

## ***Mental Health Information During Pandemic***

***Bette Wolfgang***

(Discuss the primary PURPOSE of every Christian: To serve and please Our Lord – Mt 22:36-39)

Scripture: Lk 6: 24-34 “Do not be anxious....” Lk 22:43-46 Jn 16:20,22

Phil 2:27 Phil 4:4-13 1Pet 4:12,19 1Pet 5: 6,7 Rom 12:2, 9-16

Mt 6:25-34 Lk 10:27 Rom 8: 26-39 Mk 12:30, 31 Ps.23

Isa 26:3,4 Jer.8:18, 21,22 Ezek.2:4-10 LAMENTATIONS 1Kg.19 Elijah

(Two major emotions which motivate people: fear and anger! (Pain and pleasure also motivate.)

Most common Mental Health problems in America

- Mood Disorders: Major Depression (includes Bipolar Disorder, among others)
- Anxiety Disorders: Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Phobias, OCD, PTSD, Panic Attacks
- Increasing suicidology (10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the US; 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death among adolescents; increasing rapidly in elderly population)

Formula for changing problematic thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (David Burns: The New Mood Therapy) Charts: How to evaluate your thinking, make it possible to change destructive thoughts to healthier, more rational thinking. (Charts)

How to implement needed changes... Some practical, effective ways to get started feeling better:

- Wake up at the same time each day, eat meals at same times, read/study Bible daily
- Count your blessings; challenge yourself (and spouse/family) to be aware, and name as many as possible! Offer incentives (small rewards) to children, as to who counts the most!
- Establish and keep a regular schedule!!! Important for several reason: restful sleep (circadian rhythm), set alarm/wake up at same time each day, eat a healthy, nutritious diet, (not junk, too much, too little), with snacks to supplement, shower/bathe, wear “real clothes!” (get out of pjs, at least after breakfast! You WILL feel better!
- Be deliberate; plan for specific way(s) to create a positive reason for getting up for the day. Take responsibility for your own happiness! (Be creative, use your resources; happiness is a choice!)
- Set goal(s) for the day; make sure that goals are not too demanding... (Plan for success!)
- Learn, practice relaxation, starting with deep, slow breathing; many apps for relaxation, soothing music, a variety of calming sounds (waves from beach, rainfall, trickling mountain brooks, etc....

IF, however, you (or someone you know) is already so far down in depression, or has become so anxious as not to be able to pull out of that condition (or may even be contemplating suicide) with compassion, talk with them about seeking help which is just as important as seeking medical health for the Virus, or heart disease or diabetes. The brain is also an organ of the body and can stop working properly. Do NOT allow any one talk you out of seeking help! It is available, even in the present distress: online or virtual appointments with Mental Health practitioners are possible. Later, face to face appointments may prove even more helpful. The important thing is to get the help you need! You are worth it; God made you in

His own image and he loves and wants you to do what is necessary to be healthy. We want that for all of you, too.

Re-learning how to relax (and practicing regularly) is crucial for good health and fighting the effects of stress. It helps regulate blood pressure, aids greatly for restful sleep, boosts energy, also helps to clear the mind of troublesome thoughts. It also can help reduce and manage pain (acute or chronic), and boosts immune system. When the opportunity finally allows, get a massage (or if you have someone in your household who has a little practice, ask him/her to massage your shoulders, neck...

- Everyone needs to have a PURPOSE! Plan day with productive activity to help achieve goal.
- Take a break, give yourself permission to have FUN! (Remember having fun?!) Try something new...
- If the sun is out, get outside for at least 20-30 minutes; it's part of being healthy!
- Exercise! Start moving again (which usually requires getting off the sofa!) Moderation is fine. ...To start getting better, begin with a lesser amount and increase gradually, till you reach your GOAL! If you miss a day, do not berate yourself (or others!) Just get back with the program!
- Do something kind, helpful for someone else; it is a good habit to start! Some suggestions:
- Mentor a younger woman or spend time with an older woman, getting to know her story. Everyone has something to contribute.
- Read a good book to a child.
- Take a class in a subject which interests you, but you haven't previously pursued.
- Find online instruction in drawing, painting, crocheting, cooking... ad infinitum!!! If you haven't yet learned how to access these opportunities, ask for help! Younger, tech-savvy kids/young people love to show off their skills, so it is beneficial to both!
- Smile; even with a required mask, you can smile (it also shows in your eyes,) and wave at the other masked neighbors in your neighborhood!
- Color with a child; if no child is handy, get a complex, interesting coloring book for grownups! It has been shown to be very relaxing, satisfying activity that is a good for us (not a waste of time)!

More information and resources in Steve and Bette Wolfgang, "Overcoming Depression," in *Taking His Hand, Helping Each Other Home: 2019 Truth Lectures*, pp. 210-225, 259-276. Available from Truth Publications (855-492-6657) or [www.truthbooks.com](http://www.truthbooks.com)

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance: 1-800-826-3632 or 312-642-0049

National Foundation for Depressive Illness: 1-800-248-4344 or 1-800-239-1265

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273 TALK (800-273-8255)