

May is Mental Health Month

As I entered the day room of an admission unit, I found a young man pacing about in conversation with someone only he could hear; in recovery, I see this young man smile at himself in the mirror as he prepares for work. Another individual sits in a seat with his heart throbbing in his chest, with feelings of anxiety and dread; in recovery, he will feel at ease as he leaves to meet with friends. A young girl waits to be called. She feels hopeless and alone; in recovery, she is happy as she goes to volunteer to read to the elderly in a nursing home. Who are they?



These people are individuals with mental illnesses. As with many physical diseases, mental illnesses are treatable, largely due to research outcomes, pharmaceutical advances, and an improved healthcare support system.

Advances in treatment and medications continue to shorten the hospitalization time for many mentally ill individuals. The healthcare system has made tremendous gains toward community treatment for those who, in the past, would have required hospitalization.

The people who use this community healthcare system are individuals like you and me. They go to school, hold jobs, maintain families and actively contribute to their communities and society. They have hopes and dreams, experience sadness and joy, read books, play sports and enjoy hobbies. In many instances, you may not notice their mental illness. In fact, 20% of people have a mental illness. Despite this prevalence, treatment gains, information campaigns, awareness books and articles, mental illness remains a “whispered” disease.

Bringing the “whisper” to voice requires trust, acceptance and understanding. As you worship today, look within yourself for guidance in how you and your congregation can become active partners in your community healthcare support system. Remember, the people living with these illnesses are people just like you and me. They are our neighbors, friends and family and we must strive to help them stay healthy and happy.

Good mental health makes good sense.

Written by Ron Taylor, SCDMH Chaplain

Ministering to a person with mental illness:

As you do with other friends, treat someone who has a mental illness as you would want to be treated – with understanding and respect.

Sponsor family support groups, encourage networking among families who have a loved one with a mental illness.



Take time to learn about mental illness by visiting your local library or by contacting the S.C. Department of Mental Health or a consumer advocacy group for information.

If a person with mental illness seems totally lacking in self-esteem and motivation, affirm the person's value and treat his or her accomplishments positively.

If a person with mental illness is in distress, pray for and with him or her and be sure that he or she seeks treatment.

If a person with mental illness becomes withdrawn, initiate relevant conversation, send him or her a note, make a telephone call, or take over a casserole. Offer him or her support and encouragement to seek treatment and let them know he or she is not alone!

Remember, recovery is real!



The Mission of the S.C. Department of Mental Health is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses.

For more information or to find your local mental health center, contact the S.C. Department of Mental Health:

1 (800) 763-1024 or www.scdmh.org
Speakers are also available, free of charge.