

WELS Women's Ministry | Q&A Resource from May 2 Webinar

(mis)Understanding Mental Health | A Christian Look at Today's Epidemic

The questions below were posted in the chat during the webinar. Some of these questions were addressed during the webinar itself. These answers were compiled to provide additional general information to questions asked. These answers are not meant to be comprehensive. In some cases, we were able to point to additional resources on the topic in question.

Thank you for attending the webinar. Please provide us with your feedback with a brief survey [at this link](#). You will have the opportunity to ask additional questions or request resources when you fill out the survey.

COMMENT	ANSWER
Resilience Project – Children's Version? Information on The Resilience Project?	The Resilience Project was designed to fit your congregational and community needs for outreach through mental health ministry. The delivery and content can be customized based on the audience. The Resilience Project has a variety of adaptations, including the following: • Resilience training for adults • A community outreach program • A [teen] high school workshop • A middle school mental health curriculum enhancement Find information about The Resilience Project for churches and schools at this link. Find information about an independent [virtual] self-paced course for individuals here Contact Karen Fischer, Licensed Professional Counselor, to inquire about bringing The Resilience Project to your congregation, community or school.
I really am concerned about narcissism	It would be important to understand the underlying concern that prompted this comment. Here is a resource we think is very good: Responding to Narcissism in a Loved One (focusonthefamily.com)
Suggest a resource for suicide survivors	We have an email out to a Christian pastor who has experienced this and will give a more comprehensive answer in the near future.
Are there online support groups for severe depression and/or suicidal thoughts –	For someone with severe depression, your outpatient therapist should be able to recommend treatment resources that fit the level of care you require. • If you are experiencing a mental health emergency, please dial 911. • If you are having suicidal thoughts or know someone who is, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline hotline at 988. • If you are in need of a therapist, and you live within one of the eight states where Christian Family Solutions provides care, you can call us at 800-438-1772. • You can also inquire with your pastor to see if your congregation is part of the CFS Member Assistance Program (MAP) so you can be referred to short-term care. If you are located in Wisconsin or Minnesota, Christian Family Solutions has a number of treatment options available to support people in need of more intensive treatment. • Adult Intensive Outpatient Programs (Appleton, WI and Germantown, WI) • Intensive Treatment for Teens (Online throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin) • Wellness and Skills Groups (many available online)

A better awareness of how I can help those who need help	It's natural to feel unsure about how to support a loved one battling depression or other mental illness, but your presence and care can make a significant difference. Reaching out and initiating a conversation with sensitivity and empathy is the first step. Relationships with others are important to those walking through mental health challenges. Express your concern, acknowledge any observed changes, and offer support. Your words of encouragement, reminding them they're not alone and affirming their worth, can provide solace and strength. Beyond words, taking tangible actions like assisting with tasks, supporting treatment access, and encouraging physical activity can demonstrate your commitment to their well-being. Supporting a loved one with mental illness requires compassion, patience, and understanding. By starting a conversation, offering encouragement, and taking proactive steps to support their well-being, you can make a meaningful difference in their journey toward healing and recovery. A couple articles for more information: How to Support a Loved One Struggling with Depression 5 Principles of Psychological First Aid
How many Christian counselors are there? Is there any new information regarding WELS counseling services?	There are many counselors out there who profess to be Christian. There are also many counselors working in secular agencies who are discouraged or even prevented from involving faith or spiritual matters in counseling sessions. There are several great resources to find Christian counselors near you. 1. WELS/ELS Christian Therapist Network – a network maintained by the WELS Special Ministries Committee on Mental Health 2. Christian Family Solutions Counseling Care & Services – a WELS-affiliated ministry. ChristianFamilySolutions.org. 3. If you are a member of a WELS or ELS congregation, check with your pastor to see if your congregation is part of the CFS Member Assistance Program (MAP). MAP congregations can refer members to short-term counseling through the MAP partnership with Christian Family Solutions.
Who does CFS serve?	Christian Family Solutions is a counseling care and services agency that is also a WELS-affiliated ministry since 1965. We offer Christian counseling and more intensive treatment options at our clinics as well as through telehealth. We are licensed to provide those services in eight states. In addition, we can serve anywhere in the world through our Member Assistance Program (MAP). CFS's main clinic locations are in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Arizona. Visit CFS Clinic Locations for exact locations.
What is MAP?	The Member Assistance Program (MAP) is a way for churches, schools, and organizations to assist in meeting the mental health and wellness needs of their members by providing access to affordable services. Much like an Employee Assistance Program, MAP services are offered at no direct cost to the individual or family being served. Counseling is provided by WELS counselors at Christian Family Solutions (CFS) who are uniquely trained for this ministry. The CFS MAP team's mission is to heal and help people in need by working with pastors and educators to make healing and help as accessible and affordable as possible. MAP counseling costs are kept low for these organizations with the generous support of the donors to CFS. You can inquire with your pastor to find out if your congregation is a MAP member, and you can learn more about MAP here.

How can I help my severely depressed 32-year old son who has already been to residential treatment for 7 weeks? He is now in therapy with a local therapist but just doesn't seem to improve. We're running out of ideas.	Working with a local therapist individually is important, because counseling can be tailored to looking at his situation specifically, and getting to the root of any underlying trauma, beliefs, etc., that might be contributing to his depression. This might take some time, so as long as he is safe, encourage him to continue as long as needed working with a counselor. Often after residential treatment, it can also be helpful to be involved in an intensive therapy group for a time to learn effective coping skills. Your therapist should be able to recommend an intensive program nearby. (If this person is in Wisconsin, this program might be appropriate: Adult Intensive Outpatient Programs (Appleton, WI and Germantown, WI).) Also with severe depression, medication can be helpful. If his current dosage/medication does not seem to be working, he can talk with his prescriber about looking at other options. Here is more information on intensive therapy and how it works: https://christianfamilysolutions.org/2023/04/14/what-if-outpatient-counseling-isnt-working/
Have a family member who has gone for decades with no real results. Trying to learn how to interact with her, help her	I don't know the details of the mental illness your family member is dealing with, but there are a few steps to consider when counseling doesn't seem to be helping. Could it help to try working with another counselor? Sometimes a different perspective can help uncover issues that haven't been considered. Could group counseling be an option? Sometimes people or issues are more helped in that format. Has medication been tried, and if it has, is it time to talk with a doctor or psychiatrist about making a change? You can interact with her in love by letting her know you care about her and that you are there to support her as she continues to struggle. You can share the promises of Jesus with her that He is with her in the midst of suffering, and that He "binds up the broken-hearted." You can also try this article: https://christianfamilysolutions.org/2023/04/14/what-if-outpatient-counseling-isnt-working/ Depending on what the issues are, it may be necessary to set some loving boundaries to protect yourself and the relationship. NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness) offers support groups for family members of those who are struggling with mental illness, and those groups can be very helpful and encouraging. NAMI Family Support Group NAMI
How to help best those that are in what seems to be just a large pattern of recurring highs and lows and can't seem to change it	The same answer above could be used for this situation.
What insurance CFS accepts	Christian Family Solutions is a participating provider in over 100 different insurance networks. We will submit charges for your visit to your insurance company, which will be subject to your individual plan's provisions, including any deductibles. You may also choose to pay for services "out of pocket" if you do not have insurance or choose not to utilize it for various reasons. Information about payment options including insurance can be found here. You can always call us at 800-438-1772 (option 4) to verify your health insurance benefits and to learn about other accommodations.

Books or resources to learn more about this and perhaps to share with a friend or family member	• A Guide to Mental and Emotional Wellness by Dr. Jennifer Londgren • Look Up From Your Phone So I Can Love You by Amy Vannieuwenhoven • A Christian Guide to Mental Illness by Dr. Stephen Saunders
Anxiety seems to be a family issue for us and trying to understand more	First, know that you are not alone in this. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting nearly 20% of the adult population every year. Here are a couple resources on the CFS website you can refer to for more information and some interventions to help: • Relationship between Anxiety Fear and Worry • Techniques to Help with Anxiety • Helping Children with Anxiety (includes resources for children and parents)
How to talk with others about mental health and emotional health? How do we bring God into the conversation with unbelievers?	We have several articles on the CFS website that deal with how to support others who are struggling with their mental and emotional health. • How to help a loved one struggling with depression • How to help children struggling with anxiety • How do you help someone struggling with depression without offending them? • See the recent article in the WELS Women's Ministry newsletter, "Love for the Lonely." There are also several great resources from Time of Grace on this subject. With regard to witnessing to unbelievers – that is a larger topic, and we've taken note of your interest so we can put together some resources. Many of the Biblical principles on witnessing apply here. • Showing love to one another is a Christian witness that others will notice, which opens the door to further conversation. (John 13:35) • Offering hospitality or care for someone in need is a Christian witness that opens the door to further conversation. (Romans 12:13)
How do you think we should handle people that seem to be unhinged and mentally ill if they are leaders in the church?	Some of the same answers about how to approach a loved one with concerns could work in this situation as well. However, I would be happy to consult about the best way to approach this if you would like to discuss a specific situation more in-depth. Sarah Reik, LPC, Christian Family Solutions Program Manager, Member Assistance Program sreik@wlcfs.org or call 800-438-1772 and ask to speak to me
Interested in learning about the different resources available especially with a Christian perspective.	We have a variety of resources available on the Christian Family Solutions website at ChristianFamilySolutions.org. Here is a link to the resources page. NPH also has a number of mental health-related resources available: www.nph.net

Resources locally, helping teens	We encourage you to visit CFS's Real Questions-Real Solutions page for teens, where our counselors share articles and videos addressing some of the most pressing questions teens submitted around mental health and wellness. Topics include anxiety, depression, self-harm, bullying, and how to help friends who are hurting. In addition to outpatient counseling, CFS offers more intensive day treatment programs for teens. In-person programs are currently available in Milwaukee, WI and Mankato, MN. Online programs are available throughout WI and MN. Learn more about the ARMOR Day Treatment for Teens program.
How can I best support friends and family who may benefit from mental health support but who might be reluctant to try it?	Let them know it's completely normal to feel hesitant about seeking mental health support, but help is available and taking that first step can lead to significant healing. A couple points to share with them: • Counseling is a process that takes time to become comfortable with, and counselors are trained to support them every step of the way. • Many people fear counseling will be a long-term commitment, but it often involves short-term sessions focused on providing coping skills. • Sessions can be in-person or through secure video sessions, scheduled at their convenience typically 1-2 times per week • Seeking support is a brave and important decision that can lead to lasting peace and healing. Additional resources to help with the conversation: I'd Like to Try Counseling But and How to Encourage Someone to See a Therapist
What are some ways to shift self degradation?	As Christians we know that we have worth because Jesus died for us and lives in us. He loves us, He has chosen us, He has given us gifts to serve Him and others, He calls us His children. Any thoughts or statements we or someone else might have that cause us to view ourselves in a negative light are simply lies that come from the devil, the father of lies. • Find ways to connect to God's Word about who you are in Jesus every day—read what He says about you in His Word, pick some favorite passages and hang them on your wall or at your desk or even on your bathroom mirror. • Make an effort to stop saying negative things about yourself out loud (you can enlist the help of a spouse or friend to remind you). • Then start working on your mind. Anytime you put yourself down, follow it up immediately with a statement or verse about your worth in Christ. By doing this, you can actually change neural connections in your brain, so that you start thinking and talking about yourself the way that Jesus does.
Self care for mental wellness	Prioritizing self-care can be a challenge. Yet, when you do not take care of yourself, you lose the capacity to care for others. A couple resources on the CFS website to help: • This Self-Care Guide helps you make a plan and track self-care habits. It also includes a list of “30 Days of Self-Care” where you can get ideas for one self-love habit to incorporate in your schedule each day. • Focused on teens but relevant to adults, this article shares some Simple Self-Care Routines and Habits that can contribute to mental health.

Ideas to bring this conversation into our congregations, especially with members who were raised to not talk about mental health	• Share this webinar link and view it with others. • Invite a WELS Pastor from Christian Family Solutions to preach at your church and discuss CFS and Mental Wellness during bible class time. https://christianfamilysolutions.org/christian-counseling-focused-worship-service/ • Host an Educational Presentation, led by one of Christian Family Solutions' professional counselors, on a mental health topic of your choice. https://christianfamilysolutions.org/helpful-resources/educational-presentations/
Ways to open up conversations with the ladies in our congregation about Mental Health Issues in a loving and supportive way	A wonderful way to start could be to mention the webinar you were part of and some of what you learned. Let them know that this is something that many of our churches are talking about. And ask for some suggestions about how you might be able to serve those who are struggling in your own congregation or community.
What we can do as leaders in ministry?	Becoming aware and developing compassion for those who struggle with mental health is an important first step. Many people suffer in silence. When someone does open up about a mental health struggle, or that they are supporting someone with a mental health condition, you can provide a listening ear, a compassionate heart, prayers, and connection to resources. Hopefully the resources provided in the webinar and in this document will be helpful to you as you minister to others. If you would like to be on the CFS mailing list to receive <i>Healing & Helping</i> magazine and helpful emailed resources, please leave your contact information here. We want to connect with people so that we can provide helpful resources for mental health ministry.
General knowledge of CFS services and availability	CFS's services include outpatient counseling, adult intensive outpatient programs (IOPs), child & adolescent day treatment, intensive treatment for teens, wellness and skills groups, medication management, and ministry partnerships. Mental health care is a continuum of care. Many people benefit from outpatient counseling, which is typically 1-2 times per week with a counselor. Some people need a higher "dose" of care, and that's when an IOP or day treatment program may be recommended. For more information: • Introduction to CFS Counseling Care and Services • This video also provides an overview of our services.
How to access CFS services, phone number, website, etc.	• Give us a call at 800-438-1772. • You may also fill out an appointment request on our website. • You can visit our website at www.christianfamilysolutions.org for more information about our organization, counseling services, and mental health resources. • Our Facebook page is another option to follow us and keep up-to-date on new services and resources.

Help finding assistance locally (when your state doesn't allow for online therapy options).	Every state will allow you to meet with a counselor online. However, the counselor needs to be licensed in the state where you live. That may be changing in some states with something called the Counseling Compact, but there is nothing concrete in place with that yet. Our Member Assistance Program (MAP) operates like an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and an EAP is not prohibited from crossing state lines. So if you are a member of a church and would like counseling services through our organization, talk to your pastor to see if your church is a MAP member or would like to become one. This would allow you to meet with one of our counselors from anywhere in the country. If you are looking for in-person local options, it can be helpful to look on one of these databases to find Christian counselors: • Counseling Services and Referrals - Focus on the Family • Christian Care Connect – AACC • WELS/ELS Christian Therapist Network – a network maintained by the WELS Special Ministries Committee on Mental Health • Christian Family Solutions Counseling Care & Services – a WELS-affiliated ministry.
OCD resources, especially for teens	Here are resources we recommend at CFS: International OCD Foundation Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) (iocdf.org): Brain Lock, Twentieth Anniversary Edition: Free Yourself from Obsessive-Compulsive Behavior: Schwartz, Jeffrey M.: 9780062561435: Amazon.com: Books <i>The OCD Workbook for Teens</i> by Anthony Bishop <i>The OCD Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness and CBT Skills</i> by Jon Hershfield If the teen's issue regarding OCD requires intensive therapy, those in WI and MN can access our ARMOR Day Treatment for Teens, an online program that addresses more acute mental health concerns like debilitating OCD.
The understanding that it's not a sin to need or require mental health services	As Lutheran Christians, we believe that God created us “body and soul,” and “richly and daily provides” us with all we need to support this body and life (Luther's Small Catechism, The First Article). Sometimes we require the help of a medical doctor to care for our body. The same is true of our mind. During the webinar, Karen Fischer mentioned the idea of “psychological stewardship.” Caring for our minds and our emotional health is caring for the body and beautiful brain God gave us. It is good stewardship to seek the help of those who are knowledgeable on how to best care for our minds.
How to speak to others who may benefit from counseling vs. overstepping boundaries	If you are concerned because you've seen some clear behavioral changes, you can say something like, “I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself—are you OK? Is there anything I can do to help?” A statement like that shows that you care and are willing to be part of a solution. You can also share any experience you may have had with counseling that was positive. By doing that, you show that you are a safe person to talk to about any struggles they may be having. Here are some other suggestions that are written specifically regarding someone with depression, but that could apply in other circumstances as well: How to support a loved one struggling with depression - Christian Family Solutions

Resources for children's mental health	Visit CFS's Helpful Articles for resources on a number of children and parenting-focused topics, including, anxiety and stress, bullying, arguing, and strategies to address holiday challenges. We also have quite a few Activities and Toolkits available for parents and children, including techniques and strategies to help children to stay calm, increase focus, handle worries, and instill confidence.
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