

## **LS 24.6.25 The minister's mental health**

### **1/ What is depression?**

Causes: Reduction of levels of chemical messengers in the brain (neurotransmitters): dopamine, serotonin, noradrenaline

Genetic Factors

Hormones

Stress

Drugs, alcohol

Triggers: bereavement, illness, financial problems, relationship breakdown etc

### **How diagnosed?**

**Symptoms of 1 major and 2 minor criteria present**

#### **Major:**

Depressed mood nearly every day for 2 weeks or more

Diminished interest or pleasure

Not enjoying anything anymore.

#### **Minor:**

Sleep disturbance early morning waking esp.

Appetite change weight gain / loss (later in severe depression)

Fatigue, Low energy levels

Restlessness - unable to settle

Slowness of doing things or of movements

Inability to concentrate

Feelings of low esteem or worthlessness

Thought of death and suicide

**When diagnosed, doctors classify into mild, moderate or severe.**

#### **Mild depression**

Still able to function

Able to appear at work as if things OK, but when home emotionally flat.

May be very sad or tearful

May have a short fuse/temper

#### **Moderate depression:**

Energy levels low.

Problems of concentration; work will suffer

Relationships affected

Difficult to leave house

Gradual withdrawal into one's private world; "cave".

Might have thoughts of being better off if dead, but not intentionally suicidal.

#### **Severe depression:**

Lacking in concentration and energy

May spend days in bed

Prob won't shop and eat so weight loss

Isolation; Hard to speak with anyone.

Serious thoughts of suicide, considering different ways of doing it, planning and even rehearsing it.

## **2/ Why do Pastors get depression?**

Pastors are not immune; just as fragile and vulnerable as anyone else.

### **Peculiarities of Pastoral ministry**

helpful to see this; to guard ourselves and know what measures might be helpful to prevent recurrence.

Work:life imbalance

Isolation

Constant level of stress.

Spiritual pressures;

Stress of...“expectations”

people pleasing

fear of failure & guilt of failure. Disappointment over lack of progress

Church conflict

Loss

Technology and administration

Family pressures, financial pressures

## **3/ What to do if depressed?**

### **1/ Admit and take advice**

### **2/ Stop and rest**

Jesus said to his disciples “**come and rest a while.**”

**Elijah after Carmel and Jezebel's** threats, 1 Kings 19:5, Angel gave him food and sleep!

Adequate time of rest; Don't return to full duties too early - until much improved.

### **What might your medical services do?**

a/ Time off work

### **b/ Therapy**

#### **Counselling**

CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy)

Biblical counselling

**Medication.** Antidepressants

c/ **Support:** You will need sympathetic support of you leadership team.

## **LS 24.6.25 The minister's mental health Part 2**

### **4/ Guarding ourselves from developing depression & preventing relapse?**

#### **(i) Work-life balance**

##### **(ii) Diet**

Keeping the gut healthy; a good gut biome, important for mental health.  
Avoiding UPF. Include foods such as Kefir / live yoghurt, Brown rice and grains, wholemeal bread, oats, vegetables such as mushrooms, leeks, spinach, watercress, corquettes or zucchini, fermented veg such as sauerkraut and bananas & kimchi enhance good bacteria in the gut.

##### **(iii) SAD Lamp** SAD = Seasonally Affected Disorder (SAD)

10,000 lumens, used for 20 minutes per morning September to April can be preventative.

**(iv) From "Zeal without burnout"** 4 things we need; but God never needs which are safeguards: (Christopher Ash in Zeal without burnout,)

a/ Sabbath rest b/ Sleep c/ Friends, d/ Spiritual renewal

##### **a/ Sabbath. Jesus said it was made for man.**

Regular rest is not an option; it is a command & a necessity; we are not indispensable & can trust God

How to take a Sabbath Rest.

Communicate it to Church;

Delighting in God's creation is good.

Give yourself to your wife & children if you have them. give your phone to your wife if you have one, saying "I belong to you today!"

##### **b/ Sleep**

Need sufficient: & 7 hrs 30 mins per night at a regular time.

Regular bed times

Room temperature lower.

Wind down to sleep & dim lights in later evening.

Avoid blue screens for 2 hours before bedtimes.

Blackout in the bedroom is important for the quality of our sleep.

Bedroom for sleep and rest; not a work station.

##### **c/ Friendship**

Jesus spoke of friendship; said "I have called you friends," John 15:15  
accountability

Cultivate our friendship with our wives

##### **d/ Spiritual refreshment**

Psalm 1:3 "like a tree planted by streams of water."

## **5/ What can the Church do to help?**

### **a/ Recognise the role of Medical Services**

God's providence

### **b/ Supportive help**

Can non-professionals such as fellow Church members help?

Christian love and care

Might take a long time

Company. Availability.

Listen

Sending message text/card/phonecall

Don't focus on how they are all the time.

Ordinary activities; a walk or craft

Pray or sing or just listen to Christian songs

Aim to gradually reintroduce them to the fellowship

### **c/ Support for the spouse or near relative**

big burden on them

### **Books:**

"Down, not out" by Chris Cippollone

"Zeal without burnout," Christopher Ash

"The Pastor with a thorn in his side," Stephen Kneale

"Tackling mental illness together" Alan Thomas

"Living with Depression", Elaine Brown

"Christians get depressed too" David Murray

"Broken minds" Steve & Robyn Bloem,

"Spurgeon's sorrows" Zack Eswine,

,