



Creating Caring Faith Communities

Learning Objective

- Learn 5 things each of us can do to make our faith communities in Minnesota a better place for people who experience a mental illness

Goal

- Create a Minnesota where each person lives a full, productive and satisfying life
- Create a faith community that welcomes participation of all, including people who live with a mental illness and their families

We're not there...

- 1 in 5 people live with a mental illness *AND*
- Youth
 - 7 out of 10 in the juvenile justice system
 - 6 out of 10 are not receiving treatment
 - 5 out of 10 age 14 and older leave school
- Adults
 - 4 out of 10 living with a serious illness not treated
 - 8 out of 10 not in the workforce
 - 1 out of 4 are in the criminal justice system

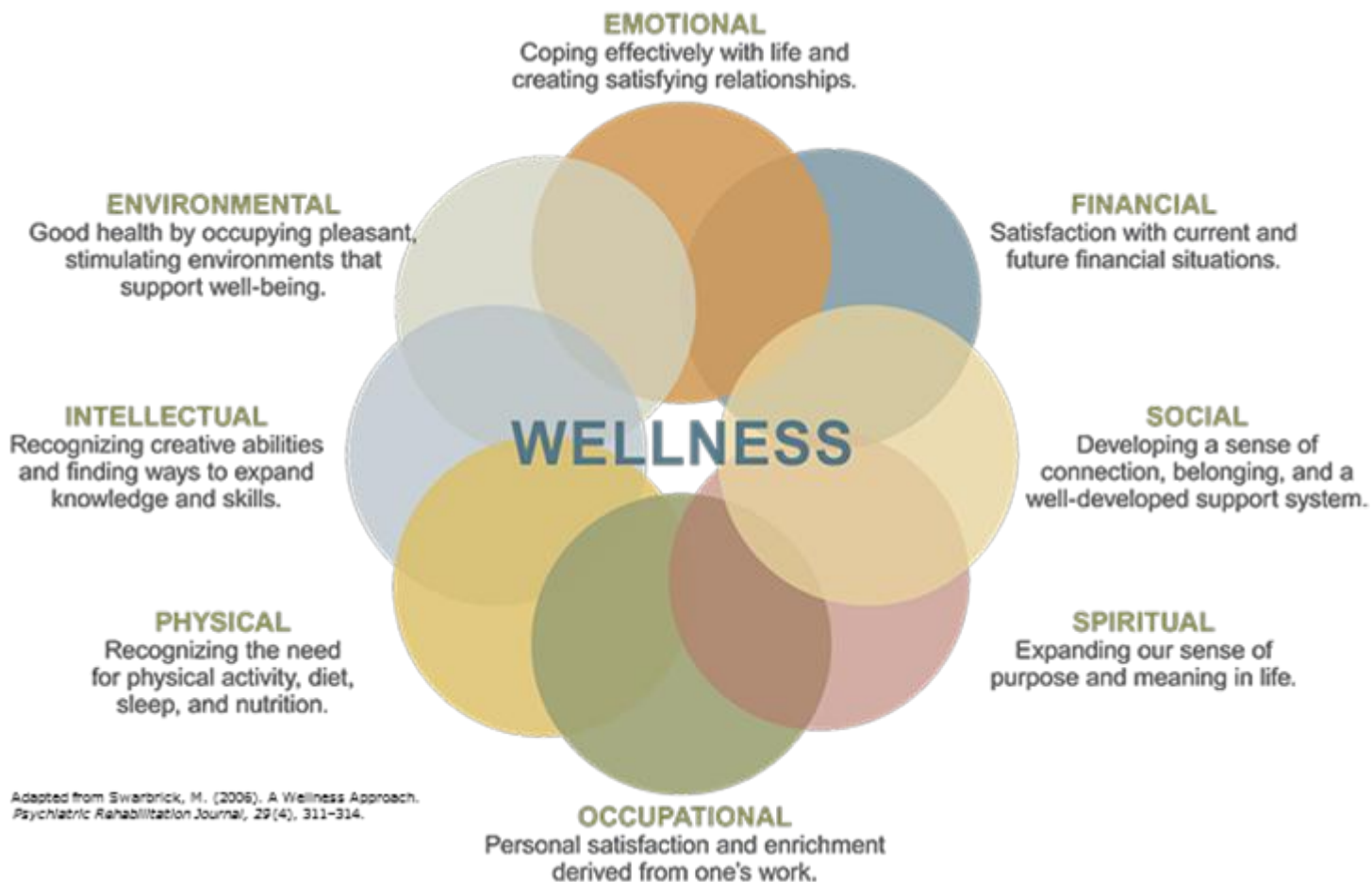
Five things we can do...

1. Shift how we see and interact with people experiencing a mental illness
2. Use respectful, accurate language
3. Resist disrespectful language & images in the media
4. Know common symptoms of mental illnesses
5. Create faith communities that foster respect and acceptance

1. Shift how we see and interact with people

- Illnesses are not caused by the person, their family, or sin
- Causes are complex
 - Genetics
 - Environment
 - Negative life influences (stress, violence)
 - Chemical exposure
 - Brain structure
- Mental illnesses ARE treatable

Recovery



Adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006). A Wellness Approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29(4), 311-314.

Shift Our Perceptions & Behaviors

- Understand mental illnesses as *illnesses*
- Name and challenge stigma & discrimination
 - Hiring
 - Renting
 - Social Interactions
 - Public Policy
- Respond with understanding & acceptance

2. Use respectful & accurate language

- Five slang words for mental illness?

2. Use respectful & accurate language



Crazy	Mad
Nuts	Cracked
Insane	Kookie
Wacko	Loony
Psycho	Maniac
Demented	Berserk
Deranged	Daft

2. Use respectful & accurate language

- Use “people first” language
 - “a person living with schizophrenia”
 - “people experiencing mental illnesses”
- Recognize each illness is different
 - Say, “mental illnesses” or “a mental illness”
- Avoid negative language
 - Instead of “suffering from” use “experiencing”
 - Instead of “life-long” or “chronic illness” use “treatable” or “serious illness”

3. Resist disrespectful language & images in the media

- People living with a mental illness are likely:
 - Nonviolent
 - Generous
 - Courageous
 - Determined
 - Inspirational
- When media uses a broad, negative brush:
Speak up and speak out!

Psycho Donuts



Bipolar



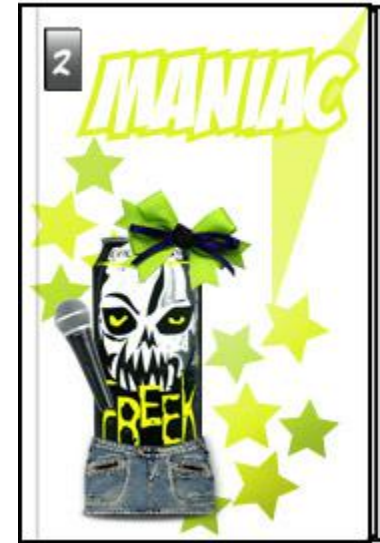
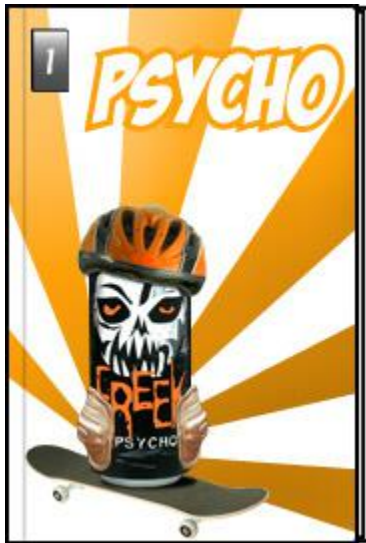
Cocoa marbles



Cereal killer

Freek Energy Drinks

Evil Energy



4. Know symptoms of mental illnesses

- Weeks of feeling sad, irritable; changes in mood, appetite, sleep, energy >> **Major Depression**
- Pounding heart, dizzy, short of breath, fatigue, edginess >> **Anxiety Disorder**
- Depression with mania (risky behavior, racing thoughts, grandiose ideas) >> **Bipolar Disorder**

4. Know symptoms of mental illnesses

- Extreme disturbances in eating patterns, too much or too little >> **Eating Disorder**
- Intense changing moods, stormy relationships, self-destructive acts >> **Borderline Personality Disorder**

4. Know symptoms of mental illnesses

- Unwanted and repeated thoughts & impulses
>> **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**
- Flashbacks, avoidance, increased arousal
>> **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**
- Hallucinations, delusions, emotional flatness, inability to start & follow through on activities
>> **Schizophrenia**

5. Create communities of hope & support

- When someone is experiencing a mental illness
 - Offer to help – rides, child care, meals, etc.
 - Send a get well card
 - Add them to prayer lists
 - Offer accommodations to make faith services accessible
 - Encourage the person to set up a support website
 - Reach out: people often feel isolated
 - Treat with compassion, not pity
 - Listen without judgement

5. Create communities of hope & support

- Hold educational sessions
- Host support groups or classes
- Work with leaders to ensure mental health resources are available to your congregation
- Hold awareness events in May and October
- Encourage support
- Treat mental illnesses like any other illness

Why We Should Care

“All major religious traditions carry basically the same message, that is love, compassion and forgiveness ... the important thing is they should be part of our daily lives.” – Dalai Lama

“Do not suppress this compassion, this sympathy especially with the sufferings of your fellowman. It is the warning voice of duty, which points out to you your brother in every sufferer, and your own sufferings in his, and awakens the love which tells you that you belong to him and his sufferings with all the powers that you have.” – Horeb, Chapter 17, Verse 126

Why We Should Care

“Be steadfast. Enjoin kindness. Avoid ignorance. And bear with patience whatever befalls you.” – Quran 31:17

“For I was hungry & you gave me something to eat. Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” – Matthews 25:35

“I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all.” – Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299

How Do We Get Started?

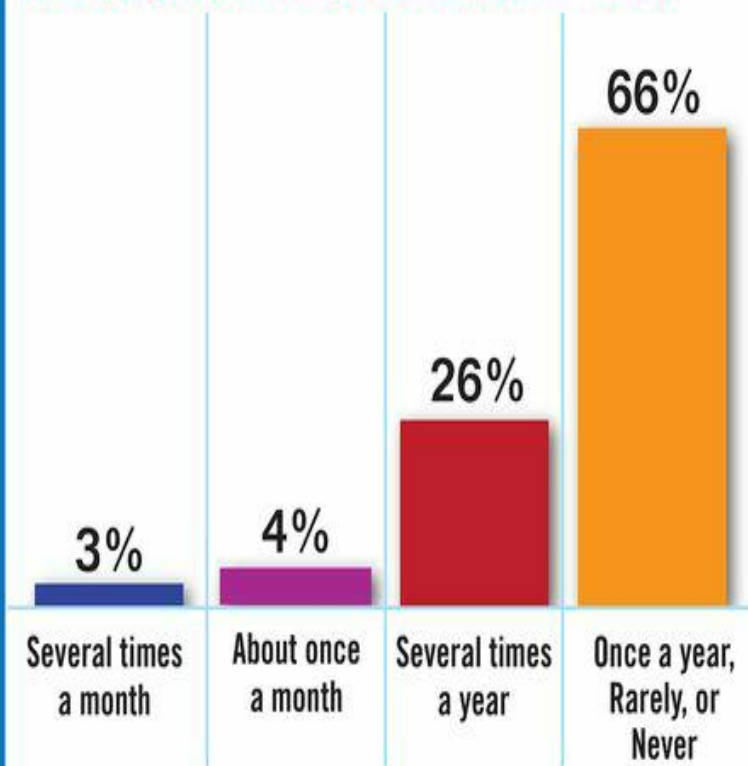
- Create a Wellness or Social Justice Committee (or both)
- Host ongoing mental health support groups
- Include mental health resources at an annual health fair
- Mental health training for pastoral staff, befrienders, friendly visitors, Stephen Ministers
- Do joint mental health programming with sister faith communities

How Do We Get Started?

- Create awareness during mental health month (May), mental health week (Oct.), suicide prevention month (Sept.)
- Clergy messages from the pulpit in homilies/sermons
- Hire a faith community nurse – share with another congregation if budget is factor
- Hire a peer support specialist – share with another congregation if budget is factor

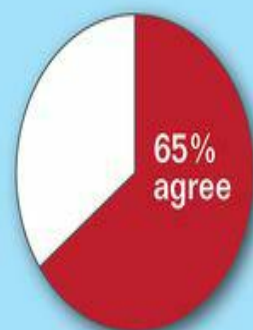
TALKING ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

How often pastors speak to the church in sermons or large group messages about mental illness.

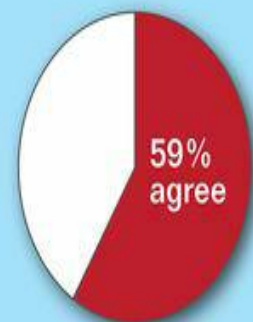


Notes: 1% Don't know. Numbers do not total 100% due to rounding.

Want their church to talk openly about mental illness, so the topic will not be a taboo.



Among family of a person with mental illness



Among people with a mental illness

How Do We Get Started?

- Offer mental illness training for teachers at affiliated faith-based schools and invite CCD teachers
- Offer interfaith Lenten soup suppers in your town and have mental illness be the theme one year with a different topic each week of Lent
- Hang a mental health art show at our church if you have gallery space
- Co-host a MHFA or YMHFA class

How Do We Get Started?

- Mental health film series followed by discussion
- Provide mental health resources/brochures in your public area brochure racks
- Form a NAMIWalks team for the annual walk on the fourth Sat. of September at Minnehaha Falls
- Train a volunteer/staff person to teach classes like QPR, Mental Health First Aid, Hope for Recovery, etc.

How Do We Get Started?

- Offer homeless outreach services
- Adopt a mental health service provider in your community – offer volunteer opportunities to parishioners with that organization
- Offer a bible study with mental illness as the theme
- Start a church book club and choose at least one mental health book each year
- **YOUR IDEAS HERE**

Five things we can do...

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What We Do

- Education classes, booklets and fact sheets
- Suicide prevention
- Support groups, Helpline
- Public awareness presentations
- Legislative advocacy
- NAMIWalks

Support NAMI Minnesota

- Advocate for a better Mental Health System
- Attend an event
- Sign up for a newsletter
- Join an affiliate
- Be a sponsor
- Volunteer
- Become a donor

Questions?

Contact Information

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