

FROM IT'S GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME! MENTAL HEALTH OUTREACH TO YOU



**It's getting better all the time!**

**MENTAL HEALTH OUTREACH, INC.**

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PROVIDING INFORMATION AND SUPPORT WHILE ENCOURAGING HOPE AND FAITH

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## First, What Is a Mental Illness?

Mental illnesses are brain illnesses that are characterized by changes in a person's thinking, mood, or behavior, and that are accompanied by significant distress, or impairment in functioning (Healthy People, 2010). While spiritual beliefs in the life of a person with a mental illness can help to provide hope and strength, they do not automatically exempt a person from becoming ill. No one regardless of their race or economic status is exempt from the impact of having an untreated mental illness. Currently as identified in the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (a book that is used by mental health professionals to identify and classify symptoms) there are currently over 15 broad categories of mental illness.

While the exact causes of many mental disorders are still unknown, according to published reports, it is likely that biological, psychological, and social/cultural factors all work together to shape the development of many diseases, to include mental illnesses (Surgeon General's Report, 1999). Some of the major theories currently associated with the causes of mental illnesses include genetics, changes in brain chemicals, infections, psychological issues, the environment, life events, personality, and developmental factors.

### Why do people become ill?

From a spiritual perspective, we know that man consists of a spirit, soul, and body. Any change or problem in any one of these three areas can influence the other parts, in either a positive or a negative way.

Likewise, the brain an organ just like the liver or heart, can negatively influence or be influenced by various factors that can cause impairments in the life of an individual. Traumatic brain injuries or fluctuations in brain chemicals can trigger changes in the personality or the soulish area of an individual to such an extent, that it can appear to look as if the person is undergoing a spiritual attack. While there may be some illnesses that are demonically induced those are not the kind that we are addressing in this booklet. Mental illnesses are brain illnesses.

Some disorders last only for a while and may have limited impact on a person's life. While others may be more expansive and severe. "Serious mental illness is a term used

in federal regulations that define some 5.4 percent of the U.S. adult population with a mental disorder that interferes with at least one area of social functioning. About half of these people (2.6 percent of adults) experience a severe and persistent mental illness”  
<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.25.3.737>

Severe and persistent mental illnesses are illnesses that are long-lasting, persistent or chronic in nature. Severe mental illnesses like Schizophrenia and Bipolar disorders can impact all aspects of a persons’ life to include their ability to work, go to school, and or to even have a family. Symptoms of severe and persistent mental illnesses, like those of diabetes and other chronic diseases, fluctuate in intensity, and even with the use of medications individuals may never be totally free of symptoms.

### Relapse May Happen So Don’t Panic

In reality, many people who are living with a mental illness even while taking their medication(s), still experience ongoing or reoccurring psychiatric symptoms. So don’t panic. If you are aware of your ongoing or reoccurring symptoms and can monitor yourself for changes, you may be able to avoid a relapse. Relapse signs which may or may not be different from your re-occurring symptoms, refer to those physical, behavioral, and emotional signals that indicate a return or increase in the active symptoms of an illness. For example, let’s say that even with the use of medication(s) and ongoing visits to your psychiatrist, you still hear low, muffled voices every now and then. But over the last few weeks, you have noticed an increase in these voices. Well by taking a minute to think about the events that have recently occurred in your life, you may find that the increase in your symptoms is directly related to a change or recent stressor. By evaluating the circumstances associated with the rise in your reoccurring symptoms, you may be able to make some life changes before your symptoms become unmanageable.

Symptoms of a pending relapse can include an increase in psychotic symptoms, increased isolation, reoccurrence of negative feelings or thoughts, and a decrease in the participation of healthy behaviors, such as bible study and prayer. But each person is different and may have different signs. So it is essential for you to be aware of your own personal signals, and then be prepared to make changes before those relapse signs usher in a full-blown reoccurrence of your illness. But please know that an increase in symptoms does not necessarily mean that you are headed for a relapse, or that you need to be hospitalized. Increased symptoms do, however, signal a need for you to take a look at your life, talk to someone and if needed contact your doctor as soon as possible.

## Living With A Mental Illness -Taking Care of You

Seeing a doctor regularly, monitoring your symptoms, regulating stress, bringing your thoughts in line with the thoughts of God, exercising, and eating healthier are all essential keys in your ability to fulfill your God-given purpose for living.

Taking medications as prescribed, and seeing a doctor regularly are important strategies for maintaining your health, and living the life that God has for you. In fact, if you have a mental illness or think that you may have a mental illness, seeing a doctor will be the second step in your recovery process. Your first step will be developing or maintaining a relationship with Jesus Christ.

### Seeing a Doctor

First Time - When you see a doctor for the first time, he or she will talk with you about your symptoms. Then he or she depending on the setting may schedule or request that you obtain a physical and blood work. Again, this will depend on the type of doctor you are seeing and the circumstances. For example, if you are seeing a Primary Care Doctor, he or she may request the blood work and complete physical on site. But if you are seeing a Psychiatrist (a medical doctor who specializes in mental health), in his or her office he or she may conduct the mental health evaluation first and then refer or request that you see your Primary Care Doctor.

Regardless of when you get it done, obtaining a complete medical physical to include blood work will be necessary. The results of the physical will help your doctor to determine if the symptoms that you are experiencing are in fact related to mental illness, and not to some other illness or disease.

Upon completion of your physical and or mental health evaluation, your doctor may choose to prescribe medications for you, refer you to a mental health worker, or do both. In any event, if your doctor feels that medications are warranted, he or she will explain the medications that they are recommending to you, and answer any questions that you might have about them. But please understand that medicines used to treat mental illnesses, just like those used for high blood pressure or diabetes, do not cure the disease. They can, however, help to regulate your symptoms so that you can live a better life, and walk out your God-given purpose with more energy and less discomfort.

You may not want to take medications, but medications can help to decrease your symptoms, shorten the number of days that you have to stay in the hospital, and in

some cases even help to keep you out of the hospital. Remember, God has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness, to include medications. So don't reject the tools that He has provided for you to live a better life. If you need medications, try to take them as prescribed, and if you are having any problems with them, talk to your doctor as soon as possible. Remember God created you for a purpose, and that purpose does not have to be aborted just because you have been diagnosed with an illness, or have to take medications.

### Regular Visits

At each visit your Psychiatrist will ask about you, your medications and if you are having any problems. If he/she does not, then please bring the topic up. Be honest. If you are not taking the medications or not as prescribed tell your doctor. Unfortunately, in many locations, there are just not that many Psychiatrist to go around so your Doctor may be seeing many consumers in a limited amount of time. The Psychiatrist, unless he or she is acting in a dual role, is not your Therapist. So while your therapist may spend 30 minutes or an hour with you, your Psychiatrist may only be able to spend 15 minutes. So when you meet with your Psychiatrist, ask questions (if you need to, write your questions down so that you will not forget them). When your Psychiatrist asks how you are doing, the clock is ticking. So take advantage of the time to honestly share how you are feeling and see your MD as scheduled. But while seeing your psychiatrist is essential so is meeting with the other members of your treatment team. Other members of your team can help you with medication issues, insurance problems, obtaining basic humans service needs, crisis situations, therapy and more.

### When to Get Help?

If you are experiencing changes in your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are negatively impacting your life, then it might be time to talk to someone. Getting help for a mental health concern can happen anytime you are ready. Where you go to get help will vary depending on where you live. But a great place to start is by contacting the helpline at SAMHSA. (See Below)

SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357), (also known as the Treatment Referral Routing Service) or TTY: 1-800-487-4889 is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. Callers can also order free publications and other information.

### Getting Help For Some One Else

Depending on where you live, symptoms and previous history you may choose to contact your local Crisis Team or 911. A crisis team consists of a group of mental health professionals who will once you call respond to you at your location. The crisis team can help navigate you through the mental health services in your area, triage symptoms, arrange a follow-up appointment and assist you in getting appropriate help. The Crisis team after assessing your situation can sometimes help to defray an inpatient hospital stay, encourage medication use and stabilize symptoms until a clinic provider can see your loved one. Sometimes however the crisis team may decide that an inpatient stay is needed. If they do, they will help to arrange transportation to the hospital. But please understand that even if the crisis team feels that your loved one should be admitted the Doctor at the hospital may not agree.

A crisis team can be an invaluable asset to you and your family, but there are times in which you may have to call the police as opposed to or before you call a crisis team. When deciding between calling the cops vs. calling a crisis team ask yourself, are there weapons involved? Is there actual violence or issues related to safety present? A crisis team consists of a group of mental health professionals, not police officers. Only police officers have the training and expertise to manage dangerous situations and to transport a person against their will to the hospital for an evaluation.

However, just because you call the police and request that they take your loved one to a hospital, there is no guarantee that they will. In general, the police take, removing a person from their home and escorting them to the hospital against their will very seriously. Especially if they arrive on the scene and do not see the signs that you saw and or your loved one appears fine. Just because you feel that your loved one should be taken to the hospital because they are not taking their medications, the police may not feel the same way. Your loved one has a right to refuse their medications, to refuse to see their outpatient therapist or to get help. The question you have to ask your self is how are the signs/symptoms experienced by your loved one negatively impacting them or the people around them and then be prepared to make a case.

If the police agree with you and take your loved one to the hospital, please know that they will more than likely handcuff your loved one. I point this out because many people become nervous when this happens. Handcuffing is a safety precaution for both your loved one and the police; it does not mean that they are under arrest. Again it does not matter if you or your loved one was escorted to the hospital by the police or with the support of the Crisis Team, it is the Doctor who will decide if admission is warranted.

Once at the hospital the decision to involuntarily commit your loved one is up to the doctor. Again, just like the police doctors do not make the decision to hold a person against their will lightly. While "Almost all states allow police and clinicians to initiate short term commitments lasting up to seventy-two hours to handle imminent emergencies" there are legal statues that must be met to hold a person against their will. Please click on the following link for more information and rules in your state (<https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/component/content/article/183-in-a-crisis/1596-know-the-laws-in-your-state>).

### Getting Help For Your Self –Voluntary

Mental disorders are treatable, but many people do not seek out help until their symptoms become severe. If you have come to the point in your life where you feel that you need assistance, then you are not alone. There is hope and support for you. If you present to the hospital, seek help and are admitted then this would be considered a voluntary admission. Voluntary admissions can help to identify symptoms, clarify the diagnosis and stabilize symptoms.

### What You May Experience at The Hospital

Your experience at the hospital will vary depending on your insurance, the hospital, the time of the day, your symptoms, if you are admitted involuntarily and if you are already on medications. But just because you make it to the hospital does not mean that you or your loved one will be admitted. For example, if you are already on medications, the hospital staff may call your outpatient treatment team for information, make adjustments and send you home with a follow-up appointment.

However, while at the hospital waiting to be seen keep a few things in mind (again this list will vary).

1. You may be seen in the emergency room first unless previous arrangements were made or you are in a jurisdiction like the District of Columbia that has what is called a Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Admission hospital.
2. You may have a long wait (but don't let that discourage you)
3. You will be asked many questions so be patient and if possible know what medications you or your loved one is taking

4. The first Doctor you may see may not be a Psychiatrist, many times the Psychiatrist or another mental health professional will have to be called to the emergency room to see you. So be prepared to tell your story more than one time.

5. Even if you feel that you or your loved one is experiencing a mental health event that requires admission into a hospital, the doctor at the hospital may not feel the same way. So be prepared to make a case. Yes, sometimes you have to make a case for admission. If there are very few beds, if the Doctor thinks that you or your loved one can be stabilized with a medication change and sent back home the same night or you have insurance issues, then you or your loved one may not be admitted.

But if you feel that admission is needed, then say so. But be prepared to explain why you are seeking help. Describe the symptoms you are experiencing and explain how those symptoms are negatively impacting your life. In the case of a loved one be able to speak to what you have seen, don't worry about using the right psychological terms. Just describe what you saw or are seeing. Unfortunately, many people feel that the only way for them or for someone that they love to be admitted into the hospital is to wait until things get bad or to say that they are suicidal, while this is still true in some cases, just know that there are other ways.

For example, if a person already has a chronic health condition, are the symptoms associated with the psychiatric illness such as not taking their medications keeping them from recognizing the need to take their diabetes medication? Are the symptoms of their mental illness causing disruptions to others around them to the point that if not managed could cause harm to your loved one? Is your loved one sleeping and if not what are they doing when they are awake? Are they losing weight? Are they not eating? Do you or your loved one already have a Psychiatrist in the community who you could call and ask to coordinate a direct admission on your behalf? Do you have a crisis team in your area (a group of mental health professionals who will respond to you at your home or your location)? The Crisis team can help you to process your symptoms and help to navigate you through the mental health services in your area.

At some point during the admission process, you will receive a medical workup and be escorted to a room or bed (if there are no rooms, you may have to sleep in the emergency room). You may be assigned a single or be in a room with other people. Either way, you are in a place with others who are seeking help just like you. While at the hospital you may be prescribed medications, treatment options will be discussed and you will meet the members of your treatment team that will include the Doctor. While your Doctor and other members of the team will make recommendations just know that

as a patient in a hospital, you have rights. You have the right to be treated with dignity and care, to know your treatment options, medication side effects, to say who should or should not receive your information and to be involved in your treatment process. Please if you have a loved one who cares about you, give the treatment team permission to contact and to speak with them. If you are a family member, ask your loved one to do this as soon as possible.

Being admitted into a Psychiatric Ward is not a sign of failure or the end. In fact, an inpatient hospital stay can be the beginning of your recovery and could save your life. While in the hospital medications can be adjusted, diagnoses given or changed, and you can get answers to questions. No, I am not saying that a hospital stay is the best thing that will ever happen for everyone, and many people do not like being admitted. Some hospitals are better than others and sometimes getting admitted can be a problem. You may be in a room with people who you are not comfortable with, be surrounded by some not so friendly staff and even have to eat lousy food, but focus on you and why you are there. Take advantage of the time to ask questions, to learn from the other people around you and to get better.

If you are a family member of a loved one, who is currently on a psychiatric ward, visit and be involved. Get to know the treatment team to include the Attending and treating Physician (may or may not be the same person). If possible, ask for a meeting with the Social worker and or Doctor. If a date for a team meeting (a meeting in which all of the professionals involved in the care of your loved meet to discuss his or her case) has been set, try to attend. Your input is valuable and can help ensure that the treatment team is focusing on the right goals (your loved one may not be able to articulate their needs clearly).

Ask questions about the diagnosis, about the medications, inquire about the discharge plan and if you have concerns, share those concerns with the team. For example, you may feel that your loved one should be in the hospital for longer than two days. If that is the case be prepared to share with the team why you feel that way and let them know what you have been observing. But please understand that the goal of an inpatient hospital stay is to stabilize not to warehouse. Today many inpatient hospitals do not have enough beds to keep people long term, and many of the newer psychotropic medications work faster so people can stabilize and can go home quicker. However, you live with your family member, and you know the challenges that you and your loved one will have to face once he or she is discharged. So share those challenges with the team and ask for help developing a realistic plan that takes into account those challenges.

For example, if you know that there are limited mental health supports in your area and that the earliest your loved one can get a mental health appointment in the community is three weeks from the discharge date advocate with the inpatient doctor for enough medications to cover the time.

Upon discharge, ensure that you or your loved has a follow-up appointment with a psychiatrist or mental health clinic in your area. It will be vital for you to follow up and to continue the work you have done while in the hospital. Regular appointments with a mental health professional, medications, family, friends and faith can all be important components in your recovery plan.

Unfortunately, some people after their discharge do not follow up with their community mental health team. Because they feel good after being discharged from the hospital, they don't feel the need to keep seeing anyone, so they don't. Unfortunately, symptoms may return. But don't let that be you. Get Help and stay in treatment.

### Support

You will need support. Attempting to live your life without the help or assistance of anyone else, is unrealistic and shortsighted. God did not create man to live in isolation, or to exist in a vacuum hidden away from other people. And as you walk with Jesus Christ, He will place the right people in your life to support, and to love you. Please understand that having people in your life who support you, can be an essential factor in your ability to fulfill the plan of God for your life and recovery process. Supportive people can help to strengthen, encourage, and provide needed resources for you, especially when you need them the most.

Not let me say this, sometimes being alone is helpful and appropriate. In fact, seasons of being alone can allow you to draw closer to God, to reflect on your life and to make necessary changes. But monitor your thoughts and the impact that they are having on your behavior. Meditating on beliefs that are not based on the Word of God, can further depress you and cripple your progress.

If you are not meditating on the Word of God and His love for you, then you will not experience the best that God has for you in your thoughts. Even if you have a mental illness that makes it difficult for you to think clearly, you can still learn to meditate on the goodness of God, and His word towards you. Your meditation may not look like someone who does not have a mental illness so don't compare yourself because God is

not. He made you, mental illness and all and you are fearfully and wonderfully made. So there is no need to isolate yourself because of your or your loved one's symptoms.

Isolating yourself away from other people with nothing more than your negative thoughts and feelings is not helpful. When we are alone with our own thoughts and ideas, we tend to engage in thinking that focuses on the negative absolutes in life, such as "nobody likes me" or "I will never make it" as opposed to the possibility that can be found in Jesus Christ. When we are alone with our negative thoughts, we do not have the benefit of having an objective viewpoint, on which to base our thoughts or to monitor our ideas. However, supportive people can help to remind us that there is hope and that tomorrow can be better than today. Supportive people in your life can provide you with an outlet to sound out your ideas, and to gain a new perspective on what is happening in your life.

Unfortunately, feeling sad, alone and miserable can be both naturally, and spiritually detrimental to your life. For example, during difficult times in your life, you may be tempted to make decisions about your future and to make estimates about your abilities based on how you feel at that moment. But understand that your reality or view of a situation, when you are feeling depressed, and do not have the energy to focus on anything else but the crisis of the moment, is not always accurate. Now, I am not saying that what you are thinking or feeling is not important.

However, when we are depressed or in the middle of a crisis, we can become so focused on the present problem, that we can forget that hope is still available. For example, it may be true that you made a mistake, that your wife left you, that you do not have a lot of money, that you lost your job, or that you are not as smart as someone else. However, it is not true that you "always make mistakes," that you "can never do anything right," or that "things will never work out for you."

If you are continually telling yourself that things in your life will "never work out," or you are meditating on how hopeless your life is, then those thoughts must be challenged. It's hard to believe that God loves you and that you are fearfully and wonderfully made if you think of yourself as a perpetual loser. Supportive people can help to keep you focused on the goodness of God and help you to challenge negative thoughts. Don't have any supportive people in your life? Then pick one faith-filled word or scripture from the Word of God and then begin to meditate on it. The Word of God lets us know that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there will He be in the midst. You make one, the Spirit of God makes two, and together the two of you can

overcome anything. So despite how negative things may look in your life at this moment, because of Jesus Christ they do not have to stay that way.

Supportive people can be used by God to encourage and strengthen you. Supportive people can bring a sense of balance and comfort into your life, just when you need it the most. For some of us, there is a sense of belonging and peace in knowing that we are not the only individuals in the world who are coping with a particular issue or problem. Interacting with other people who have similar issues and hearing the testimonies of how they overcame, can provide us with a sense of encouragement and hope. No matter how you feel right now, there is someone out there who can identify with what you are going through, and who can support you if you will let them.

### In Closing

Ongoing symptoms of a mental illness or long term negative situation can challenge both our hope and faith in God. Long term negative situations, can force us to confront our thoughts about God, and test everything that we believed about Him and His Word. Let's be honest, it's one thing to pray about a situation for one day or one week, but it is another thing to have to pray consistently about a problem that seemingly does not change. For many people, it is hard to remain hopeful, during ongoing negative life situations.

Yet, it is during these very times of waiting that you must continue to hold onto your hope, and faith in Jesus Christ. God has not forgotten you. He has heard your prayers, and it is He who is sustaining you in your waiting. Living with a long term negative illness or situation does not mean that you are not saved, or that you are inferior to other people. So in the midst of your tears, depression, anxiety, and anger at God hold on and don't give up. God has a plan and purpose for your life, and He is faithful to His word and His thoughts towards you.

### Resources

Take some time to prepare a list of resources, and emergency phone numbers that could be of assistance in a crisis. Place these resources in a place where everyone in the family can find them, and then periodically check the numbers to ensure that they are still up to date.

Special Note:

Religious and spiritual beliefs, along with a caring faith-based community can be supportive factors in the lives of individuals and family members, who are living with the consequences of a mental illness or negative life situation. In fact, religious/spiritual beliefs, and a connection to a supportive faith based-community can provide individuals with a sense of consistency, relief from their symptoms, fellowship, comfort, hope, faith, and assistance in obtaining help with basic social service needs. As such, it is important for members of the faith-based community, to increase their awareness of mental health issues and be prepared to help.

Need help getting started? Listed below are just a couple of organizations that may be able to provide you with a list of resources or provide more information.

1. It's Getting Better All The Time! Mental Health Outreach [www.igbatt.com](http://www.igbatt.com)
2. National Institute of Mental Health [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov))
4. National Alliance on Mental Illness ([www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org))
5. Veterans Mental Health ([www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov))

## A Faith Based Recovery Is

1. Recovery is a process that can be facilitated by many factors to include: a belief in your ability to get better, support systems, medication(s), and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. A faith-based recovery mindset is freeing yourself from the prison of your limitations and realizing that God has indeed created you for a purpose. It is coming to the knowledge that the grace of God is available for you and that He is concerned about everything that concerns you.
3. A person with a faith-based recovery mindset understands that while the plan God has for their life may not be the plan that they envisioned, they remain determined to rest and to trust in His sovereign plan.
4. A faith-based recovery mindset is choosing to take responsibility for your treatment, and not being afraid to seek help when needed. It is coming to the understanding that to live a healthy life, you may have to take medication(s), but having to take medication(s) does not decrease or imply that you lack faith in God.
5. A faith-based recovery mindset does not just accept the belief that things will always be the way that they are now, or that things will never get better.
6. A faith-based recovery mindset chooses to hope, to trust Jesus Christ, and to do the things that are necessary to facilitate recovery and life.
7. A person with a faith-based recovery mindset understands, that even if they don't get a miracle when they want it, God is still in control of their steps.
8. A person with a faith-based recovery mindset is not just sitting down, idly waiting for a miracle. Instead, they are living their life to the fullest...now.
9. A person with a faith-based recovery mindset understands, that even if they don't get a miracle when they want it, God is still in control of their steps.
10. A person with a faith-based recovery mindset understands that because they are more than the symptoms of their illness they must take care of their spirit, soul, and bodies.

11. Recovery is living every day knowing that as a Christian you have the treasure of God in you, so the Excellency of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ may be of him and not of you. It is for that reason that you keep moving in the plans that He has for your life no matter how you feel.

12. Recovery is understanding that though setbacks may happen in your life, with Jesus Christ you can recover and move forward.

13. Recovery is standing on the word of God, trusting your lord and savior Jesus Christ and thanking him for the grace that has brought you this far.

God Bless From It's Getting Better All The Time! Mental Health Outreach Inc ([igbatt.com](http://igbatt.com))

## Who We Are

### Our Mission

"To provide information and support while encouraging hope and faith"

### Vision

Our vision is to ensure that all individuals who have been impacted in some way by a severe and persistent mental illness will have access to information that will empower them to make informed decisions about their mental health and fulfill their God given purpose for living.