

**Mental Health Myths and Facts for Congregations**  
*Lutheran Voice for Mental Health*

**MYTH: Mental illnesses don't affect me.**

**FACT:** Mental illnesses are surprisingly common, and they do not discriminate. *One in four adults (approximately 57.7 million Americans) experience a mental health disorder in a given year. Based on this fact, how many individuals in your congregation might be dealing with mental illness.* <http://www.nami.org>

**MYTH: Mental illnesses are the result of a character weakness.**

**FACT:** Serious mental illnesses are *diseases of the brain* that cause disturbances in a person's thinking, feeling, moods, and ability to relate to others. *Knowing the facts about any illness helps create understanding. To learn more about mental illnesses go to:* <http://www.nami.org>

**MYTH: Once people develop mental illnesses they will never recover.**

**FACT:** *Mental illnesses are treatable and most people recover.* The treatment includes medication and psychological/social rehabilitation programs. People with mental illnesses lead active, productive lives. *To learn about resources for treatment and support available in Minnesota go to:* <http://namihelps.org>

**MYTH: Depression is a normal part of aging.**

**FACT:** It is not normal for older adults to be depressed. *Depression in the elderly is often undiagnosed.* It is important for seniors and their family members to recognize the problem and seek professional help. *How do your current ministries (e.g. phone ministry) help prevent depression in older adults?*

**MYTH: Children are too young to get depressed.**

**FACT:** The US Center for Mental Health Services estimates that *more than 2 million children* in the United States *suffer from depression* and *half* of them *go untreated.* *To learn about Minnesota resources for children facing mental health challenges go to:* <http://www.macmh.org>

**MYTH: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) happens only after you fight in a war.**

**FACT:** *PTSD can occur after any traumatic event* such as rape or other violent attack, natural disaster or learning of an unexpected death of a loved one. *To become more informed about PTSD go to:* <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/index.shtml>

**MYTH: Talking about suicide may give someone the idea.**

**FACT:** You don't give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true -- *bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do.* *To learn more about suicide and what you can do to prevent it go to:* <http://www.save.org>

**MYTH: Children with autism are simply non-compliant and stubborn.**

**TRUTH:** *Autism is a complex developmental disability that affects essential human behaviors* such as social interaction, the ability to communicate ideas and feelings, imagination, self-regulation, and the ability to establish relationships with others. *Understanding autism will make it easier to support families who deal with this disability. Check out the facts at:* <http://www.ausm.org>

**MYTH: Only celebrities and models have eating disorders.**

**FACT:** According to the National Institute of Mental Health, eating disorders and binge eating affect 24 million Americans each year. *Eating disorders claim more lives each year than any other mental disorder. To learn more go to:* <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/index.shtml>

**MYTH: People who abuse drugs aren't sick they are just weak.**

**FACT:** According to the “Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health”, *over 66% of young people with a substance abuse problem also have a mental health problem. To learn more about dual diagnosis check out:* <http://www.nami.org>

**MYTH: Only children are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).**

**FACT:** *Half of the children with ADHD continue to have the disorder throughout their adulthood.* ADHD is sometimes not diagnosed until adolescence or adulthood. *To gain a better understanding of ADHD and it’s impact on people’s lives go to:* <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/index.shtml>

**MYTH: Anxiety disorders are not that common.**

**FACT:** Approximately 40 million adults suffer from anxiety disorders. In fact anxiety disorders *are the most common of mental disorders.* *You can find out more at:* <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/index.shtml>

<p>The Lutheran Voice for Mental Health is a group of individuals from Minnesota South District congregations that meet under the auspices of the Lutheran Counseling Center, Burnsville. Motivated by the love of Jesus Christ, we want to equip congregations with the truth about mental illness, and so provide hope for all whose lives are impacted by mental illness. For more information see: <a href="http://www.lutherancounseling.org/resources/">http://www.lutherancounseling.org/resources/</a> OR call 651-603-6279.</p>
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