Speaking into the Silence: Storytelling as a Path to Healing

Angela Whitenhill, M.Div., LCSW
Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund
MENTAL HEALTH 101
What is Mental Illness?

Challenges adapting or responding to stress / change

Biological Factors
Social / Developmental
Traumatic Event
Multiple Risk Factors
Maladaptive Coping Skills
Duration / Severity
Acute vs. Chronic
Curable vs. Healable
What is Mental Illness? (Cont’d)

Affects:

Relationships, Functioning, Behavior, Mood

PERSON, NOT DIAGNOSIS.
TESTIFYING TO HEAL
Blessed Are the Crazy: Trailer

"To tell the true story is to heal."
- Sarah Griffith Lund
“Sharing my testimony is liberation. It sets me free from my prison of fear, shame, and pain, and opens the door to new hope, healing and love.”

- Sarah Griffith Lund
“Both a narration of events and a confession of belief: we tell what we have seen and heard, and then confess what we believe about it.”

- Anna Carter Florence
Power of Vulnerability

• Funnel & Trauma
• Brene Brown

https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=en
What would it take for the church to be a safe space to be exposed and unashamed?

What Does This Have To Do with the Church?
PICKING UP THE CROSS OF MENTAL HEALTH
Carrying the Cross: Becoming a safe space for testimony sharing

- **Listen**
  - Allow a space for unfiltered, raw expression

- **Comfort**
  - Validate, Empower, Encourage

- **Refer**
  - If you feel in over your head...you are

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Closing & Questions

Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund
Vice President for Advancement at Christian Theological Seminary

Angela Whitenhill, M.Div., LCSW
Psychotherapist, Chaplain, Activist

www.nbacares.org/mental-health
Hotlines & Faith-Based Resources

NAMI Faithnet: www.nami.org/FaithNet
Pathways to Promise: www.pathways2promise.org
Mental Health Ministries: www.mentalhealthministries.net
Interfaith Network on Mental Illness: www.inmi.us
United Church of Christ Mental Health Network: www.mhn-ucc.blogspot.com

24/7 National Mental Health Helpline:
1-800-662-HELP (4357)
National Suicide Prevention Life Line:
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
10 Steps to Developing a Mental Health Ministry

1. Make a commitment
2. Educate yourself
3. Get buy-in from your clergy/board of directors
4. Form a task force or ministry team
5. Decide with your team what you want to offer/accomplish
6. Define strategies for keeping the congregation, board and clergy involved
7. Make an inventory of available resources
8. Join with other organizations
9. Communicate
10. Be prepared to nurture your ministry
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Thank you!

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