

Mental Health with Grace: A 5-Part Parish Education Series

Purpose of the 5 Night Series: Awareness, Acceptance, Accompaniment

Key Objectives:

1. To develop a mental health team to minister and accompany people and families living with mental illness
2. Explore topics important to ministry in mental health
3. Provide time for education, prayer, conversation

Topics for 5 Nights:

1. The impact of mental illness on individuals and families
2. An evening with a mental health professional
3. Ministry to people with mental illness and their families
4. Spirituality and mental illness
5. Mental health resources and how can we minister to people

How to Start:

- Get approval from Pastor and staff
- Invite surrounding parishes to join in both the participation and organization of these 5 nights
- Seek out group leaders to form a team
- Determine the best times for your parish to host the events
- Leading up to series put announcements in the bulletin

Outline for Each Night:

- Prior to Meeting
 - o 1.5 hours in length, start on time and end on time
 - o Handouts on each topic available for participants
- Meeting
 - o Opening Prayer
 - o Ice Breaker
 - o Small Group Discussions
 - o Speaker on Night's Topic
 - o Discussion
 - o Closing Prayer
- Post Meeting
 - o Team wrap-up meeting

Introduction to the series (see if a deacon or priest can give a Sunday homily involving mental illness or have a parishioner talk after Mass)

First Night – Impact of Mental Illness

- Icebreaker: “What was your first experience of a person with a mental illness? How did it make you feel?” (talk in small groups – maybe have someone from the small group share with the large group)
- Speaker Topic: Impact of Mental Illness on Individuals and Families
 - o Good resource is NAMI (include statistics)
- Overview of MI by a person involved in ministry
 - o Invite a family member and a person with a mental illness to witness their experience (have them share how their faith has helped them)
- Discussion

Second Night – Spend an Evening with a Professional

- Icebreaker: “Why are you here tonight? What would you like to learn?”
- Speaker: Mental Health Professional
- Speaker Topic: What are types of mental illnesses, medications, treatment, and issues that parishes need to be aware of? How from a professional perspective can parishioners be supportive to people with a mental illness and their families?
- Question and Answer

Third Night – Ministry to People with Mental Illness and Their Families

- Icebreaker: “How have you found support for any difficult times you have experienced?”
- Speaker: Person in Mental Health Ministry
- Speaker Topic: Ministry to people with mental illness and their families
 - o Awareness – creating welcoming environments
 - o Acceptance – people with dignity and value; person not an illness
 - o Accompaniment – journey in faith together, learn from one another
- Discussion

Fourth Night – Spirituality and Mental Illness

- Icebreaker: “What does Spirituality mean for you?”
- Speaker: Spiritual Director who ministers in the field of mental illness
- Speaker Topic: Spirituality and Mental Illness
 - o Healing the Wounded Spirit

- Does God love me?
- How do I know?
- Healing involves mind, body, and soul
- How does our faith nourish us?
 - Sacramental life of the Church
 - Devotional practices
 - Prayer and meditation

Fifth Night – Resources and Next Steps

- Icebreaker: “How have you found or are you aware of the mental health resources in the community?”
- Speaker: Local service providers (have tables with their materials for people to take home)
- Speaker Topic: Where are community mental health resources?
 - How do we access services?
 - How can we partner with service providers?
- Speaker: from the Team
 - Where do we go from here?
- Handout a survey (allow participants to review the quality of each night as well as the relevance of the topics, quality of speakers, and what was most/least helpful)

Next-Steps

- Form a mental health ministry team
 - Training
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - Sanctuary Course
 - Catholic Resources
 - ACMHM
 - NCPD
 - Archdiocese Chicago Commission on MI
- Start a support group
- Additional information night/speaker