

# BEVERAGES AND BIBLES

**“She who leaves a trail of glitter is not ever forgotten.”**

**Kate Spade**

**Introduction Question - Anthony Bourdain once said, “I'm not afraid to look like an idiot.” Are you OK with embarrassing yourself? What's your most embarrassing moment?**

**Question: Nearly everyone knows someone with a mental health condition or has had/has one. With this in mind, why are many people afraid of people with mental health conditions?**

- “Emotional pain is not something that should be hidden away and never spoken about. There is truth in your pain, there is growth in your pain, but only if it's first brought out into the open.” - Steve Aitchison
- “I think the idea of a 'mental health day' is something completely invented by people who have no clue what it's like to have bad mental health. The idea that your mind can be aired out in twenty-four hours is kind of like saying heart disease can be cured if you eat the right breakfast cereal. - David Levithan
- “It is not the the bruises on the body that hurt. It is the wounds of the heart and the scars on the mind.” - Aisha Mirza
- “Although studies suggest a link between mental illnesses and violence, the contribution of people with mental illnesses to overall rates of violence is small, and further, the magnitude of the relationship is greatly exaggerated in the minds of the general population.” - Institute on Medicine

**Question: Why are we, culturally, more open about almost everything in our lives than we were a generation ago except mental illness? Why does this stigma / prejudice maintain its socially-accepted status when most others have been rejected?**

- “The acknowledgement of having suffered evil is the greatest step forward in mental health.” - Stefan Molyneux
- “Sometimes our own needs and desires must be expressed, even at the expense of shattering the image others have created of us.” - Sean Wolfe
- “We are asking you to be better, to look deeper, to read and learn about mental illness, suicide and depression before you make it worse for survivors by judging that which we do not understand, that which can never fully be understood. Sometimes we are stuck in the unknowable, and that is where we are now, a massive wave of darkness that threatens to swallow everyone in its wake... There is no one to blame but the stigma of loneliness, the stigma of asking for help, the stigma of mental illness, the stigma of being famous and hurting.” - Rose McGowan
- “I now see how owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we will ever do.” - anonymous

**Question: Is mental illness a physical event with spiritual side effects or a spiritual event with physical side effects; do choices-emotions trigger biology or biology trigger choices-emotions?**

- “The bravest thing I ever did was continuing my life when I wanted to die.” - Juliette Lewis
- “The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.” - Jonah 2:5-7
- “Feelings don't try to kill you, even the painful ones. Anxiety is a feeling grown too large. A feeling grown aggressive and dangerous. You're responsible for its consequences, you're responsible for treating it.

But...you're not responsible for causing it. You're not morally at fault for it. No more than you would be for a tumor." - Patrick Ness

**Question: When do labels with mental health serve well (i.e., offering a sense of hope by breaking the sense of isolation and shame) and when do labels serve poorly (i.e., diminishing hope by creating a sense of determinism and stigma)?**

- The DSM-IV-TR is a 943-page textbook published by the American Psychiatric Association that sells for \$99...There are currently 374 mental disorders. I bought the book...and leafed through it...I closed the manual. "I wonder if I've got any of the 374 mental disorders," I thought. I opened the manual again. And instantly diagnosed myself with twelve different ones." - Jon Ronson
- "Never be defined by what has happened to you in the past, it was just a life lesson, not a life sentence." - Donald Pillai
- "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." - 2 Corinthians 12:10
- "Though no one can backtrack and create a brand new start, Everyone is capable of taking their life in a brand new direction." - Germany Kent

**Question: Are we trying to medically create an idyllic sanguine personality? Is "normal" becoming too emotionally narrow?**

- "There is no standard normal. Normal is subjective. There are seven billion versions of normal on this planet." - Matt Haig
- "Don't give up on me when I isolate myself." - Jen Jolly
- "As your faith is strengthened you will find that there is no longer the need to have a sense of control, that things will flow as they will, and that you will flow with them, to your great delight and benefit." - Emmanuel Teney
- "People who need help sometimes look a lot like people who don't need help." - Glennon Melton

**Question: Does God treat people who commit suicide any differently from those who die by other means? How would you respond to someone who says, "Suicide is an unforgivable sin"?**

- "I once read in my physics book that the universe begs to be observed, that energy travels and transfers when people pay attention. Maybe that's what love really boils down to--having someone who cares enough to pay attention so that you're encouraged to travel and transfer, to make your potential energy spark into kinetic energy." - Jasmine Warga
- "There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn't." - John Green
- "The pain of severe depression is quite unimaginable to those who have not suffered it, and it kills in many instances because its anguish can no longer be borne. The prevention of many suicides will continue to be hindered until there is a general awareness of the nature of this pain." - William Styron
- "You've got to trust yourself. Be gentle with yourself. And listen to yourself. You're the only person who can get you through this now. You're the only one who can survive your story, the only one who can write your future. All you've got to do, when you're ready, is stand up, and begin again." - Tessa Shaffer
- "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid." - John 14:27

## Faith & Spirituality - From NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness

As we learn more and more about the connections between the mind and body, it becomes clear that spirituality, religion and faith can help some individuals live well with mental health conditions. Some individuals and families turn to faith in times of crisis to help in their recovery while others find that spiritual practices help them continue to manage their mental health.

### How Faith Can Help

Research has shown that for some, religion and individual spirituality can directly improve our physical and mental health.

### Meditation

One practice that has received a lot of attention is contemplative prayer and meditation. Many studies have found that 10-20 minutes of meditation twice a day causes what is called the "relaxation response": decreased metabolism, decreased heart rate, decreased breathing rate and slower, calmer brain waves.

The relaxation response was originally observed in practitioners of Transcendental Meditation, a form of Buddhist meditation, but subsequent research has found the relaxation response can result from other contemplative practices as well. The daily ritual prayers of Islam and the Catholic practice of praying with rosary beads, for instance, are religious rituals that invoke the relaxation response.

### Togetherness

Religion offers other supports for mental health as well. In the United States, the Christian practice of congregational prayer is so popular that it now exists even in Asian religions such as American Buddhism and Hinduism, which didn't traditionally gather as a community once a week. One of the most popular ways to interact with the community is to attend congregational gatherings such as Sunday church, Saturday Torah readings, prayer meetings or full-moon celebrations at Hindu temples.

These group religious rituals provide structured social activities that cause relatively little anxiety and benefit our health directly. Places of worship may also offer a number of resources and social activities that can encourage and support people living with a mental health condition and their families, providing additional benefits through community connections

### A Sense Of Understanding

For some, the most important aspect of religion is that it offers ways to understand our experiences. The major world religions each offer explanations of why suffering exists in the world. Turning to these explanations brings comfort to many people confronting illness. The "why me?" question can never be answered entirely by medical science, and some people find the answers they seek in religion.

### Helping Others

Relatively recent research suggests that we experience direct health benefits when we volunteer to help others. Religious organizations may provide us with straightforward, simple opportunities to serve the community, thus improving our mood and reducing our anxiety levels.

### What Makes A Good Faith Community?

#### A Welcoming Community

Each world religion has its own set of ideas and practices. If you grew up in a specific faith and feel comfortable with it, you may already have prayers and rituals that support your health.

If you feel alienated from your faith of origin, you may feel uncertain whether you can benefit from faith. Just as there isn't a downside to learning more about your mental health condition, there's no downside to learning more about religion or spirituality. Learning about a faith doesn't obligate you to follow it and may give you new ideas for how to live with a mental health condition.

If you're looking for a regular place to worship or practice your faith, be alert to how each congregation or community approaches mental health conditions. Some churches view mental illness as a moral failing for which prayer is the only treatment while others maintain active outreach programs for people with mental health conditions. Above all, find a community where you feel welcomed and loved despite your mental health condition. Finding a caring congregation that is accepting and supports your healing journey is key.

### Actions That You Practice On Your Own

The benefits of religion don't end at the steps. The most powerful health benefits of religion may come from simple contemplative practices that invoke the relaxation response. Some find great comfort and peace in spiritual practices of surrender and contemplation on meaning and purpose. You can encourage these rituals into your daily routine at home.

Learn more about your faith's contemplative practices from faith leaders, friends in the faith, Internet websites or library books. You will find many possibilities: saying the rosary (Catholicism), meditating on Bible passages (Protestant Christianity), observing daily mitzvot (Judaism), making time for the five prayers (Islam), performing puja (Hinduism), or chanting the "Nam myoho renge kyo" (Nichiren Buddhism).

Looking for new ways to practice your spirituality or religion can give you valuable tools for times of sorrow or frustration. Ways to practice your faith outside of a congregation include reading scripture, visiting sacred sites, learning about important people in your religion, listening to sacred music, engaging in private prayer and attending prayer or discussion groups.

### It Speaks To Your Needs

If you don't feel comfortable with organized religion, you can still access the benefits of relaxation and find meaning in your experiences. Think of places, people and experiences that give you feelings of peace, awe or greater meaning.

Some might find their greater meaning outside in nature, or in an art gallery, or while listening to a piece of beloved music. Others may find comfort in reading poetry, or in learning about science or history. Whatever your interests are, by pursuing them you can give your mind a valuable "time out" from thinking about your mental health and invite moments of peace to your experience

#### How You Can Help Your Faith Community

Faith communities have begun paying attention to mental health, but they may have misconceptions about the issues. Your faith community may be unsure how to help. A good place to begin engaging them is by meeting privately with your pastor, priest or religious leader and telling them about the questions and challenges you have as a person of faith living with a mental health condition.

If you're comfortable sharing with a wider group, you can teach your faith community about mental health through starting a discussion group or support group. You can also reach out to your local NAMI Affiliate as many have relationships with their area faith communities that may provide some benefit.

By being open about your mental health, you may help others in your community who have been afraid to talk about their mental health. Starting this conversation creates a stronger, healthier, more compassionate community.

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Thanks to Brad Hambrick for many of the questions tonight

<http://bradhambrick.com/18-questions-about-faith-and-mental-illness/>