Be Empowered to Work Toward Mental Wellness

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Mental Health Awareness

Mental health conditions may be more common than you think.

In fact, according to a 2020 survey,

21% of adults in North Carolina reported experiencing 1-13 days of mental health that "was not good" in the past 30 days.[1]

While mental illness can affect anyone regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or other aspects of identity,

only 1 in 3 Black adults in the United States who needs mental health care receives it.[2]

There are many historical and cultural factors that make it harder for Black adults to find and receive care that considers their cultural experiences.[3,4]

For Black adults, factors like:

- negative feelings and beliefs about mental illness
- feeling or being treated as "less than"
- cultural differences with a healthcare provider

and more can make it difficult to feel comfortable discussing mental illness.[5,6]

A support system can include trusted healthcare providers, family, friends, community, and faith-based organizations, which can provide help for those living with a mental illness as well as their family members and caregivers. Family, friends, and caregivers are often the people you turn to first when looking for help because they understand your personal, daily needs, and are able to help you along the journey.

Being more aware of the impact of mental health conditions may empower family members and friends of someone with mental illness to be more supportive. It can also help make sure people receive care that reflects important aspects of their culture, faith and spiritual beliefs. According to Galatians 6:2, when we carry each other's burdens, we are fulfilling the law of Christ.

Addressing Stigma

It is estimated that

1 in 20 American adults experiences serious mental health conditions like depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.[2]

Mental illness is more common than you think. In fact, Biblical scholars agree that Ruth, Naomi, Hannah, Mary, David, Elijah, Jonah, Moses, Job, and Jeremiah may have struggled with bouts of depression and anxiety.

Mental health is important to overall well-being, and reducing stigma can help people seek and receive the care they need. There are many ways to reduce stigma, like being open about your experiences with mental illness or being open to learning about mental illness.

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Strategies to Advocate for Self

Finding a trusted healthcare provider, sharing your goals, and being involved in treatment plans can help ensure you receive the best care for you or your loved one. **Proverbs 12:15 tells us "a wise man seeks counsel."**

For adults with lived experience:

- When you are feeling good, talk with trusted healthcare providers and people who understand your beliefs and cultural background about your goals and ways to support you
- Have a plan ready for when you may not be feeling in control of your symptoms. This may help you feel empowered when important choices need to be made regarding your health

For caregivers:

- Caregivers often are involved in a loved one's recovery journey from the very beginning of symptoms. Make a plan with your loved one when they are feeling good so you are aware of the signs that may occur when they are in a time of need
- Learn about their beliefs and what they value most. Having a plan will help you and your loved one feel confident in finding the appropriate care. **Proverbs 15:22 reminds us that without counsel, plans fail. But with many advisers, they succeed**

Advocacy organizations provide tools and information to help work towards mental wellness. These include:

- Mental Health America of Central Carolinas' *Emotional Toolbox for Building Resilient Communities*, which provides access to resources, awareness, education, and on-line screening tools that can help address mental health concerns. Visit: http://www.mhaofcc.org

- Mental Health First Aid course helps build skills and knowledge to support adults living with mental health challenges

- Local mental health advocacy organizations may provide free short-term counseling for those who cannot afford longer-term therapy

- Peer-led support groups, like those from the National Alliance of Mental Illness, are offered for adults living with mental health conditions and their loved ones to share experiences and develop supportive relationships. Visit: http://www.naminc.org

- For resources from Empower East of Eastern North Carolina-Raleigh to the coast: Visit http://www.empowereast.org

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