

Help! I Am Struggling

The three areas of mental health that seem most effected in the time of a crises are:

- Anxiety reactions,
- Depressed mood, and
- Urges to misuse alcohol or some other substance as a means to cope.

Some might say, “What about anger outbursts and frustration?” Usually, increased anger and frustration is an outward reaction to internal depression or anxiety. These three areas are not exclusive. One might feel anxious when feeling the urge to relapse, and another may relapse to curb their anxious feelings.

Quick Interventions: (Do daily devotions in all of these intervention plans)

Anxiety

- Slow, deep breathes. (see breathing exercise below)
- Schedule daily worry time of 15 minutes a day. Rest of the day use thought stopping and redirect thoughts to other activities such as memorizing scripture, praying for others, planning a project, writing in Gratitude Journal (see instructions below).
- Play praise/worship music

Depression

- Take a shower at least every 3 days
- Watch a comedy
- Listen to upbeat music and move/dance (walk if you can)
- Write in Gratitude Journal
- If depression persists call for help. **Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

Relapse Urges

- Call a trusted, responsible friend/mentor and share your struggle
- Remember a memory of when you said “no” in the past, remember what has helped in the past, how good it felt to say no. If possible write it down, or remember it as you are taking a walk. See if you can practice what has helped in the past.
- Notice if the urge is connected to anxiety, depression or some other issue. Think about the underlying cause and address it head on, rather than cope by using.

Reach Out to A Friend, Sponsor, Counselor, etc.

Primary to all these suggestions is: **please do not suffer or struggle alone.** There are people who care. Your pastors care. There are people at the church who care. The

church will link you to resources if they cannot provide the best help for you. Please call us at **(805) 489-0600** or email us at **hopechurchcentralcoastca@gmail.com**.

Breathing Exercise:

4-7-8 Technique by Dr. Weil (you can use a different method if it works for you)

Breathing exercises can help with reducing anxiety, going to sleep, managing cravings and controlling or reducing anger responses. Focus on the following breathing pattern:

- Empty the lungs of air
- Breathe in quietly through the nose for 4 seconds
- Hold the breath for a count of 7 seconds
- Exhale forcefully through the mouth, pursing the lips and making a “whoosh” sound, for 8 seconds
- Repeat the cycle up to 4 times

Gratitude Journal:

There is much research that shows practicing gratitude has great social, physical, and psychological benefits, even to people going through hard times. Gratitude increases happiness, life satisfaction, feelings of optimism, joy, pleasure, enthusiasm and other positive emotions. Practicing gratitude reduces anxiety and depression, and helps with sleep. It increases resilience, which is the capacity to handle challenging situations and it improves relationships. Gratitude for sobriety reduces the likelihood of relapse as it increases the motivation to do what is needed to do in order to protect one's sobriety.

- At minimal, write 1 to 2 sentences of 5 experiences from the past week that you are grateful for.
- Elaborating in detail about a particular experience makes more impact toward change than a superficial list of things you are grateful for.
- Gratitude on people rather than on things also has more impact toward personal growth.
- Write out verses that bring feelings of joy, inspiration, or awe.
- Write out memories, or words that trigger memories that are positive, uplifting, encouraging, hopeful, and promising.
- When you are feeling desperate, or despondent, tempted or anxious read your gratitude journal.
- Write out a memory of when you felt the loving, powerful presence of God.
- Write about how good it feels to be clean and sober.
- Write about the awe and wonder of God.

Gratitude Walk

Exercise is important to mental health. Studies show that endorphins released can be effective in reducing depression and anxiety. To maximize the benefits of exercise it is

important to combine with positive brain or thought input. This means talking positively with a friend, listening to praise music or an affirming or uplifting podcast. Also, you can simply do a 20 minute gratitude walk using the suggestions from above. 75 minutes a week of moderate exercise, without working on your thoughts, is shown to make a difference on depression and anxiety, by changing body chemistry. Simple walking combined with positive, constructive thinking is shown to improve overall brain function, which means less depression, less anxiety, less frustration and better coping.