

## **Addressing Mental Health: Anxiety and Depression**

If you are experiencing anxiety or depression or both, your goal right now is to:

- Get empowered with information.
- Get direction from a professional in order to create an immediate strategy for daily practices and begin to discover the source of your depression and/or anxiety so it can be brought into the light and healed.
- Start engaging daily disciplines that will heal your brain and transform your life.

### **Mental Health**

Most of us are aware that mental health issues are on the rise. It is estimated that over 55 million Americans are currently facing some form of mental health concerns. While rampant among today's youth, mental health issues are also common among older people.

People who are struggling with mental health issues are often combating stress which can lead to exaggerated anxiety and eventually depression. Often there is a loss of hope, joy, the absence of peace and comfort. The experiences of sadness, loneliness, unpredictable and uncontrollable emotions are common. In more critical situations, a person with mental health issues may have thoughts of ending their life or a desire to self-harm as a coping mechanism. If this is where you find yourself, please call the suicide prevention number at Suicide Hotline (U.S.) - 1-800-273-8255.

We believe GOD uses prayer, mental health professionals, Christian community, spiritual disciplines and an assortment of other tools to restore us to health. Some cases of depression/anxiety are due to chemical imbalances in the brain and will require psychiatric medication. Other situations may be due to feelings of guilt, bitterness, unresolved pain/trauma, or unforgiveness. This is where a trusted pastor, counselor or spiritual friend can offer support and help. Sometimes, however, chemicals are misused to suppress difficult emotions — emotions that need to be addressed, not stuffed or medicated. In such cases, we recommend you see a mental health professional to discuss the process of emotional and spiritual healing.

# A TOOLBOX FOR MENTAL HEALTH:

## UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

Let's begin the discussion about depression by defining it.

Depression is a mood disorder in which individuals experience abnormally low moods and sadness. During these periods of lows, the individual is unable to raise their mood. Depression is not the same as sadness or grief.

Depression is a more persistent, marked difficulty in elevating one's mood. Grief is a response to a death or loss. The death or loss can be of a loved one, pet, unexpected endings, marriage, ending of a dream. Although sadness and grief can lead to depression, it is important to be self aware and seek professional assessment before self diagnosing.

The symptoms of depression are physical and mental. The symptoms include loss of interest, lack of appetite, weight loss, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, difficulty with sleep, sleeping too much, feelings of worthlessness and recurring thoughts of death. When depression goes unmonitored it will result in a depression cycle. The cycle consists of the depression feeding off of itself — an example being the lack of motivation leads to isolation which leads to more feelings of worthlessness. It is critical to be aware if depression is present, and engage tools to begin to exit the depression cycle.

The tools needed to deal with depression will feel counterintuitive. Engaging these tools will seem like the last thing that you want to do. When using these tools, it is important to remind yourself of the goal — taking one step at time. The Lord is with you in the valley. He is guiding you step by step out of the cycle.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** It is possible you will start to feel different immediately. But often you won't feel immediate relief from your pain. However, the process IS WORKING if you do it daily whether you feel it immediately or not. So, this is where faith comes in — have faith by continuing to engage these practices.

## **A STRATEGY FOR WALKING OUT OF DEPRESSION**

Following is a general strategy to help you walk out of your depression and/or anxiety:

**MEET WITH A GUIDE:** Meet immediately with someone who has expertise. A counselor, pastor, or a person who has walked out of anxiety or depression. They can help you come up with a strategic plan, pray for you, and help launch you into your plan and a season of prayer.

**MEET WITH THE LORD:** Meet the Lord every day in prayer. Use the book of Psalms to guide your prayers as often, when we are hurting, our minds are not able to generate prayer very well, but the Psalms guide us generate the words for us.

**MEET WITH YOUR COMMUNITY:** You will not feel like doing this but you must! Immediately find a place of community. It is essential to be in relationships during this season. The church will help connect you to a discipleship group.

**DO NOT ISOLATE YOURSELF:** Do not spend excessive time alone but instead go outside often. Perhaps go outside to pray or, if you are working, go to a coffee shop instead of staying at home.

**GET YOUR HEART RATE UP EVERY DAY:** Exercise 10 to 20 minutes, at least four times a week, and the goal is to just get your heart rate up high not to do long exercise at a low heart rate

**DON'T EAT SLUGGISH FOOD.** Remove unhealthy eating right now, in this season, from your diet. Eat more basic healthy foods.

**CUT DOWN ON CAFFEINE:** Remove most of the caffeine from your diet and drink more water in this season.

**CUT OUT DEPRESSANTS:** If there is any alcohol in your week remove that immediately as it is a depressant.

**GRATITUDE LOG:** Engage in writing down 2-3 things you are grateful for each day.

**BREATHING:** Take some time each day to engage in breath prayer or grounding. These tools help you connect with the present moment.

**SEE A PHYSICIAN:** You may be very chemically depleted in your mind and so if your anxiety or depression is severe go see a doctor for possible medication.

## UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

Defining Anxiety ... Anxiety is a mental and physical reaction to perceived threats.

Worry is mental distress resulting from concern (usually something impending or anticipated).”

The definitions outline a clear difference between anxiety and worry. Anxiety is a reaction to perceived threats whereas worry is thinking of things that are impending. In other words, worry is a response to things that we know are coming and anxiety is a response to perceived threats.

Anxiety and worry are both helpful within the correct context and when used correctly. Anxiety prepares us to fight, fly, freeze or faint. Anxiety is a part of God's good and thoughtful design for our bodies. It aids us to protect ourselves from threats (enemies, dangerous situations). It equips us through sending signals to our body.

Worry is also helpful when it directs us to productive action such as planning, seeking counsel, and problem solving. When worry becomes excessive it turns into unhelpful anxiety.

Anxiety that is unhelpful consists of excessive worry, extreme nervousness, obsessive fixations, upset stomach, racing heart, shakiness, headaches, poor concentration, sleep issues and avoidance behaviors.

When anxiety is unhelpful, it builds stories rooted in uncertainty and fear. When we are in this heightened state, it is difficult to interact with the present moment. We are unable to engage with God and access what He makes available to us. We need to name and label what is occurring in order to have some power over it.

# **A Guide for Walking Through Anxiety and Other Mental Health Challenges**

## **Prayer**

Begin here! We believe prayer is one of the most important ways we can stay healthy. Below is a list of prayer prompts to get you started.

For those of us who have loved ones battling mental health issues, the best thing we can do is pray for them and offer them space to process and express their thoughts and feelings. Remember, the gift of our listening presence is one of the most healing things we can offer.

Pray for:

- Healing for the mind, comfort for the heart, proper response to anxious thoughts
- Wisdom for medical professionals-proper medication, therapy.
- Strength and peace for loved ones; insight for them to have empathy for the person with the mental health challenge; community support
- Forgiveness of sin, relief from guilt and shame (particularly if the person admits to sinful behavior that preceded the depression/anxiety).
- Deeper faith to believe God's promises of provision, protection and guidance; to trust in the character of God to know their needs. (Anxiety or depression.)
- Power for the person to voice their cares to the Lord and leave them in His capable hands
- Hope for God's help, healing, deliverance, and strength.
- Insight to see the gift of Christian community and connection.

When ministering to someone struggling with mental health issues, DO NOT:

- Judge them for feeling sad, sensitive, ashamed, unmotivated, etc.
- Reply with simplistic, shaming statements like "snap out of it," or "just stop worrying or feeling that way." (Remember, they probably would do those things if they could.)
- Discourage them, but promote the idea of seeking professional help.

## Scripture Engagement

Psalm One offers great counsel and direction ... blessed is the one who delights in GOD and meditates on His word day and night. He becomes "like a tree," like a new person! Scripture has tremendous power to guide us. Think about some of these verses. Search for other meaningful passages to meditate on.

Philippians 4:6-7 NIV - Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Psalm 32:7 NIV - You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Jeremiah 17:14 NIV - Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.

1 Peter 5:6-7 NIV - Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NIV - The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Matthew 11:28-30 NIV - Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Psalm 42:11 NIV - Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Psalm 94:18-19 NIV - When I said, "My foot is slipping," your unfailing love, Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy.

Psalm 139:14 NIV - I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

## Reading Plans

Consider a Bible Reading plan. The Youversion app has several to choose from:

- Wisdom for Mental Health - <https://www.bible.com/en/reading-plans/32528>
- Depression: A Devotional For The Wounded Spirit - <https://www.bible.com/en/reading-plans/2614>
- The Overwhelmed Challenge - <https://go2.lc/overwhelmedchallenge>
- Anchored: Through Deep Waters - <https://go2.lc/anchored>

## Teaching Series

Sometimes lectures, books, articles, podcasts are helpful in providing information and ideas. Here are a few sermon series that will offer some insight and spiritual guidance:

“Peace of Mind” series, by Pastor Craig Groeschel

Particularly these messages ...

The Most Dangerous Myths Of Mental Health - [https://youtu.be/N\\_uzqKbQUlo](https://youtu.be/N_uzqKbQUlo)

Battling Depression - [https://youtu.be/pQ3\\_GI2H0wY](https://youtu.be/pQ3_GI2H0wY)

“Perspective” Series - <https://go2.lc/perspective>

“Words to Live By” - <https://go2.lc/wordsmessgae>

Messages by Compassion Christian

Soul Detox | Detox Your Mind | Cam Huxford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwJejZYHmJc&t=1172s>

Anxious for Nothing| Staying Calm in a Crisis... Find Your Joy, Cam Huxford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JO-o66WvtLw>

Anxious for Nothing| Philippians 4:6-7, Harrison Huxford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVUql1NC9dA>

Anxious for Nothing| Think About What You Think About, Cam Huxford

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bae\\_pfSlpHw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bae_pfSlpHw)

The Resistance | Enemy Territory | Marcus Johnson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmVxOO8SvQI>

Holiday Field Guide | Isolation and Depression | Harrison Huxford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMBpF9HcK0g>

Good Question Podcast Episode: How do I navigate Mental Health?

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1G9j0N5QO4KhMJiH5yOYjh>

## **Additional Resources for Depression and Anxiety**

Mental Health professionals are trained to listen, help guide and direct us. A great counselor will provide tools, thoughts and ideas about helpful resources, spiritual exercises and disciplines that will assist you. We do not endorse any one counselor but only provide a list so that you have options and select the one the best fits your needs. When professional counseling is the appropriate avenue, we refer to these local Christ-centered therapists:

### **Sea-Change Counseling Services - Andras Oliser, EdD, MA, LAPC**

[aoliser@seachangecounselingservices.com](mailto:aoliser@seachangecounselingservices.com)

912-777-9842

website: <https://seachangecounselingservices.com/>

50 Al Henderson Blvd.

Savannah, GA 31419

#### **Offers Telehealth throughout Georgia**

Andras offers marriage counseling in a 2-day intensive format with telehealth follow-up that makes longer distances manageable while still receiving face to face therapy

<https://seachangecounselingservices.com/marathon-sessions/>

### **DG Counseling, LLC - Jovanna Jarvis, MA, APC**

[jjaviscounseling@gmail.com](mailto:jjaviscounseling@gmail.com)

912-658-0604

50 Al Henderson Blvd.

Savannah, GA 31419

#### **Offers Telehealth throughout Georgia**

### **J. S. Bass Counseling - Jim Bass**

[jsbasscounseling@gmail.com](mailto:jsbasscounseling@gmail.com)

912-220-4441

<http://www.jsbasscounseling.com/contact.html>

2103 Bull Street,

Savannah, GA 31401

### **Five Stones Counseling - Jo Crosby, M.Ed., LPC and John Crosby, MA, CAMS-11**

912-667-5848

<https://www.fivestones.org/>

1611 Dean Forest Road

Savannah, GA 31408

### **The Barnabus Center for Counseling**

912-352-7638

<https://www.barnabascenter.net/>

1 Oglethorpe Professional Blvd. Suite 201

Savannah, GA 31406



**Daybreak Counseling** - Rachel Wood, LPC, NCC

[Rachel@daybreakcounseling.biz](mailto:Rachel@daybreakcounseling.biz)

912-289-5522

Website: <https://daybreakcounseling.clientsecure.me/>

**Hope Counseling Center of Savannah** - Bonnie Glenn, LPC, NCC, GRS

[bonnie@hopecounseling.center](mailto:bonnie@hopecounseling.center)

912- 661-2801

<https://hopecounseling.center>

37 W Fairmont Avenue

Savannah, GA 31406

**Breaking Dawn Counseling** - Dawn Fabian, MA

[dawn.fabian@att.net](mailto:dawn.fabian@att.net)

912-509-0503

website: <http://dgcounselingllc.com/contact-us/>

50 Al Henderson Blvd.

Savannah, GA 31419

Offers Telehealth throughout Georgia

online booking: <https://december-goad.clientsecure.me>

Click on "I'm a new Client" then select "Dawn M. Fabian" on the drop-down menu.

Recipient of the 2022 Georgia's Best in the Regional Category for Mental Health.

**DG Counseling, LLC** - December Goad, MA, LPC, NCC

[december@dgcounselingllc.com](mailto:december@dgcounselingllc.com)

912-417-5787

website: <http://dgcounselingllc.com/contact-us/>

50 Al Henderson Blvd.

Savannah, GA 31419

Offers Telehealth throughout Georgia

online booking: <https://december-goad.clientsecure.me>

December accepts some insurance plan

### **For Outlying Areas from Savannah**

Psychology Today - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>

- Suicide Hotline (U.S.) - 1-800-273-8255.
- International Suicide Hotlines - <http://www.suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html>
- Depression, Suicide, Eating disorders: Heart Support - <http://www.heartsupport.com>

## **Books**

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do: Discouragement and Depression, by Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend

Switch on Your Brain, by Dr. Caroline Leaf

Running Scared: Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest, by Edward T. Welch

Why Am I Feeling Like This?: A Teen's Guide to Freedom from Anxiety and Depression, by David Murray

Grace for the Children: Finding Hope in the Midst of Child and Adolescent Mental Illness, by Matthew S. Stanford