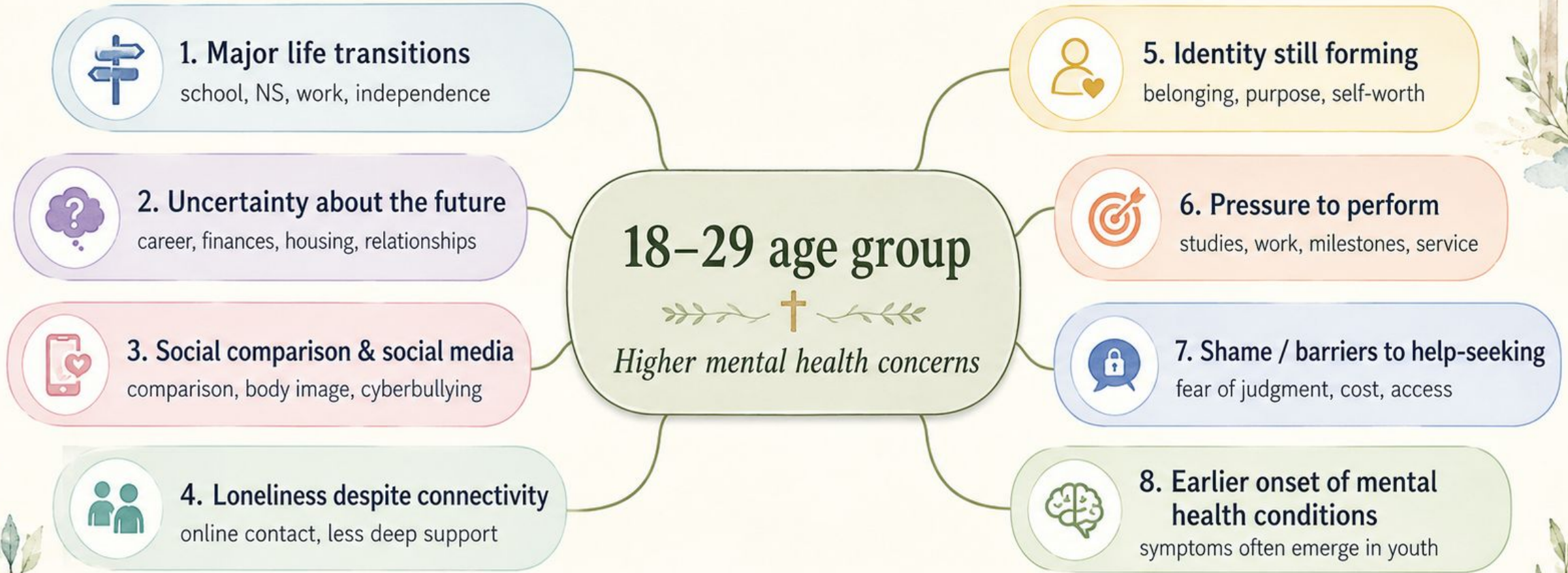
Middle-aged adults show lower rates than younger adults, but mental health struggles remain common.



Update: The National Population Health Survey reported 15.0% poor mental health in 2023, down from 17.0% in 2022, while willingness to seek professional help rose to 62.8%.

- National Population Health Survey 2023

Why are mental health concerns higher in ages 18–29?



Young adulthood is a high-transition season that can heighten stress, comparison, uncertainty, and vulnerability.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN SINGAPORE ADULTS

MD

affects 1 in 16 people

D



Alcohol

affects 1 in 24 people

Abuse



OCD

affects 1 in 28 people



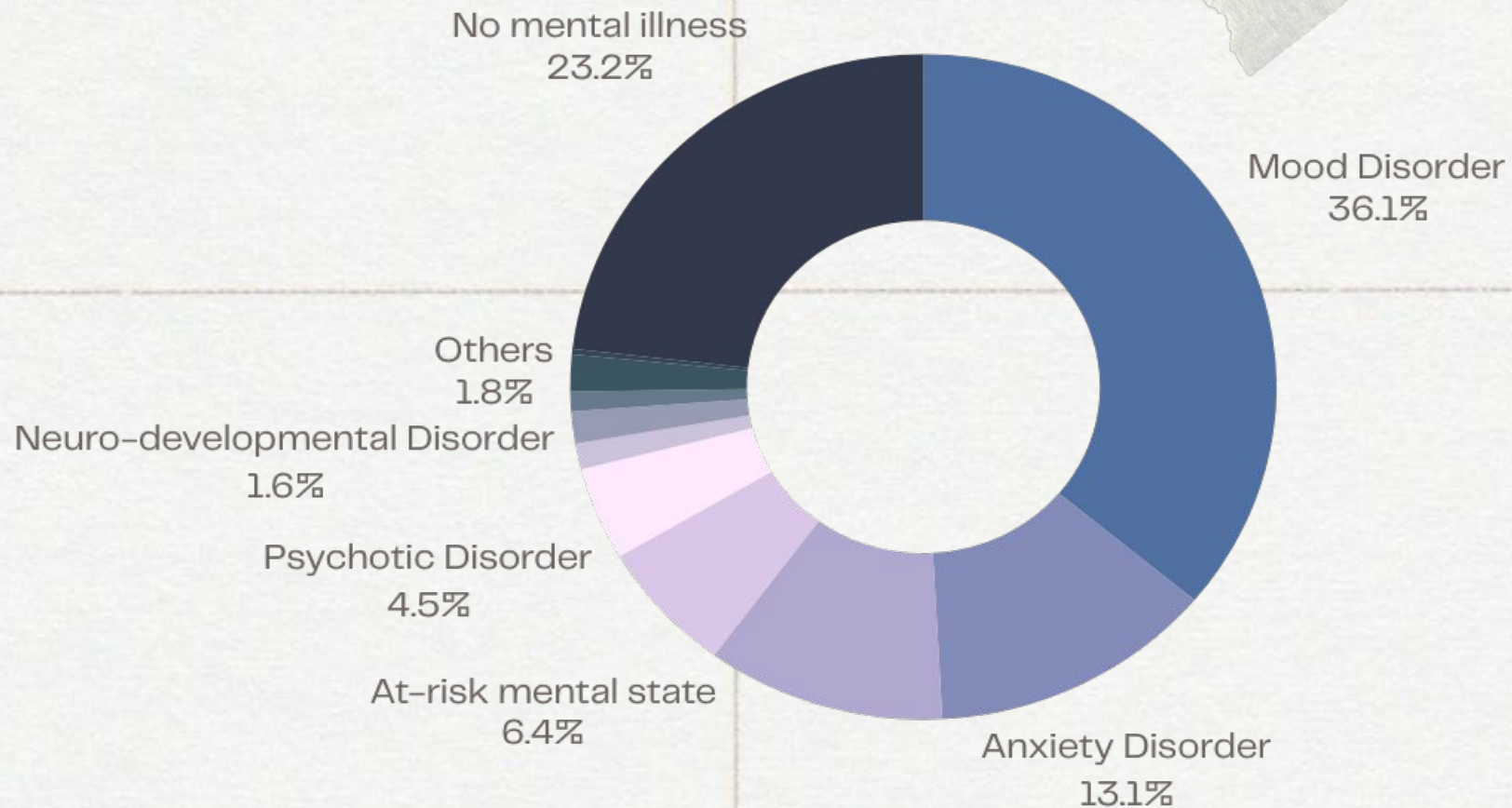
Top 3 Conditions

in a lifetime

- Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)
- Alcohol Abuse
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Singapore Mental Health Study (2016)

COMMON MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS AFFECTING YOUNG PEOPLE



Breakdown of CHAT (Community Health Assessment Team) assessment impressions from
Apr 2009 to March 2019

Understanding Diagnoses

Medical Diagnoses

- Provides an explanation
- Help us to understand the cause when a medical label is given

Example:

- Chicken Pox = an infection caused by virus
- Diabetes = reduced insulin production from pancreas

Psychiatric Diagnoses

- Use agreed diagnostic criteria based on patterns of symptoms, duration, distress, and impairment. They are not usually based on a single biological test. (Eg. Diagnostic Statistical Manual)
- Gives a description but does not give an explanation of the cause



Major Depressive

Disorder

Persistent low mood/ loss of
interest




Bipolar Disorder

involves episodes of mania or
hypomania



Mood Disorders



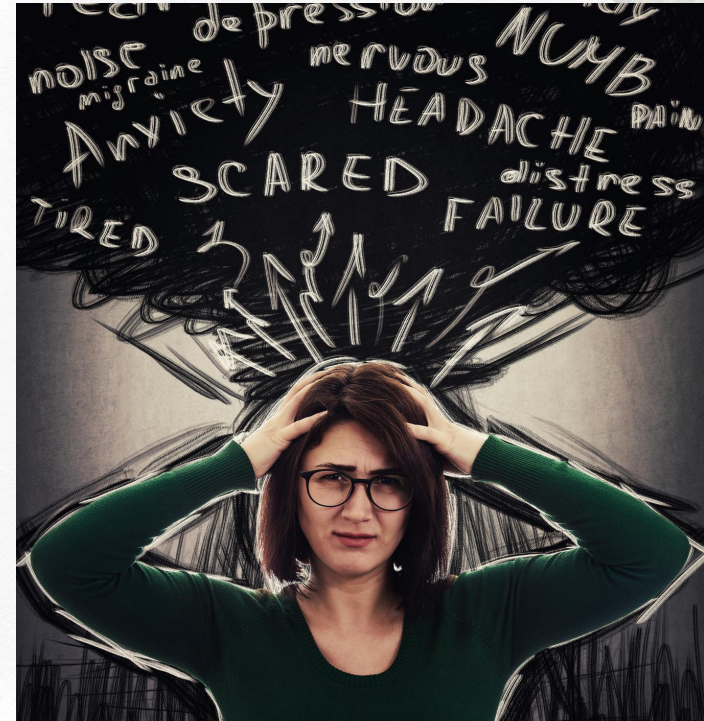
Generalised Anxiety Disorder

Persistent and excessive anxiety and worry about activities or events



Panic Disorder

Repeated episodes of sudden feelings or intense anxiety and fear that peaks within minutes



Anxiety Disorders

Risk Factors that Contribute to Poor Mental Health

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

- Genetic (i.e. family history of mental illness)
- Temperamental vulnerabilities/ emotional regulation vulnerabilities
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Experiences of losses

FAMILY FACTORS

- Divorce
- Inconsistent care-giving in family
- Poor family discipline
- Death of family member

SCHOOL/ WORK FACTORS

- Pressure from exams/ school/ work demands
- Poor academic/ work performances
- Problems with classmates/ colleagues (e.g. bullying)
- Inadequate/ inappropriate provision of education/ support

COMMUNITY FACTORS

- Substance abuse
- Poverty
- Crime/ Violence
- Lack of sense of belonging
- Increased social media use

Consider “Rachel”

- Rachel is a woman in her 20s who has attended church regularly since young and continues to serve quietly in small ways, such as helping with logistics and participating in cell group when she has the emotional capacity.
- She is the eldest daughter in an intact family, but grew up with parents who were often critical, emotionally absent, and difficult to please. Although her basic needs were met, Rachel rarely felt deeply affirmed or understood. As an average student, she often compared herself with higher-achieving peers and developed a strong sense that she had to work hard to be accepted. In church, she values belonging and faith, but sometimes feels like she does not quite fit in, especially when others appear joyful, confident, or spiritually “stronger.”
- Relationally, she may be warm and helpful when she feels safe, but guarded when she senses criticism or exclusion. She may over-apologise, over-explain, or try hard to be useful so that others will not reject her. At other times, she may withdraw suddenly, cancel plans, reply late, or stop attending cell group, especially when she feels overwhelmed or ashamed. She may interpret neutral comments as rejection, compare herself with others, feel hurt when not included, or struggle to believe reassurance even when people care about her.

Reflection Questions:

1. When Rachel withdraws, replies late, or stops attending cell group, what might church members assume about her? What else might be going on beneath the surface?
2. As church members, who intend to reach out to her, what are some concerns you might have about how to relate to her?



Consider “Jack”

- Jack struggles with his past. His life has been chaotic. He grew up in a single parent household and had been abused by his father.
- In his teenage years, he got acquainted with a gang who introduced him to drugs.
- He was caught for drug abuse and had been incarcerated for reformation and to receive rehabilitation. During his time in prison, he got to know Christ through a nonprofit Christian organization that does outreach for offenders.
- After he had been released from prison, he struggles to go to a church and usually does not participate in community events. He has difficulties keeping his employment. He constantly feels unworthy and that he does not fit in.
- When he feels depressed, he falls back on drugs and alcohol which continues to feed into his addiction on them.

Reflection Questions:

1. What are some of the challenges that Jack face in integrating back into the society and church?
2. What are valid safety or boundary concerns when supporting Jack, and how can the church respond with both compassion and wisdom rather than fear or avoidance?



**A Little Gentle
Reminder...**





God's Kingdom





A Family
Loved, adopted,
and cared for.



The Kingdom of God



A Body
United in Christ,
many parts, one purpose.



A Flock
Shepherded by Christ,
secure and known.

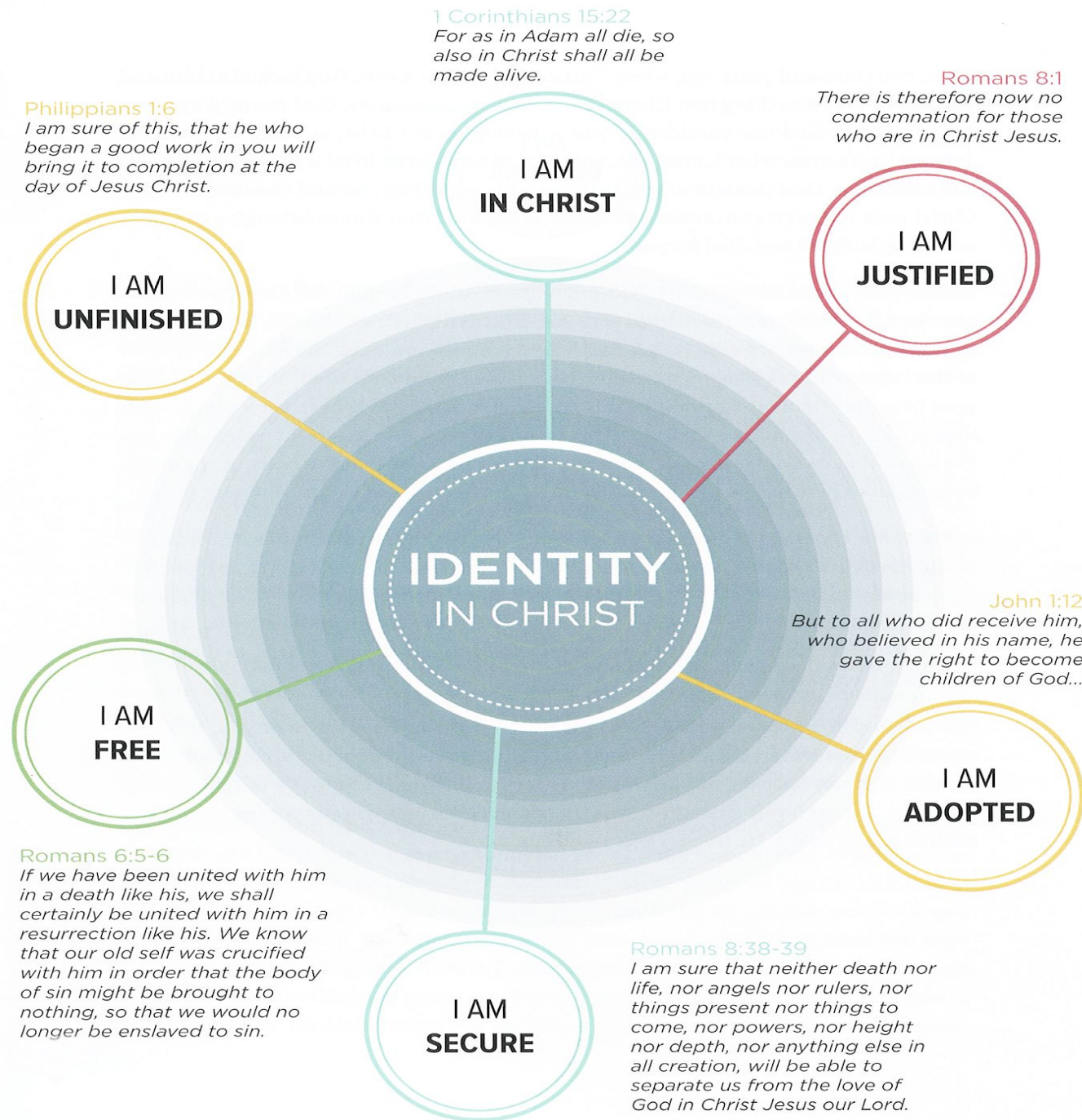
*God's reign forming a people
under Christ.*



A Fellowship
Sharing life together in
grace and truth.



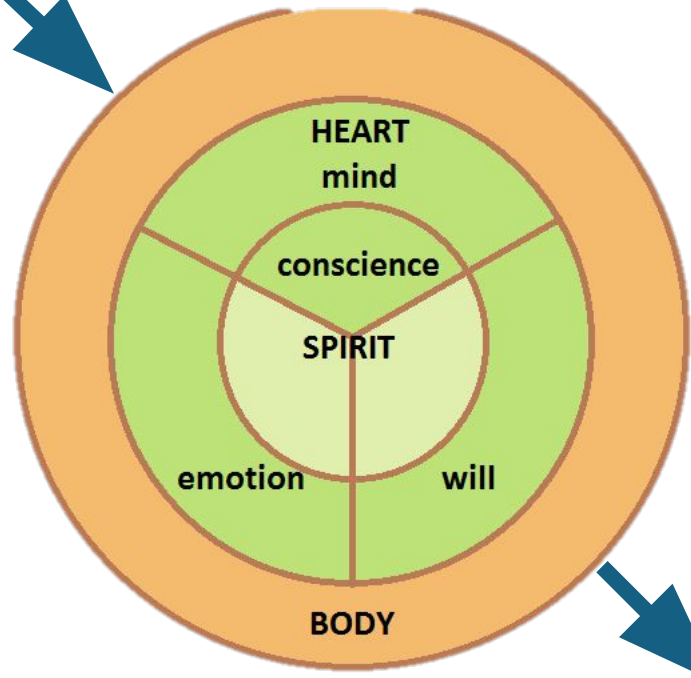
A Community
Belonging, serving,
and reaching together.



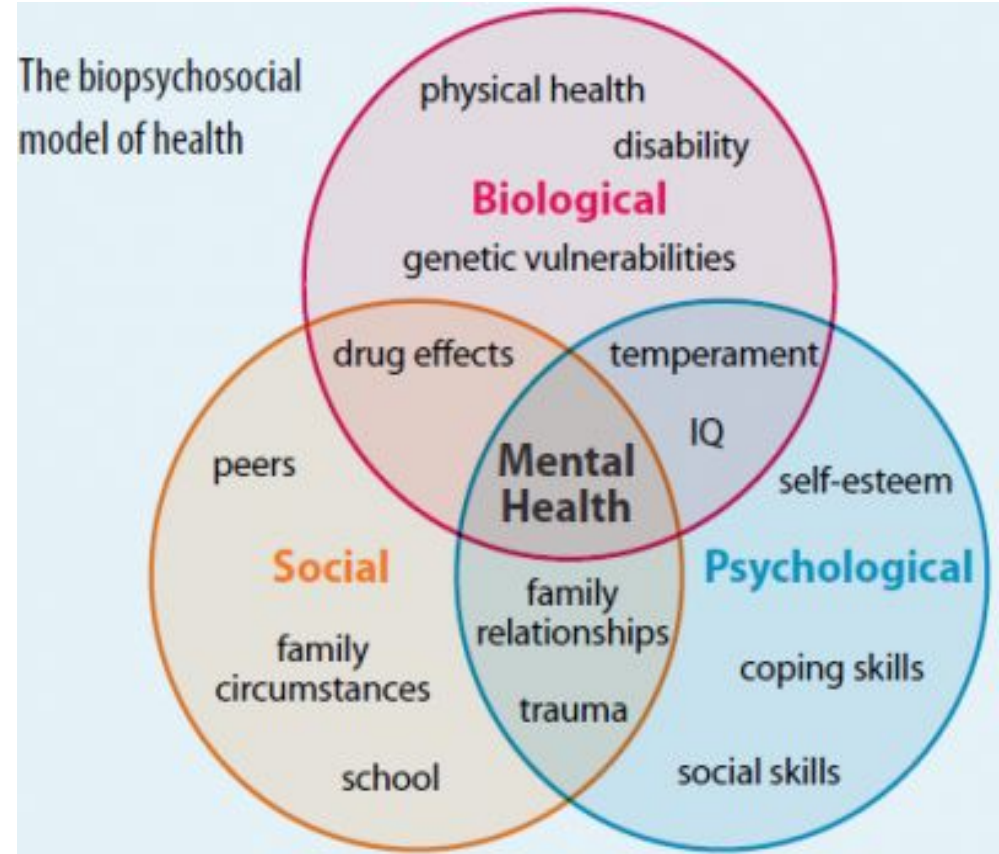
Our Identity in Christ

Biblical understanding of a human being VERSUS the Biopsychosocial Model that explains Mental Health

Environmental circumstances/
cultural beliefs



Decisions



Barriers and Stigmas:

What are our personal beliefs about persons with mental health concerns?

Barriers and Stigmas:

How does having a mental health concern impact the way a person sees himself?

Misconceptions about the Christian faith

- Faith protects a person from becoming mentally ill or any form of suffering.
- If you have mental illness or your family member is inflicted with a disability, your faith is immature
- If you are not healed, your faith must be weak.
- Your mental health concerns are purely a spiritual warfare.
- See: John 9: Jesus heals a man born blind



Spiritual realities may matter, but they do not cancel body, context, trauma, medical care, or wise support.

Recall the Characters in the Bible who faced hardships

- Jesus (Mark 5: 40; John 8: 55; 1 Peter 4:1)
 - Job
 - Naomi – who lost her two sons
 - Paul
 - Elijah who despaired during his reflection in his isolation and about the unfaithfulness of the community
- Verses:
- Scoffers - 2 Peter 3:3
 - Deceivers – 2 John 1: 7
 - Hardships –

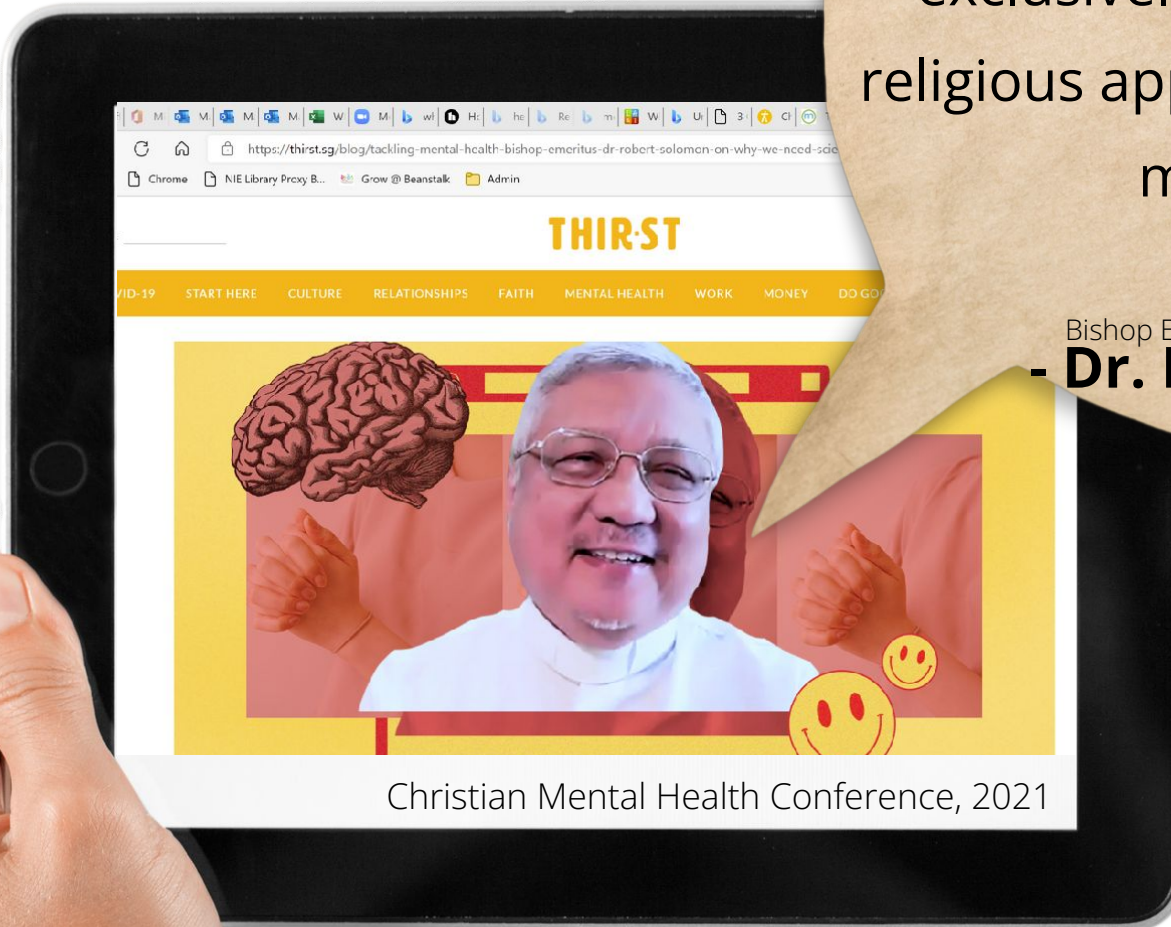


HEAR! HEAR!

"We need to guard against an exclusively clinical or exclusively religious approach when it comes to mental illness."

Bishop Emeritus (Methodist Church in SG)

- **Dr. Robert Solomon** -



Christian Mental Health Conference, 2021


Changing our perspectives about Mental Health Conditions and Disabilities

- Helps us to be a body of Christ
- Move towards another in love than in fear
- Increase our connection with each other



Is understanding the cause of someone's condition really that

- Looking at the story of Rachel or Jack
- Why are they depressed?
- Is it because of their body? Their circumstances or their heart?



It simply isn't easy to tease apart the interlocking strands apart and declare what is causing what



Quote:

- “An understanding of mental health and mental illness that seeks to do justice to the Bible’s understanding of people must make room for all these factors: our physical bodies, our cultural and personal circumstances and the activities of our hearts.”
- Recognising that beyond these 3 elements, there are broader spiritual realities at work:
 - There is a **Sovereign God**
 - There is the **Power of Evil**
 - We have the hope that **Christ has Overcome**



Reflection Questions:

1. Think of the time you have struggled. What do you think the cause might have been?
2. How does it help our mental health to know that we are both gloriously made and fallen?
3. As you consider friends with mental health problems or your own struggles, how might it help to be aware of the impact of circumstances and body and heart?



A Christian Worldview

- **Common Grace-**
 - God shows kindness to everyone through the way the world works
 - Although government, systems or psychotherapists may not believe in God, they can be part of how God shows his goodness
 - Therapies' approaches and principals to help understand human condition can be valuable
 - Yet we need to recognize that something containing truth doesn't mean it is comprehensively true
- **Worldview gets imported**
 - Self-esteem isn't a biblical concept; the Bible is concerned with whether what we do or don't do esteem God and God's perception of us
 - Solely anchoring ourselves or seeing ourselves using a particular framework from psycho-therapeutic approach may be limiting □ can be blindsided into believing that "it is all about me" (person-centred approach), or becoming very self-reliant
 - Biblically: though we are fearfully and wonderfully made, yet as fallen creation, we are also ensnared by sin

A Christian Worldview

3) Experience matters:

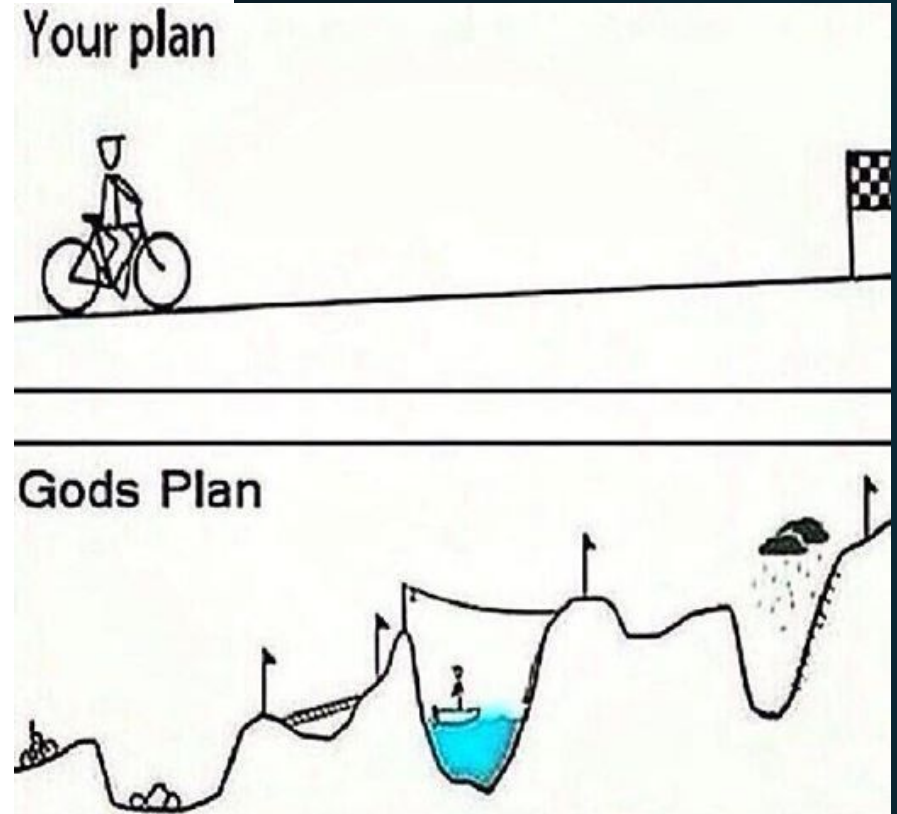
- Recognise that there is a place for the use of therapy for people in distress, yet it will be wiser and richer to have a godly Christian friend to help them reflect on the help they are getting
- Having Christian counsel to identify the connections between therapy and Christian beliefs and the gospel

4) Biblical Counselling:

Not too certain at this point if there is an availability of biblical counselling which provides evidence-based therapeutic models and integrates Christian theology with the application of Scriptural truth to support believers

What's God's plan for healing?

- What, as a church, can we do to help those who are suffering?
- What should we do to help those in our congregations who are finding life hard?





What can We do as a Church?





**ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER,
THEN, JUST AS CHRIST
ACCEPTED YOU, IN
ORDER TO BRING
PRAISE TO GOD.**

- ROMANS 15:7 -



Some suggestions

1. Help people feel welcomed by raising awareness of common struggles

2. Help people feel loved by relating in Christ-like ways

3. Help struggling persons remember their true identity



Help people be refined to be more like Jesus

Help people persevere by the means of provision of resources from the wider church or community



Some suggestions

1. Help people feel welcomed by raising awareness of common struggles

2. Help people feel loved by relating in Christ-like ways

3. Help struggling persons remember their true identity

Help people be refined to be more like Jesus

Help people persevere by the means of provision of resources from the wider church or community



1. Raising Awareness

Sermons and Bible studies:

- Beyond just informing us about God's character, biblical history or providing us with theological explanation, Sermons is a means of grace which God uses His word to speak into our lives in the power of His Spirit
- Bible studies can help people connect the riches of Scripture to the realities of this life. This can be conducted in contexts where people can speak openly about how hard some of these realities are.

1. Raising Awareness

DEMONIUM!

CALLING

ING

Dedicated Evenings for topical issues:

- Getting a specialist to talk about a topic
- Having someone from the congregation to share about lived experiences in that safe space for shared understanding
- Sharing resources for support

Books and Resources:

- Having a library of books for church members to borrow or browse through on certain topics

Testimonies

- Encourage persons who are experiencing struggles to share their testimonies of God's goodness in their lives



MENTAL HEALTH / 16 OCTOBER 2020

After a long battle with depression, I'm stepping into a new season of recovery

Words by STEPHANIE CHUAH
Illustrated by HIU LI YENG

—Matt 6: 25 - 34

•Do Not Worry

- ²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^[a]?”
- ²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Reflection Questions:

1. **What makes it hard for people in our church to speak honestly about anxiety, depression, addiction, grief, or burnout?**
2. **What would make it safer without turning every church member into a counsellor?**
3. What are some ways our church has shown support to those who struggle?





Some suggestions

1. Help people feel welcomed by raising awareness of common struggles

2. Help people feel loved by relating in Christ-like ways

3. Help struggling persons remember their true identity



Help people be refined to be more like Jesus

Help people persevere by the means of provision of resources from the wider church or community



2. A Call to Relate in Christ-like Ways

- Understanding that struggling with mental health issues can be an isolating experience
- A person facing such hardships can feel, look, behave differently or have difficulties with relating in appropriate ways
- **How can church members then relate with people who struggle in these areas wisely?**
 1. Recognise that it is not just a 1-person's job to support persons who struggle, it takes a community to build someone up relationally and spiritually
 2. Recognise boundaries of support, resources and limitations
 3. Check in with persons how they would like to be supported, **don't assume**
 4. Be consistent in your approach, yet don't over-promise; e.g., "I'm always here for you."

Reflection Questions:

1. What are we already doing that support persons with mental health issues?
2. What can be done better to support persons



Practical ways to relate to a person who struggles with Mental Health Concerns

- Provide biblical framework to address their past hurts
- Offer regular check-in or prayers
- Offer hospitality – i.e., eating meals together or opportunities to spend time in someone's home
- Practical help – transportation to appointments, house-cleaning
- Offer accountability in reading the Word or developing a spiritual discipline
- Offer Encouragement through verses or a listening ear
- Offer time to exercise with





Some suggestions

1. Help people feel welcomed by raising awareness of common struggles

2. Help people feel loved by relating in Christ-like ways

3. Help struggling persons remember their true identity



Help people be refined to be more like Jesus

Help people persevere by the means of provision of resources from the wider church or community



3,. Help Struggling Persons remember their true identity

- **Mental health concerns can distort one's self-image, how one see themselves;**
 - In the light of what has happened to them
 - What has spoken over them
 - The diagnosis given to them
- **Their perception of who God is can also be distorted:**
 - God is distant
 - God doesn't care
 - God is punishing
 - How do their views of God impact how they relate to God and participate in Christian communal life



3. Helping people remember their true identity

How do we answer questions such as these:

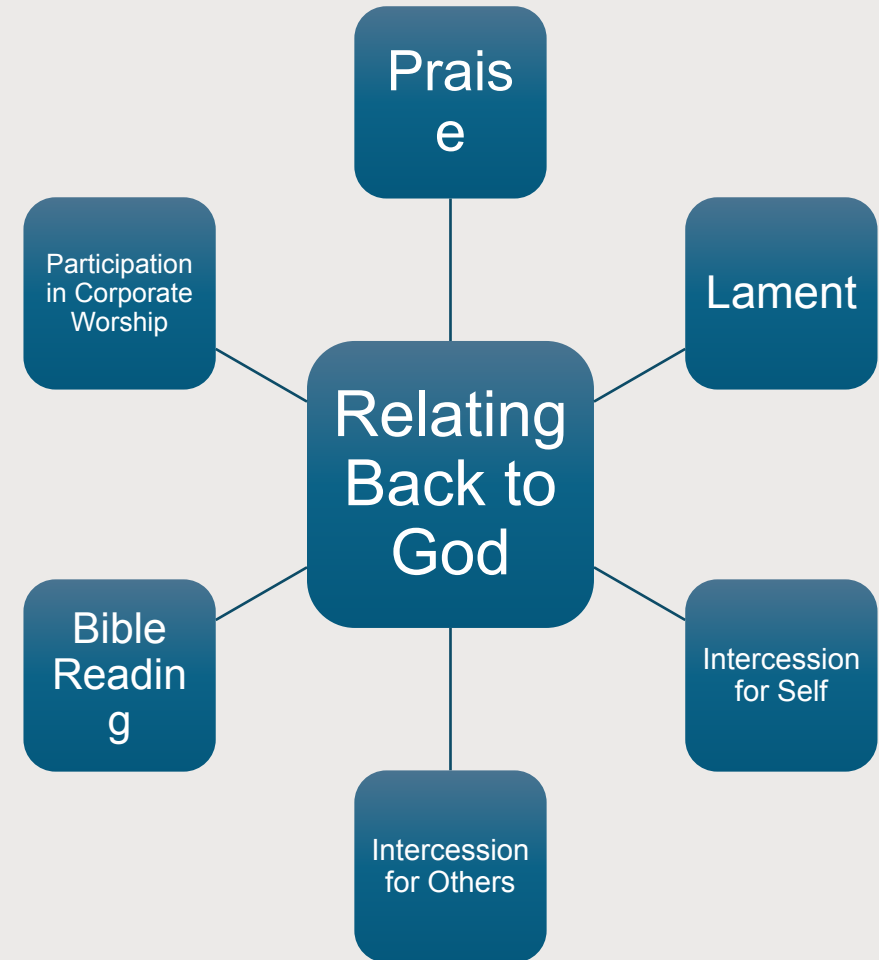
- Why is he allowing this suffering?
- Is He really good?
- Is there hope of healing in this life?
- Why won't He take away the pain?

[1 Peter 3:15-17 New International Version \(NIV\)](#)

[But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.](#)

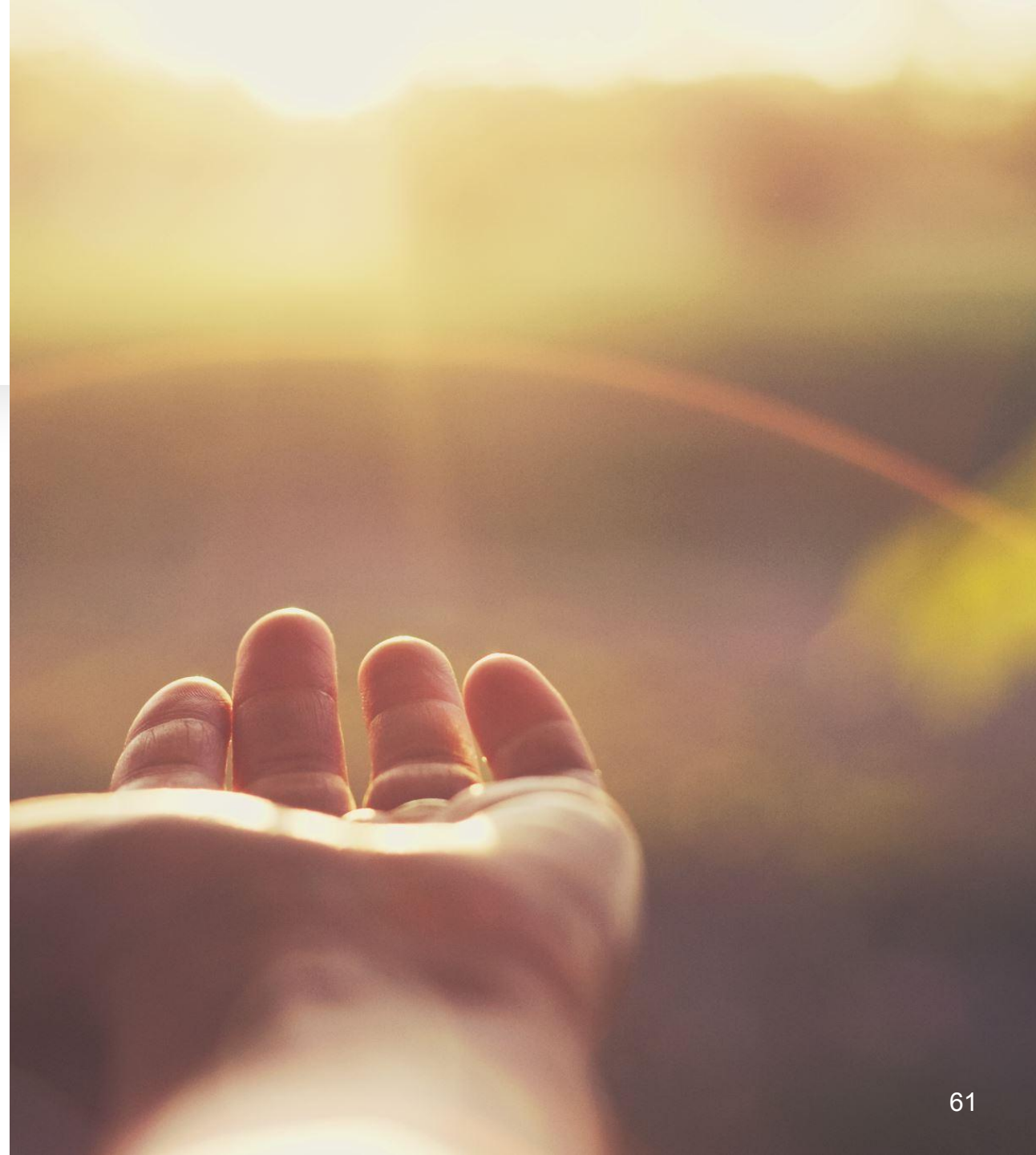


Encouraging persons to relate to the Lord



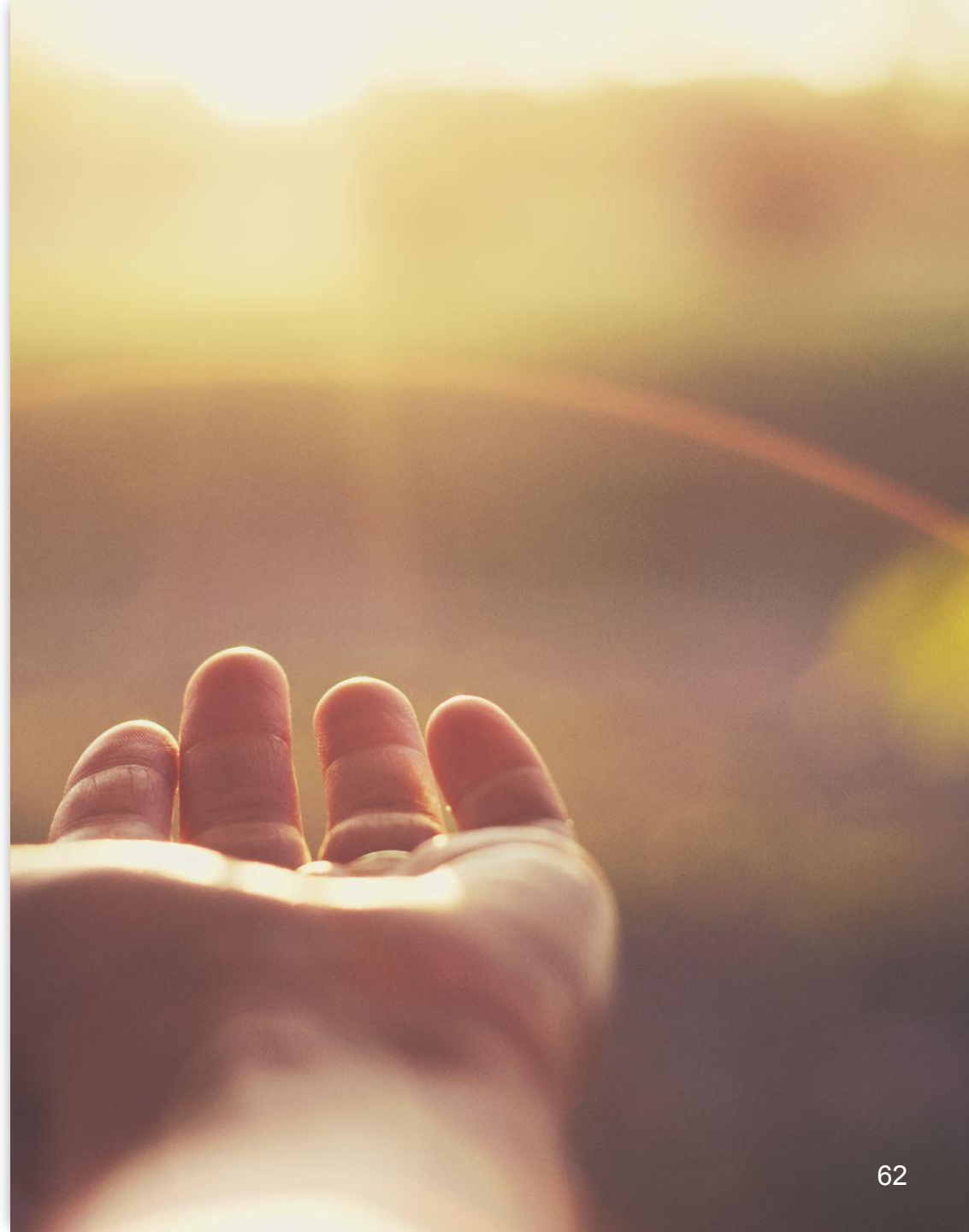
Example 1: Helping them remember who God is

- Help them see the goodness or greatness of God
- Help them know that they are **forgiven, secure and free:**
 - Use stories to speak into their lives
 - Show concrete examples on acts of love or kindness
 - Get them to reflect on simple, relatable biblical stories



Example 1: Helping them remember who God is

- Being trauma-informed to assess their readiness to receive certain biblical truth; meet them where they are
- Tips on assessing readiness:
 - How do they see God?
 - How did this view of God develop?
 - How much evidence do they have for this perspective?
 - What would make it safe for them to consider their views?
 - What foundations need to be in place before change ,can begin?
 - Are there realistic expectation of changes?



Example 2: Helping people remember who they are in Christ

- How do we hold the tension of these two biblical truths? [**Supportive challenge**]
- How do we explain to someone who struggles to understand this?

HUMANS ARE REBELS

IN CHRIST, WE ARE LAVISHED
WITH GRACE, LOVED, VALUED
AND CLEAN



Some suggestions

1. Help people feel welcomed by raising awareness of common struggles

2. Help people feel loved by relating in Christ-like ways

3. Help struggling persons remember their true identity



Help people be refined to be more like Jesus

Help people persevere by the means of provision of resources from the wider church or community



Tips

- Being realistic about the extent of changes that can a person who struggles can make, due to their limits
- Support their change in small steps
- Refining safely – people change when they know they are loved, yet have some boundaries of relating in place
- Refining wisely – identifying the areas that the church can support and the areas that can be supported by professionals
- Refining by normalizing the abnormal
- Refining imaginatively



Some suggestions

1. Help people feel welcomed by raising awareness of common struggles

2. Help people feel loved by relating in Christ-like ways

3. Help struggling persons remember their true identity



Help people be refined to be more like Jesus

Help people persevere by the means of provision of resources from the wider church or community



Providing Resources

- Practical help:
 - Offer to shop
 - Offer to cook
 - Offer to pay
 - Offer to clean
 - Offer to give a lift/ transportation
 - Offer to write
 - Offer companionship in exercising

Providing Resources

2. Providing spiritual or emotional support through
 - Offer a listening ear
 - Offer prayers
 - Offer support in giving caregivers respite care
 - Offer the chance to laugh and praise
 - Offer the chance to do life together



Putting It Altogether using a Supportive Framework



When should we be concerned?

A simple traffic-light guide for noticing mental health deterioration

Green

Ordinary stress

Tired, worried, or temporarily discouraged.

Still functioning.

Still connected to people, routines, and responsibilities.

Amber

Deterioration

Withdrawing from people.

Persistent low mood or anxiety, irritability, sleep/appetite changes, loss of interest.

Difficulty functioning, neglecting responsibilities, increased alcohol/drug use, panic attacks, hopeless comments.

Red

Urgent concern

Talking about wanting to die, self-harm, or feeling like a burden.

Giving things away, severe agitation, psychosis, intoxication with risk.

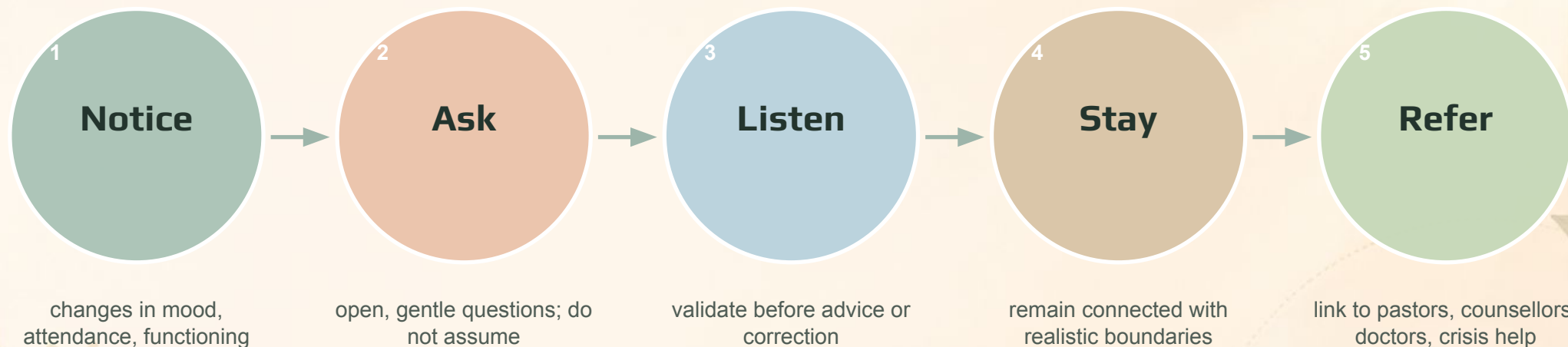
Domestic violence, abuse, or inability to stay safe.

Red signs require immediate help — do not manage safety risks alone.

A simple church care pathway

Notice, Ask, Listen, Stay, Refer

Not every church member needs to be a counsellor. But every church member can learn to notice distress, respond gently, and connect people to wise help.



Practice sentence: *"I noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. How have things really been for you?"*

Use this as a first response — not a full treatment plan.

Notice, Ask, Listen, Stay, Refer

Practise a gentle first response when someone may be struggling — not fixing, diagnosing, or rushing to advice.

Set-up: groups of three



Struggling
church
member

Supportive
church
member

Observer

The observer listens for warmth, assumptions, boundaries, and whether the helper rushes to advice.

Scenario A

Rachel

Rachel has missed cell group for three weeks. When you check in, she replies:

“Sorry, just tired. Don’t worry about me.”

Someone also heard she has been crying at work and feeling like she does not belong in church.

Practise:

Notice gently → Ask without assuming → Listen before advice → Stay connected with boundaries → Refer to wise help if needed

Notice, Ask, Listen, Stay, Refer

Practise a gentle first response when someone may be struggling — not fixing, diagnosing, or rushing to advice.

Set-up: groups of three



**Struggling
church
member**

**Supportive
church
member**

Observer

The observer listens for warmth, assumptions, boundaries, and whether the helper rushes to advice.

Scenario B

Jack

Jack has stopped attending service regularly. When you check in, he says:

“Church people won’t understand people like me.”

You also notice he has been drinking again and missing work.

Practise:

Notice gently → Ask without assuming → Listen before advice → Stay connected with boundaries → Refer to wise help if needed

Notice, Ask, Listen, Stay, Refer

Practise a gentle first response when someone may be struggling — not fixing, diagnosing, or rushing to advice.

Task for the supportive church member: Practise a 5-minute conversation using this structure:

Notice gently: “I noticed you haven’t been around as much, and I just wanted to check in.”

Ask, don’t assume: “How have things really been for you?”

Listen and validate: “That sounds very heavy. I’m sorry you’ve been carrying that.”

Stay connected with boundaries: “I can check in with you this week, and we can also think who else should walk with you.”

Refer wisely: “Would you be open to speaking with a counsellor/doctor/pastor? I can help you take the next step.”

Observer checklist: Did the person avoid preaching too quickly? Did they validate before advising? Did they avoid over-promising? Did they ask about safety if there were red flags? Did they include practical and spiritual support?

Debrief Questions

- What felt natural?
- What felt awkward?
- What did we tend to rush into?
- What is one sentence we can use in real life?

Where to Get Help

Hotlines

- IMH Helpline:
6389 2222
- Help123 Cyber Wellness:
1800 612 3123
- TOUCHline
1800 377 2252
- SOS – 1767 or
WhatsApp: 9151 1767

Websites

- MINDLINE.SG
- Feiyue Online Counselling
eC2.SG
- [Community Health
Assessment Team \(CHAT\)](#)

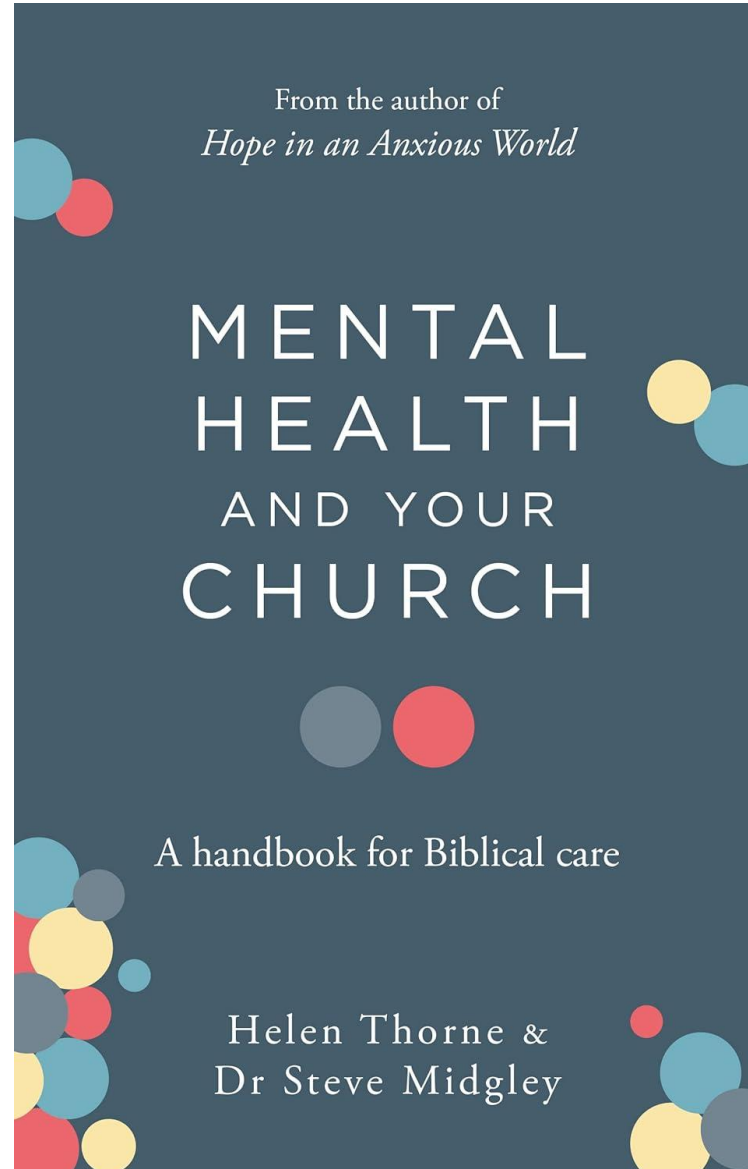
Christian-based Support

- [Psaltcare](#)

INSTAGRAM

- [@kayatoastforth
esoul.sg](#)
- [@itallstartshear.
sg](#)

Resource



Final Takeaway

A mentally healthy church

is not one where everyone is fine.

It is one where suffering people are not shamed, hidden, rushed, or handled alone —

but are patiently helped to keep following Jesus with wise support.

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...” Romans 15:7

Thank you ... 