



Mental Health Week

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

“Let’s have a big party and get some good food in!”

Luke 15:22-32

Read the story from page 218 of *Good as New*
– A Radical Re-telling of the Scriptures

MIND, the Mental Health Foundation and other charities and public bodies rarely agree on when to hold a week to raise public awareness of mental health issues. However, all agree that mental health is a key topic in Britain today and one that has a particularly devastating impact on ethnic minority communities.

Basic questions are raised in the material about how to improve the nation’s mental health and about the relationship between a person’s culture and identity and their mental health. It can be used at any time of year.

MENU

Appetisers

Ways of marking Mental Health Week

Remembering that a disproportionate number of black and minority ethnic people find themselves diagnosed as being mentally ill...

- Hold a service of prayer for healing with a particular emphasis on mental health and spiritual healing, including healing memories and relationships.

Photos of fruit: bies



Designed to be read in Print Layout view.

Main courses

Bible connections and theological themes

Matthew 9:27 / Mark 1:21-28

It seems that Jesus was often addressed by people whose behaviour the disciples felt very challenging. The scriptures describe many such incidents in terms of the activity of evil spirits and a theological rationale is given in terms of satan recognizing the son of God – but today the people involved would frequently be categorized as mentally ill. What do you think are the connections between heightened spiritual awareness and mental illness?

I John 3:17-18 and 4:19-21

Love is the visible outworking of faith. Those who love God are called to demonstrate this faith by practicing inclusive love towards our “brothers and sisters”. Mental illness affects all sections of the community, including the church. Loving people who are mentally ill can be demanding but it is still a tragedy that some mentally ill patients feel rejected by family, community and church. In order to help someone who is mentally ill, such love must sometimes be “tough love”, but this should surely be familiar ground to followers of Christ.

You may find the book, “Stop Walking on Eggshells” by Randi Kreger/Paul Mason helpful at this point. (ISBN 1-57-224-108-X)

Mae deunydd Cymraeg ar gael o www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday
a www.cytun.org.uk

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland





Questions for discussion

- What images of rejection, alienation, stigma can you find in the story of the Lost Son?
- What do you first think of when you hear the words 'mental illness'?
- What is your experience of mental health problems – either your own experience or that of a friend or relative?
- What can we learn as individuals or as a church from the responses of the older son, and the father in the story?
- How far do you think that there are particular problems for Christians in responding to people with mental health problems?
- What can we do to help?
- How do you feel about mental illness as opposed to physical illness? Why?

Mental health statistics

From Anorexia, Autism, Schizophrenia to Seasonal Affective Disorder: there is a huge range of conditions affecting our mental health.

Statistics show that 1 in 4 people will suffer some kind of mental health problem. The likelihood is therefore that there will be a number of people in your group or congregation who have experience of these problems.

Some black and minority ethnic groups are three times more likely to be admitted to hospital for mental health problems, figures show. The Healthcare Commission said agencies must work together to prevent and better manage mental illness in black and minority ethnic groups.

Census figures in 2007 revealed that 22% of people on mental health wards were from minority ethnic groups, compared with 21% in 2006 and 20% in 2005. This compares with about 14% in the general population.

Faith issues

“Explanations for mental health problems proposed by some faiths, such as blaming individuals or looking for sins in their lives to account for their problems, have caused great suffering. Concerns have also been expressed about religious groups who may discourage people with mental health problems from seeking professional help. Faith communities are not immune from the wider fear and misunderstanding about mental health problems that are characteristic of social attitudes in general.”

Richard Frost (Vocational Advisor for Devon Partnership NHS Trust)

From article in 'The Reader', Summer 2007

Deserts

Mental health problems range from the worries we all experience as part of everyday life to serious long-term conditions. Many people who experience mental health problems can get over them or learn to live with them, especially if they get help early on. How can we help ourselves?

We can help keep ourselves in good mental health by:

- talking about our feelings
- keeping active
- eating well
- drinking sensibly (or not at all)
- keeping in touch with friends and loved ones
- asking for help when we need it
- taking a break
- doing something we're good at and enjoying doing it
- accepting who we are
- caring for others

Can you think of other ways of staying sane?

Chef's specials

Challenges for response by the congregation

In a context of prayer and healing, why not attempt an informal 'mental health audit' of your congregation or house group? Encourage people to talk about times of stress, depression, anxiety or other episodes of mental illness. Encourage the groups towards greater understanding and mutual support.

Book suggestion

Manage your Mind: The Mental Fitness Guide, Gillian Butler/Tony Hope, OUP 1995

Discussion topics for young people

What are the pros and cons of a teenage mother diagnosed as mentally ill keeping her newborn baby or her not being considered a 'fit mother' and her baby being cared for by strangers?

Examples of community action

Church members volunteering on a rota basis in a charity shop which is connected with a mental health charity, e.g. MIND.