

Mental Illness Among the Urban Poor

**Ana Wong-McDonald, Ph.D.
Clinical Director of Programs
The Salvation Army – Haven
11301 Wilshire Blvd., Bldg. 212, 3rd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90073
(310) 478-3711, ext. 43653
ana.wong-mcdonald@usw.salvationarmy.org**

Handouts

- **Extended outline**
 - **Depression & Anxiety Questionnaires**
 - **Guidelines for selecting mental health professional**
 - **Mental Health Directory Listings**
 - **Brochure, Creating Caring Congregations, with websites**
- **PowerPoint slides**
- **Bookmark: Who I am in Christ**
- **Reference Guide: Mental Illness & Substance Abuse Among Homeless**

Resources

- **Mental Illness & Families of Faith**
(free download at www.MentalHealthMinistries.net)
- ***Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical & Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness***
by Matthew S. Stanford
- ***Lay Counseling*** by S. Y. Tan

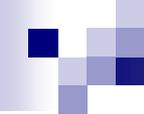


Prevalence in U.S.

- 46% of all Americans will meet criteria for a DSM-IV psychiatric disorder sometime in their lifetime (Archart-Treichel, 2005).
- Serious mental illness (that substantially interferes with life activities and ability to function) afflict 5.4% of U.S. adults each year (Wang et al., 2002).

What is mental illness?

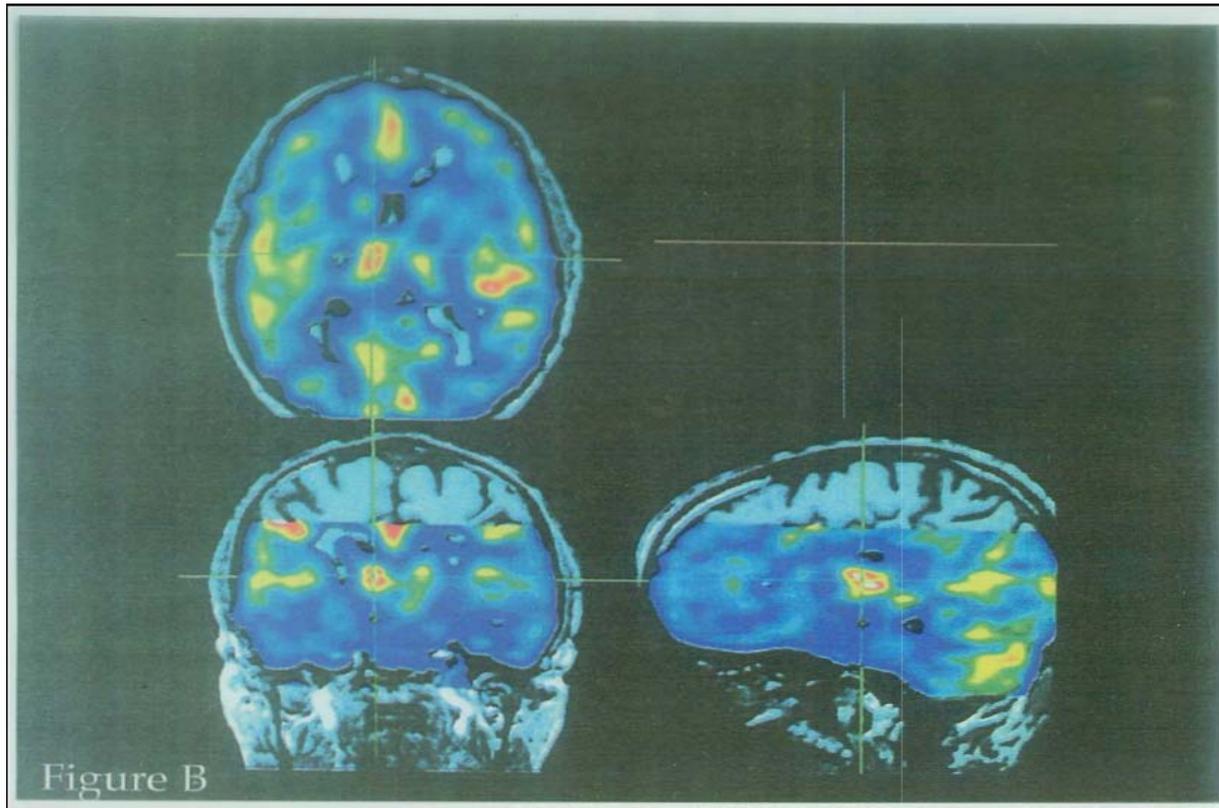
- Illness - A disease/sickness
- Mental - involving the mind
- The sickness can affect thinking, mood (feelings), or behavior (action).
- As heart disease is an illness of the heart, ulcer is an illness of the stomach, mental illness is a disease of the brain.



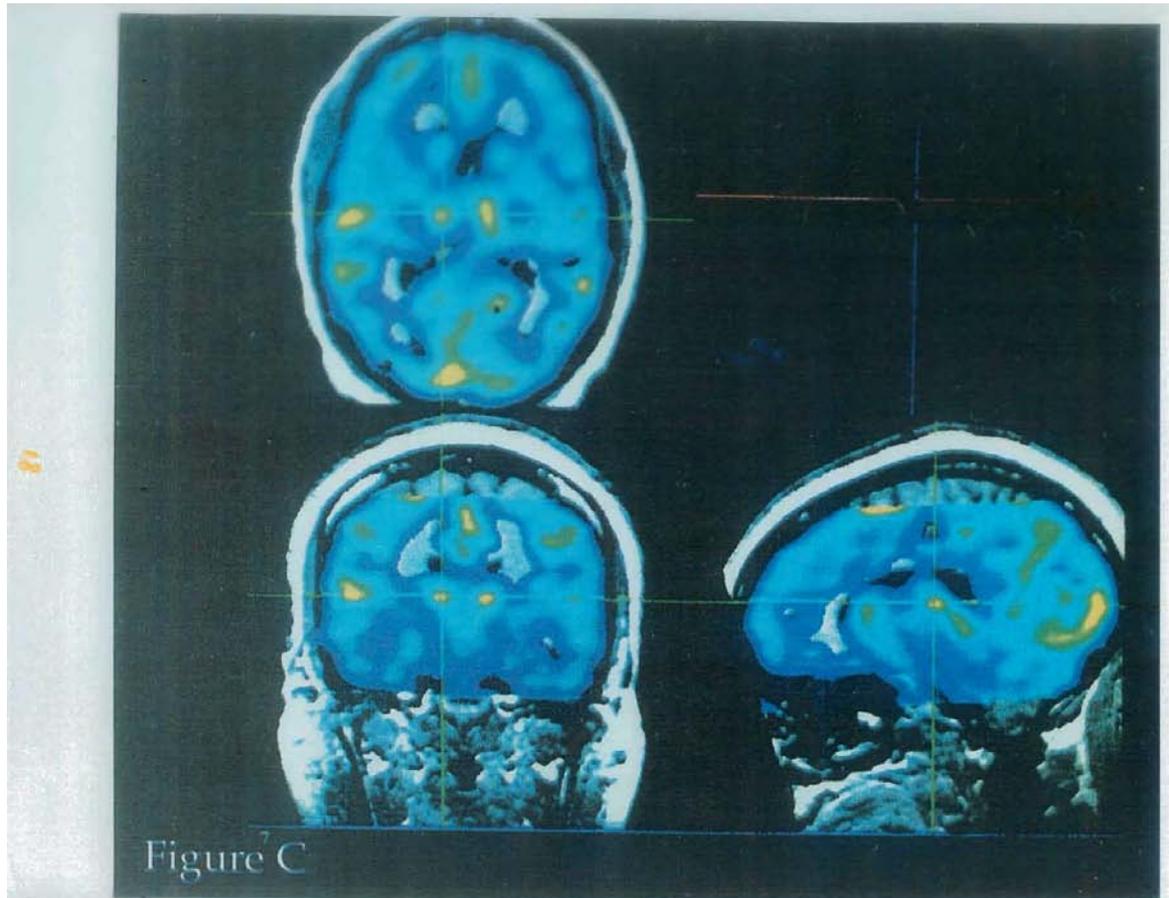
Mental illness is a disease of the brain

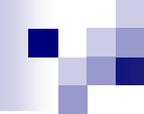
- Due to advances in technology, we are now more able to see the disorder in the brain through neuroimager techniques such as PET scans (positron emission tomography) and MRI (magnetic resonance imager).
- We now know that for people with psychiatric disorders the neural circuits in the brain are not functioning properly.

Normal Brain



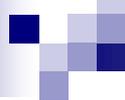
Brain of Person with Schizophrenia





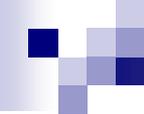
What is mental illness?

- Just as certain illnesses like diabetes is lifelong, mental illness can also be chronic or lasting throughout a lifetime.
- About 1 in 10 people in each faith community has a chronic/lifelong mental illness
- Just as diabetes can be controlled by medication and treatment, mental illness can also be controlled by medication and proper treatment.



Where does mental illness come from?

- Heredity (genes), and
- Stress
- combine to bring about symptoms of mental illness.



What are some severe mental illnesses?

- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder or Manic Depression
- Anxiety Disorder
- Schizophrenia

L.A. County Dept. of Mental Health Clergy Survey

5,900 mailings to churches in Fall 2005

453 responses received between 10/05 & 1/06

- Main mental health issues in faith communities: Depression, anxiety, and substance use
- Clergy currently address these issues by: Referral, counseling, and prayer/healing sessions
- Main requests from clergy: Resources, trainings, & consultations
- Over 250 respondents (57%), request for contact by the Dept. of Mental Health



Major Depressive Disorder

The Blues vs. Depression

- A normal reaction to a life stressor
- Primarily affect only the emotional domain
- Temporary
- Rarely lead to suicidal thoughts
- Requires coping, support, and time
- A psychiatric disorder or mental illness
- Affects multiple domains – emotional, cognitive, physical
- Persistent/Chronic
- Suicidal thoughts common
- Requires professional treatment

(DiPaolo, 2006)

Prevalence

- **Depressive disorders (i.e, Major depression, dysthymia, bipolar disorder) affect about 20.9 million Americans each year.**
- **Or 1 in every 5 persons (9.5% of the U.S. population age 18 and older)**
- **Making it one of the most common mental illness in the U.S. (NIMH, 2003)**



Symptoms of Depression

- Persistent sad mood
- Change in appetite
- Change in sleep patterns
- Fatigue
- Self-image distortions
- Problems in concentration
- Hopeless feelings
- Loss of interest in activities
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Thoughts of suicide

Criteria for Major Depression

- 5 or more symptoms must be present for at least 2 weeks
- One of the symptoms must be either sad mood or loss of interest/pleasure
- Recurrent (chronic condition) must have 2 or more Major Depressive Episodes (separated by at least 2 consecutive months in which criteria are not met for a Major Depressive Episode)

Depression Affects the Whole Person

- Physically - lack of energy, appetite change, sleep problems, restlessness or lethargy
- Mentally - poor concentration, distorted thinking (e.g., no one likes me), indecision, suicidal thoughts
- Emotionally - sad mood, loss of interest, inappropriate guilt & shame, feelings of hopelessness
- Relationally - isolation, tension/conflicts
- Spiritually - sense of despair/hopelessness, feeling abandoned by God (DiPaolo, 2006)

Treatment

- **Effective treatment: A combination of medication & psychotherapy**
 - antidepressants (SSRIs, TCAs, MAOIs)
 - cognitive behavioral therapy
 - interpersonal therapy (NIMH, 2000)
- **Family and social support**

Treatment

- **Proper exercise (e.g., brisk walk, jogging)
30 min per day, 3 - 4 days per week**
- **Spiritual interventions**
 - prayer**
 - meditating/memorizing Scripture**
 - listening to/singing spiritual songs**
 - pastoral counseling**
 - reading spiritual literature**



Examples of Spiritual Interventions

- **Prayer (e.g., going to God “as you are,” pray for specifics, “inner healing prayer” – visualization, laying on of hands)**
- **Journaling – record prayers, insights, conversations with God, answered prayers**
- **Practice spiritual disciplines, especially those that “counter” a depressive mindset (thankfulness, worship, and celebration)**

Depressive Mindset

- **Persons in the midst of depression often describe a negative and hopeless mindset about themselves, their future, and the world in general.**
 - **self: “I can’t do it. I’m useless.”**
 - **future: “Things will never change.”**
 - **world: “This is a hostile place.”**

Examples of Spiritual Interventions

Examples:

- ***Self Talk:*** No one wants me; no one loves me.
- ***Replace self talk with:*** “You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you.” (Isaiah 43:4)

Examples of Spiritual Interventions

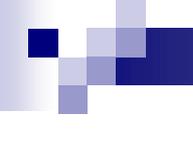
Examples:

- ***Self-Talk:*** It is too late for me. I'd committed too many sins against God.
- ***Replace self talk with:*** There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

Examples of Spiritual Interventions

Examples:

- ***Self-Talk:*** Nothing will ever change. There is no hope for the future.
- ***Replace self talk with:*** I know the plans God has for me...Plans for good and not for disaster, to give me a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11).



Overcome Depression by the Renewing of Your Mind

- **If you commit large sections of Scripture to memory, you will find that your thinking is changed in the process. You simply cannot be filled with God's Words and negative thoughts in the same time (Stanley, 2003).**
- **One way of meditating on Scripture is to sing and memorize spiritual songs, especially those with lyrics that are taken directly from the Bible .**

Renewing Your Mind

- **Use the bookmark, Who I am in Christ, to remind yourself who you are (i.e., a beloved child of God) and to renew your mind. (This list can be obtained from the Freedom in Christ Ministries website at www.ficm.org)**
- **One woman who had successfully recovered from depression shared that she taped herself reading a list like this and listened to it when she woke up in the morning and again before she went to bed at night.**



Renewing Your Mind

- **“If what we believe does not reflect truth, then what we feel does not reflect reality.”**

-- Neil Anderson
- **Do not determine reality by just how you feel.**
- **It is time to take back any grounds lost to our enemy via negative self-talk (lies) and to renew our minds with the truth (God’s word).**

Changing Your Beliefs

From:

Personal

“I’m the problem”

Pervasive

“In every situation”

Permanent

“Forever”

To:

Impersonal

“It’s a problem.”

Specific

“In this one situation”

Temporary

“For a season”

(Anderson, 2000)

Renewing Your Mind

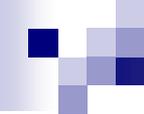
- **The transformation of your mind is a process and an ongoing battle.**
- **Combat the lie (i.e., negative self-talk) with God's truth each time it surfaces.**
- **Guard your minds: Be careful of what you allow to be put into it (e.g., TV, movies, books, music, listening to people).**
- **Fill your mind with good things (e.g., Scripture, conversations with godly people, inspirational music & films, contemplating the beauty of nature, remembering a beloved pet).**

Renewing Your Mind

- **Proverbs 23:7 – As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.**
- **John Maxwell: “Your life today is a result of your thinking yesterday. Your life tomorrow will be determined by what you think today.”**
- **Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. Romans 12:2 (NLT)**

Recovery Rate for Depression

- **With medication and therapy: 80%**
- **With medication, therapy, and spiritual interventions, the rate is even higher!**
- **Results of a 3 year spirituality group for chronically mentally ill clients:**
 - **With medication & rehabilitation: 57% success in treatment goal attainment**
 - **With meds, rehab, & spiritual interventions: 100% success in txt goal attainment (Wong-McDonald, 2007)**

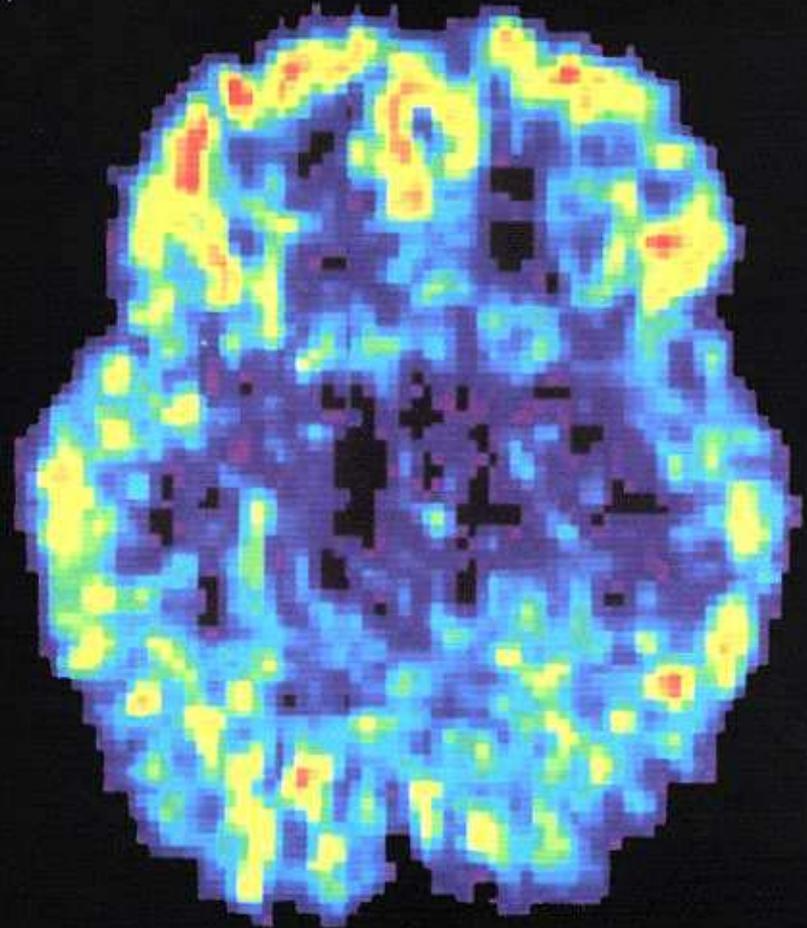
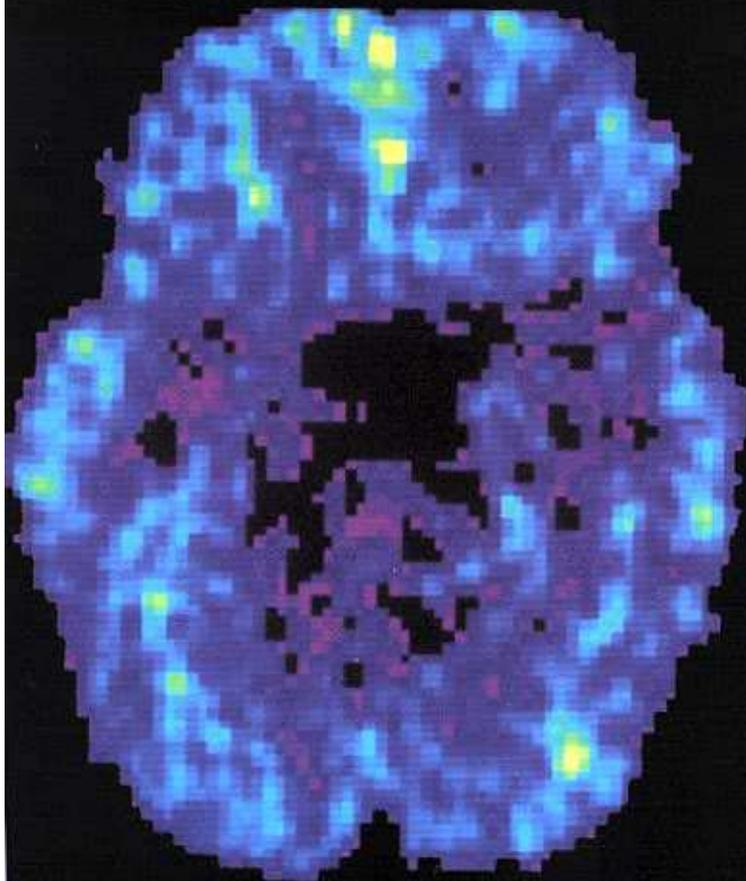


Best Practices

- **Effective Treatment = Medication + Psychotherapy**
- **Best Treatment = Medication + Therapy + Spiritual Practices**

Depressed Brain

Recovered Brain





Anxiety Disorders

Going to the Root

- **Root of depression = hopelessness**
- **Root of anxiety = fear**

When someone is in a state of anxiety, it usually means that their mind and emotion are dominated by fear. They perpetually worry that something horrible will happen.

Understanding Anxiety Disorders

- The core issues have to do with fear, worry, and an exaggerated negative mindset that the worst will happen.
- Anxiety disorders involve automatic reactions to a *perceived* threat. The reaction tends to be out of proportion to reality, as the person will perceive the threat to be much greater than it actually is.

How Real Are Our Worries?

The Truth

- 40 % of what we worry about never happens
- 30% has already happened
- 12% has nothing to do with us
- 10% relates to imagined illness
- 8% is legitimate

(Bellesi, 2006)

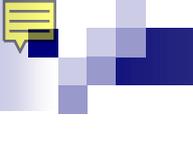


Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

- feeling anxious most of the time with no apparent reason
- anxious feelings interfering with daily activities (e.g., person cannot get out of the house or take public transportation)
- intense anxiety that terrify and immobilize
- Usually there is an exaggerated unrealistic fear from perpetual worry and negative self-talk which lead up to the disorder

Effects of Prolonged Anxiety

- ***physically*** – muscle tension, nausea, abdominal distress, sleep problems, fatigue, restlessness, shaking, sweating, shortness of breath
- ***mentally*** – persistent worry, poor concentration, mind going blank, hypervigilance
- ***emotionally*** – anxious mood, irritability or anger, inappropriate guilt/shame, fears
- ***relationally*** – isolation, tension
- ***spiritually*** – despair, feeling abandoned by God (DiPaolo, 2006)



Effects of Prolonged Anxiety

Depletion of Body Systems

- The immune system becomes depleted, so you are more prone to illness (e.g., flu, heart disease)
- The anti-pain system becomes depleted, so you feel more bodily pain and discomfort (e.g., fatigue, pain syndromes)
- The anti-anxiety system becomes depleted, so you will experience more anxiety and frustrations which will predispose you to hypertension, anxiety disorders, panic attacks, and depression.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

- ***panic disorder*** – feelings of extreme dread accompanied by intense physical symptoms
- ***obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)*** – intrusive repetitive thoughts and rituals performed out of a sense of urgent need (e.g., checking & rechecking)
- ***post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)*** – a reaction to a terrifying event that keeps returning as intrusive memories and brings on hypervigilance and numbing of normal emotions
- ***phobias*** – intense fear of an object or situation (e.g., social phobia is a fear of social situations)
- ***generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)*** – exaggerated worry and tension over everyday events and decisions

Prevalence

- **Anxiety disorders affect over 20 million Americans annually. It is one of the most common psychiatric illness.**
- **Usually, specific fears or phobias have a feared object whereas generalized anxiety tends to be a pervasive state without specific causes.**

Treatment

- **Effective treatment is a combo of medication and therapy (recovery rate is 70 – 90 %).**
- ***medications* - antidepressants and benzodiazepines**
- ***cognitive-behavioral therapy* – changing the thinking patterns so they can react differently to situations that cause them anxiety**

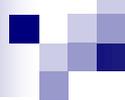
Treatment

- ***family and social support***
- ***relaxation techniques*** – changing the body's conditioned response to fear through the use of relaxation exercises (e.g., slow deep breathing, visualization, calming self talk).
- ***spiritual interventions***
 - use interventions to quiet fears
 - visualization (e.g., seeing self as a lamb and Jesus holding the lamb)
 - use Scripture as calming self-talk



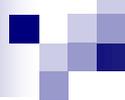
Best Practices during Recovery

- **Recovery is a process. It is normal sometimes to take 3 steps forward and 2 steps back.**
- **Be careful of what is absorbed into the mind (e.g., media, talk shows, movies, novels, music, listening to others, self talk).**



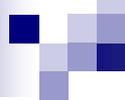
Best Practices during Recovery

- **Test self-talk, thoughts, various communications, & anxieties with Phil 4:8 “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”**



Best Practices during Recovery

- **Move away from rumination (use distraction, thought stopping).**
- **Discourage continual venting during counseling.**
- **Take small steps toward achievement of counseling goals (e.g., breakdown ultimate goal of finding a job into smaller steps such as completing vocational training, doing volunteer work, writing a resume, finding part-time work, mock interviews, checking job listings, sending applications).**



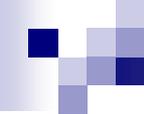
The Anxiety-Depression Connection

- It is very common for both to coexist.
- One seldom appears without the other.
- Research indicates that up to 60% of people who are depressed have some type of anxiety disorder also.
- Treatment is dependent on which is the primary problem. Usually, when the dominant problem gets treated, the secondary diagnosis will take care of itself.
- If both disorders are independent, then both will need to be treated simultaneously (Hart, 1999).



Video

Depression & Anxiety in Adults
Carol's Story
(Mental Health Ministries, 2005)



Causes of Anxiety Disorders

- **heredity, often run in families**
 - **predisposing causes in childhood (e.g., caregivers communicate an overly cautious view of the world)**
 - **medical conditions**
 - **stressors**
 - **trauma**
 - **significant losses**
 - **major life change**
 - **high-stress lifestyle**
- (Bourne, 1995)**

Causes of Anxiety

- **Edmond Bourne, award-winning author on anxiety and fear, wrote: “anxiety arises from a state of disconnection.”**
- **When we go to the Bible, we find that the Greek word for peace means to “bind together” something that has been broken, disjointed, or disconnected (Stanley, 2003).**



Causes of Anxiety

Jesus said:

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

A spiritual cause of anxiety is a disconnection from the power of Christ, and the disconnection produces a host of fears and worries.



Causes of Anxiety

- **But how do we get disconnected from the power of the indwelling Christ?**
- **Recall Peter's example when he walked on water (Matthew 14:25-31).**

Causes of Anxiety

- **The Bible tells us that**
 - **God loves us.**
 - **He will never leave nor forsake us.**
 - **He is all-powerful.**
 - **Nothing will happen to us apart from his sovereign will.**
- **If we truly believe these promises of God, then what are we worried about?**



Causes of Anxiety

- **Sometimes we are like the seed sown among thorns (Matt 13:4).**
- **We allow the peace of God be choked out of us by the thorns of worry and fear.**

Two Main Fears

When we examine the fears known to us (e.g., fear of strangers, fear of humiliation or embarrassment, fear of height, fear of disease, fear of insects or animals, fear of natural disasters), we can generally fit them into 2 main categories:

- fear of people**
- fear of death**

Fear of People

- **Social phobia, shyness, being afraid to say “no” to people’s requests, fear of rejection, being accommodating when it is inappropriate to do so, fear of what other people think, stage fright, and fear of “appearing like a fool” are all rooted in the fear of people.**
- **The cause of such fear can be traced to abuse, trauma, mental illness, rejection by peers, and a lack of receiving enough love and acceptance when one is growing up.**

Fear of People

- Usually the fear of people originates from an internal need to gain the acceptance and love of others, because one's self-esteem and security is based on other people's opinion.
- This is a lie that unfortunately many people are caught up under. If this is your problem, know that your worth is not dependent on other people's opinion but on God's opinion about you. Your self-esteem is not based on other people's approval but on the love of God.



Fear of People

- **What can people do to us that God cannot fix?**
- **Who can we be afraid of that is greater than God?**
- **Whose opinion do you trust, other people's or God's?**

Fear of People

The biggest **lie** about self-worth (SW)

SW = performance + other people's opinion

The biggest **truth** about self-worth (SW)

SW = righteousness + God's opinion

(Elder, 2006)

Fear of People

Meditation on God's Truth

- The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted (Prov 29:25).
- “I..am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men [and] the sons of men who are but grass, that you forget the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror everyday...?” (Isaiah 51:12-13).
- Paul wrote in Gal 1:10, “Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Fear of Death

- **People who struggle with the fear of death are caught up in the “what if” syndrome. They tend to imagine the worst, even though 99% of the time the worst doesn’t happen and there is no evidence that it will (Anderson, 1999).**
- **They may be afraid of flying, even though research indicates that it is the safest way to travel. They may see furry animals and run away in fear, even though thousands of people have cats and dogs as pets. Or they may see a rash on their hand and be worried that they have skin cancer, even though they and their family members have no history of such.**

Fear of Death

- **O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? ... but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:55-57).**
- **Jesus said..."I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).**

Fear of Death

- **Unless Jesus comes back first, all of us will die physically, but none of us will die spiritually. When Christians die, we will be separate from our physical bodies and be transported into the presence of God (Anderson, 1999).**
- **Indeed, that is why Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21).**

Eliminating Fear

Do the thing you fear!

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Do the thing you are afraid to do, and the death of [that] fear is certain.”**
- **The truth of this statement has been proven in many psychological approaches such as behavioral therapy, systematic desensitization, and exposure therapy.**



Eliminating Fear

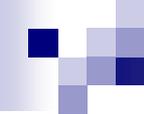
Do the thing you fear!

If someone has a fear of riding in an elevator, what do you think will happen to that fear if the person keeps avoiding elevators. Will the fear get healed? Or will it get worse?

Eliminating Fear

Do the thing you fear!

- The truth is that the more we avoid what we fear, the more scary it becomes. Every time we allow the fear to control us (e.g., taking the stairs again instead of riding the elevator), the fear gets bigger.
- It is like cowering to a bully, the more you grovel, the more he will harass you. The only way to stop the bullying is to stand-up to him. In our case, we are standing up to the bully (i.e., our fear) with the power of Christ!



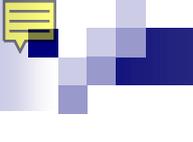
Best Practices

- **Effective Treatment = Medication + Psychotherapy**
- **Best Treatment = Medication + Therapy + Spiritual Practices**

3 Pillars of Spiritual Interventions

- Word of God
- People of God
- Spirit of God

*(See PowerPoint posted on 2009 conference website
for complete description:
www.healthcaremissions.org)*



Video

**Creating Caring Congregations:
How Congregations Can Respond
(Mental Health Ministries, 2008)**

**Five-step program:
Education, Commitment, Welcome,
Support, & Advocacy**



Questions & Discussions

Thank you!