

How do I help someone who has mental health issues?

Mental health affects people in many different ways. Some of the reasons someone could be suffering include a range of life events, such as if they are suffering from a serious illness, loss of a loved one, trauma, long-term unemployment, difficult relationships, loneliness, life stresses, drug, and alcohol problems. These are just some of the triggers. Or they may suffer from a chemical imbalance in their brain, or they could have an increased risk of depression or other mental health issues due to having a family history of mental health issues.

There is a large stigma attached to mental health, which is why some do not seek help, or tell someone about their feelings and emotions. People with mental health illnesses can hide how they are feeling, so we need to look out for signs of any changes and check in on each other regularly.



What does mental health look like?

Mental health can affect how an individual feels about themselves, they may have difficulties with managing their day to day, or it could be a feeling of numbness or emptiness and can lead to them avoiding situations that make them feel anxious, and this can impact their everyday activities and relationships. When someone suffers with mental health it can affect how they feel and how they function, like their emotions, relationships with others, personal control, purpose in life, and life satisfaction.

As brethren and sisters, we must remember and care for are those who:

- Are not coping or unwell
- Avoiding ecclesial activities.
- Suffer from anxiety, depression or have difficulties handling stress and emotions.
- Have lost a loved one.
- Are struggling financially or had a tough year.
- Have challenging family relationships or don't feel safe at home.

Signs and symptoms of mental health disorders

Mental health symptoms can be:

Feelings	Thoughts	Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sad, teary, anxious • Irritable, guilty • Hopeless • Self-doubt • Exhaustion • Loneliness or isolation • Worried or afraid • Tense or on edge • Nervous or scared. • Overwhelmed • Agitated or angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life is too hard. • I can't cope. • I can't focus. • I am useless or no good. • Everything is wrong. • There is no way out of this. • It's not going to get better. • I've got nothing to look forward to • Obsessive thinking or intrusive thoughts • Suicide, planning or thinking about ways to die 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less motivation and energy • Unable to find enjoyment in things. • Lack of sleep • Changes in appetite. • Lack of concentration and memory problems • Changes in personality • Withdrawal from family and friends • Struggle with home duties, hygiene, or appearance • Relying on drugs and alcohol • Being reckless, aggressive, or giving away their possessions.

Mental health can also affect their relationship and show as physical symptoms:

Relationships	Physical symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling like they don't belong or won't be accepted. • They are a burden to other people. • Feeling like a failure or a disappointment. • Finding it hard to talk to people, or fighting with others, and social withdrawal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling tired, sick, and run down. • Headaches, muscle and stomach pains, or a churning gut. • Loss or change of appetite, which can result in weight changes. • Panic attacks, or hot and cold flushes. • Racing heart or tightening of chest, which can result in them thinking they are going to have a heart attack.

How to help and care for others with mental health issues

- **Pray for them** - we need to pray for them to overcome their illness and have the strength and be given the comfort to face their journey. We are instructed to pray for one another in James.
- **Pray for ourselves** - and others to be able to offer the help they need or be shown what help they need to assist others. We need to put it to prayer, as we can't rely on our own understanding of the situation but need to seek God's guidance.
- **Have a conversation with them** - a conversation can make a difference in helping someone feeling less alone and more supported. Don't underestimate the importance of just 'being there' for someone. You don't need to be a doctor or psychologist to check-in with someone you're worried about. Remember you don't have to have all the answers, but what is important is that you have taken the time to have a conversation with them.
- **Listen without judgement** - let the person express themselves and feel heard. When we talk to them it needs to be without judgement, let the person express themselves. Listen to them and take your time to understand their experiences of suffering with mental health. Recognise and validate how they are feeling, while being respectful of their decisions.

- **Show empathy towards them** - and demonstrate understanding and show compassion. Empathy means you have understood the person is feeling hurt or in pain. We need to acknowledge their pain and show them you care.
- **Educate yourself** - by learning about mental health difficulties and warning signs, so you will learn and understand symptoms so you can help someone out. This could be to search the internet, do a course, attend a seminar, talk to others that have suffered mental health, read a book, or paper written on mental health.
- **Encourage them** - by showing them you are supporting them and show gratitude that the person has opened up to you. Offer your support and understanding that it must be hard, and encourage them to take small steps, remember even small steps in the right direction is success and recovery, we need to acknowledge each small step as encouragement for them.
- **Be supportive** - you can show that you support them by checking in on them with a quick visit, a text, a card, offering to do their laundry or mow the lawn. If you are unsure what to say to a person in a text or phone call, or if there are no words for the situation you can send a screenshot of a nice image, e.g., bunch of flowers, to brighten up someone's day, and let them know you are thinking of them. We need to give them time out of our busy schedules each week and include them in social activities. Remember actions speak louder than words.
- **Don't give up on them** – we need to follow up with them. Don't be put off if they don't respond, they may not know how to respond on that day, do not take their behaviour too personally as people that are mentally unwell tend to push others away. Check in a few days later and offer them support and let them know you care. Unfortunately, mental health issues don't go away quickly.
- **Make time for them** - we all need to take time out of our busy schedules each week for them, this could be a quick pop in and see how they are going, or a phone call, picking something up from the shop for them, doing something else.
- **Reassure them** - we need to reassure them that they are not alone and there is hope that things will get better, but we need to be patient with them and help them to overcome any setbacks.
- **Respect them** - we need to remember to respect their privacy where possible by not sharing what they tell you with anyone unless they say you can, or you feel they are a danger to themselves. Which may require you to call an emergency phone number (000).

When and how to encourage them to seek professional help

Even with our relationship with our God and having our Heavenly Father on our side, it doesn't mean that none of us will need to seek professional health from a health care provider, as we still suffer from the effects of mortality which includes mental illness. So, it is important to encourage them to seek professional support and offer them helplines to ring. Friends, family, and brethren and sisters can offer a great deal of support, but professionals have an important role in treating mental health issues and promoting recovery. You need to encourage them to seek help, just like they would for a broken bone or an infection. Medications may be needed, just as they would take medication for diabetes or high blood pressure.

Encourage others by explaining seeking help is a sign of strength and courage and should be seen as a positive step. Do not let them think their depression or anxiety isn't 'bad enough' as there is no wrong time to seek help and there are so many benefits when someone seeks help for mental health, it helps them be the best version of yourself, and other benefits are:

- Helps identify unhealthy patterns and underlying issues.
- Helps to improve emotional and social wellness.
- Helps you to set goals and learn coping skills.
- Increases your happiness and wellbeing.

It's important to remember, when you are dealing with mental health, you're not alone. Support is available for you, too. You need to take care of yourself first so you can take care of others, as you

need to be careful of burnout, as looking after others can be draining, both physically and mentally. You want to stay strong and reliable for the person you're supporting, but also for yourself. Example of making sure you are taking care of yourself before you are able to care for others is on an airplane when the stewardess will remind you, first your own mask, then you turn to help others put their mask on. Because if you're not breathing, in theory, you will not be able to help anyone else.

We long for that day when there will be no more mental health, when God will wipe every tear from our eyes, and God will renew our strength. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Kylee Mingham



For more articles on mental please see Adelphicare website –

Lets talk about mental health – <https://adelphicare.org/documents/053-mental-health.pdf>

Depression and anxiety – <https://adelphicare.org/documents/049-depression.pdf>

Physical and Mental Health Disabilities – NDIS, by Kylee Mingham - <https://adelphicare.org/documents/073-disability.pdf>

Understanding and Caring for yourself or Your loved ones who have mental health issues, by Kylee Mingham - <https://adelphicare.org/documents/074-mental-health.pdf>

Useful help numbers - <https://adelphicare.org/documents/027-Useful-Phone-Numbers.pdf>

VIDEO RECORDINGS on Adelphicare website –

Depression and spirituality, by Cathy Strachan - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRs2cHgf1rs>

Depression and Anxiety, by Kylee Mingham - <https://adelphicare.org/visitor/resources-index.html> (download from site)