

## RF Australia - Mental Health Ministry

Our responsibility is to bring the ministry of Jesus to the people that God has given us to care for:

The foundation for healing and continued wellbeing in the body of Christ is contained in:

**Proverbs 4:19-23** 'My son attend to my words; incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.'

Your heart – the core of your being – who you really are.

**NLT:** 'My child pay attention to what I say – listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them, let them penetrate deep into your heart. For they bring life to those who find them and healing to their whole body. Guard your heart above all else for it determines the course of your life'.

AND

**Luke 4:18-19.** 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'

### What is the challenge?

Anxiety and associated mental health issues like fear and depression are at epidemic levels in our society and are affecting significant numbers of people in the church.

Some of the causes and consequences are:

- Physical, emotional, sexual trauma in early life – depression, anxiety, poor functioning
- Genetic predisposition in combination with life stressors
- Consumerism – you must never be satisfied.
- Digital materialism – information overload.
- FOMO – fear of missing out.

- Addiction to IT devices
- Relationship between screen time and stress.
- Relationship breakdown – marriage failure
- Workplace stress
- Job insecurity
- Failure to forgive – carrying hurt
- Unease about our society – fragmentation
- Loneliness
- Culture - triviality

Almost half (45%) Australians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime. Each year 65,000 attempt suicide.

## **In our fellowship**

In both the fellowship as a whole and in individual assemblies, there is a need for better understanding of the increasing challenges to mental health in society and in the church and then how we can best minister God's healing by word and fellowship.

The general recognition of the extent of mental health problems amongst younger people particularly and an incident at a young people's camp in NSW last year, have caused us to start working together to provide more effective ministry, counselling and healing in these areas for people of all ages in the church.

It was a topic at the leadership camp at Carrickalinga in March 2018 and was the core of the Young people's camp there in April and of an important workshop at the NYC at Stanwell Tops in NSW.

We all agree that a son or daughter in the family of God is able to experience a life of spiritual, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. The person's confidence in, and experience of, the love of God through Jesus is the foundation of this wellbeing.

But we also know that in this natural life we can all experience both small and great challenges, including mental and psychological sickness that can at times overwhelm our spiritual health.

The workshop in Goulburn in March 2019 was a first step in the NSW & ACT assemblies towards better understanding of the challenges to mental health in

society and in the church and then how we can best minister God's healing by word and fellowship.

When and how we work together with medical professionals will be an essential part of this better understanding.

## **Fellowship community – the church**

**Australia Reimagined – towards a more compassionate, less anxious society.**

(Hugh Mackay – social researcher, author – Fellow of the Australian Psychological Society.)

*'Belonging to a community (FELLOWSHIP) keeps us in touch with people who might need us and nothing relieves anxiety like a focus on someone else's needs.*

*When we belong to a community (FELLOWSHIP) characterised by mutual care and respect that experience will develop our capacity for compassion towards others.*

*The exercise of compassion - not merely the experience of belonging – that is the great antidote to anxiety.'*

In the church we have the perfect extended family environment to enable healing to take place.

Our identity, our sense of self-worth, our identity, is inextricably linked to the family group we belong to.

For some people the natural family environment is not as supportive or fulfilling as it should be, but our spiritual family – the Body of Christ (GOD, FELLOWSHIP & MINISTRY) is able to provide the support, nurture and ministry we need through our engagement with the lives and sharing the pain of those around us.

A life of kindness, compassion, peace, harmony, respect and service – brings meaning and purpose to life and a shifting of focus away from self to the wellbeing of others.

The combination of personal faith and practice with involvement in the fellowship community of the body of Christ, results in healing.

## **Responsibilities & Duty of Care**

So how should the church meet these challenges?

First always remember and confirm the principle that the individual's identity is as a valued member of the fellowship community and that everyone's contribution and involvement is fundamental to the health of the community.

The body of Christ, unity, many parts, one head, servants, pride NO, jealousy NO, empathy YES, listen YES, forgiveness YES, brings healing from God to you and from you to others.

We are Bible Counsellors.

We have pastors and both male and female leaders who are potentially able to use these resources to both avert crises and to work toward permanent healing.

### **General**

We recognise that we do not have the professional medical (psychological, psychiatric, counselling) resources in the church to meet all the needs that might arise across all our assemblies.

We need to ensure that there is no stigma attached to people who seek professional support, and we will sometimes need to encourage people to do this. We must be able to recognise when this is needed and then to be able to work in parallel with such support.

### **Camps**

We have many camps every year – Christmas / Easter / NYC / Assembly / Teens / Kids / Soul Sisters / Sisters in Spirit / Mens ...

We do not have the program opportunity for state wide camps to deal exclusively with mental health issues.

There needs to be an educated awareness of mental health issues in the oversight ministry at all the existing camps – primarily as a lead and guide to continuing ministry at individual assemblies (or groups of small assemblies who are physically close) throughout the year.

We do need a person with ASIST training (i.e. suicide intervention skills training) OR alternative experience and knowledge at every teens camp and all of our other church camps.

## **Social media**

**It is important to restate the extent of the challenge of social media.**

The whole area of social media is one where there are many others better able to discuss and provide advice and set guidelines than I am. Nevertheless, people of all ages can spend an inordinate amount of time just looking at and / or contributing to pages / feeds that are frivolous or contentious or aggressive or challenging but without conclusion or benefit to the individual. In the case of young people society is experiencing damaging consequences to people's self-esteem, sense of worth, and worse, cyber bullying with tragic results.

The church can use it for good and we are doing that through various websites, Revival Fellowship Testimonies and Prayer and so on.

Use social media to REACH, ENGAGE and INFLUENCE people about the love of God, Jesus, Salvation, the Holy Spirit, our fellowship.

## **Resources**

We do have written and recorded resources from within the church that can be the basis of support and healing ministry. These resources can enable people to understand the what & why of problems and then be used as a guide to bring peace and healing.

Visit <http://www.revivalnsw.com.au/resources/mental-health-resources>