

# Conversation 3: How can we make use of the available mental health resources and services?

**\*\* Green font is action for the facilitator\*\***

**Print Handout:** How can we make use of the available resources and services?

**Print Stories**

**Make sure to take 2 pieces of large paper and markers for this session to create the circle of care.**

Time: 90-120 minutes

Preparation for the group:

- **Decide on a date and time**
- **Reserve a venue** for the group for at least 2.5 hours (for set up and take down)
- **Advertise** the discussion group in your church with this invitation **template**
- **Review** the **facilitators video** ahead of time
- **Read** the relevant info sheets ahead of time
- **Practice** the conversation outline a few times
- **Make sure you have enough copies** of the handout for each member
- **Take a sign-up sheet and pen** with you
- **Arrive early and set up chairs** in a circle before everyone arrives
- **Warmly greet** everyone when they arrive

## Starting the session:

**Gather the group together. Open with a reading or prayer.** (10 minutes)

### Start with

#### **A prayer by Thomas Merton:**

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me. Nor do I really know myself.  
And the fact that I think I am following your will  
Does not mean that I am actually doing so.*

*But I believe that the desire to please you  
Does in fact please you.*

*And I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this,  
You will lead me by the right road  
Though I may know nothing about it.*

*Therefore I will trust you always  
Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death  
I will not fear for you are ever with me.  
And you will never leave me to face my struggles alone.*

Ask everyone to share their name with a warm up activity/Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Share a favourite Bible verse or favourite teaching of Christ and why. **Ask them to keep it short.**

# **1. When we or other people are in distress we choose to make use of a variety of mental health approaches. We may not be equally comfortable with the different treatments.**

**Explain:** We are going to listen to 2 stories, and while we are listening take note of how you respond to these scenarios.

## **Introduction:**

*Kyle and Mary are two independent individuals who live with severe depression and anxiety. At this moment neither are able to work in their professions, and each have moved into the home of their parents for care.*

**Ask for two people who read clearly and with a loud voice.**

**Ask** them to each read one story (from the handout)

## **First Story:**

*Kyle's Mother is a Registered Nurse (RN) and is intent on encouraging Kyle to seek medical help for his condition. She has obtained prescription medication for Kyle and offers it to him every morning with his breakfast. Kyle works full time in computer technical support. And he has researched extensively possible treatments to depression and anxiety. He is weary of medication as an option for his recovery. Instead he signs up at the gym with a personal trainer. He is also seeing a naturopath and is taking vitamins, minerals and focussing on specific food groups. He has joined a Men's discipleship group where he is learning ways to manage his anxiety through prayer and participation in the life of the church.*

*Even though Kyle's mood fluctuate, his dedication to his way of life helps him to readjust to the distressing times. Kyles Mother remains anxious that his condition will deteriorate without proper medication. She is particularly concerned that he will become suicidal. Kyle is volunteering for his church that he is part of, in order to build up his skills to return to work.*

## **Second Story:**

*Mary had a very hard time when she had to quit her job and move home. Her anxiety attacks were happening almost on a daily basis. Her parents stepped in with providing a good structure, with healthy foods, exercise, and a generally loving and accepting environment. But Mary's condition was not improving. Mary came across a support group flyer on the bulletin board of her church. She attended the support group and learned that there were other people suffering from similar symptoms who had been managing a less stressful life with a certain kind of medication. This sparked curiosity and a glimmer of hope and she called a mental health help-line. She was given the contact information for two clinics and the emergency room at the hospital. She*

went to a drop-in clinic who referred her to a psychiatrist, but the wait list was 4 months. In the intervening 4 months her condition deteriorated to such an extent that her mother called the psychiatrist's office and managed to get her in sooner because of a cancellation. She finally got in and got her medication but that just made her drowsy and she spent many hours a day sleeping. She went through 4-5 medication trials, each one taking around 6 weeks with adverse side effects, excessive weight gain, hand tremors, emotional flattening and numbness, etc. Mary questioned her use of medication and if these trials were a sign that God did not want her to take the medications. However, Mary persisted because the members of her support group were living examples that there could be hope. They had been through the hardships of the medication trials and had found relative stability and recovered enough to return to work. Today, two years later, Mary has finally found the right dosages of the right medication. An Occupational Therapist (OT) assisted Mary to return to work. Initially it seemed she would regain her capacity as a 6th grade teacher but over time the stress was too much for Mary. The OT worked with Mary to adjust to a less stressful position in the system, to work as a teaching assistant.

**Explain:** We have heard two stories. Two people who found hope and recovery through making different choices and taking different paths towards healing. So often these things are not talked about. We get caught up in our own ideas and do not hear other people's thoughts or opinions. Today we want to hear a range of opinions, and be open.

### **Talking circle**

Establish guidelines for the Talking Circle:

**Say:** We just want to hear the range of choices that people consider. Even if for us personally there are right and wrong choices, we just want to become aware of how others view these issues.

**Ask the group to talk about:** How does some options or choices works for one person while they dont work for another. (5 minutes)

## **2. Options for a circle of care**

**On one large paper draw a circle** in the middle and write Mary/Kyle in the middle.

**Ask the group** to list all the support people that Mary and Kyle relied on for their recovery.

**Draw** them around the circle. (use the following diagram as a model)

**Ask the group** who else might be in the circle of care that was not mentioned in the stories?

**Add** them to the diagram.

**Give out** the hand-out

**Explain:** We are going to break out in smaller groups and each group will explore and learn how to make initial contact with one of the people in the circle of care and then come back

together to share. You have 5 minutes.

**Break out into smaller groups** - each taking one person in the circle of care. Referring to the handout: **How can we make use of the available mental health resources and services?**

(some may not be on the handout, eg. your faith leader, the personal trainer at the gym, etc.)  
- **Tell the break out groups:** Figure out how you would gain access to that particular person for support.

From the time that the groups actually start working, **give them 5 minutes.**

**Bring the participants back to the large group.**

**Ask** each group to share their learning (2 minutes per group)

**Offer** the handouts for those who wish to take them home.

## **Closure:**

**Ask** everyone to offer one or two words to capture what this workshop experience was like for them.

**Offer an example** of words that can be shared: hopeful, confused, perplexed, informed, relieved, curious.