

Anxiety and Depression

Anxiety

Philippians 4:6-7 This is the key biblical text that teaches us it is possible to defeat anxiety. God helps us overcome anxious thoughts, doubts, worries, and fears.

Philippians 3:5-8 The Apostle Paul went through incredibly hard situations of injustice and physical suffering. However, he was able to trust in God through the hardest of times.

Philippians 4:10-13 Paul's secret was that he wasn't facing life alone. He knew that he could handle anything "through him who strengthens." This is the great spiritual key to facing anxiety.

Psalms 55:1-8, 16-23 This psalm of David demonstrates what to do with our thinking when we are facing genuine worry and concern about situations in our lives. We can utter our complaints to the LORD multiple times each day until something changes. We can cast our burdens upon Him, and He will sustain us.

Psalms 118:5-9 In order for us to find the protection we need, we must not only pray, but then actively take refuge in our God in the hard times.

Psalms 46:1-11 If you or someone you know is facing anxiety, this scripture is very encouraging and helpful to read (or even memorize). Sometimes we have to repeat something to ourselves over and over before it finally sinks in.

Depression

What is the meaning of life? Without meaning, we can fall into depression as well as toxic behavior that can harm ourselves and others. As Christians, we have an answer as to why our lives matter.

Psalms 73:25-26 If God is our portion and we anchor our sense of meaning and value in Him, then we can weather the storms of life without getting decimated. Instead of living for our families, political causes, helping the needy, intellectual curiosity, acquiring money, increasing our power, pursuing sexual gratification, or achieving fame, we ground ourselves in someone unwavering in His love for us. In fact, when our purpose is to glorify God, suffering actually enables us to do that better. It's one thing to say "Praise the Lord" when your belly is full, your house is warm, and your job is stable. It's quite another to say those same words when you get a terminal diagnosis, when your teenager gets pregnant, or when you lose your job. However, precisely because it's harder, God looks even more glorious when we press into Him in our suffering.

According to Tim Keller (*Making Sense of God*), there are three identity formation strategies:

1. looking outward: traditional culture
2. looking inward: postmodern culture
3. looking upward: biblical culture

Helping Hurting People Session 5 – Student Notes

Romans 5:6-8 God says you're loveable. The most important being in the universe deems you loveable. He fully knows you and still wants to spend forever with you. He wants to have a relationship with you that never ends. You are way more loveable than you ever imagined!

Romans 8:35-39 Even when we feel sad over legitimate circumstances we face in life, we still know that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is a powerful truth if we can let it sink down to our very cores, replacing other reasons we think we have value.

Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God*, (NY: Viking: 2016), pp. 141-142:

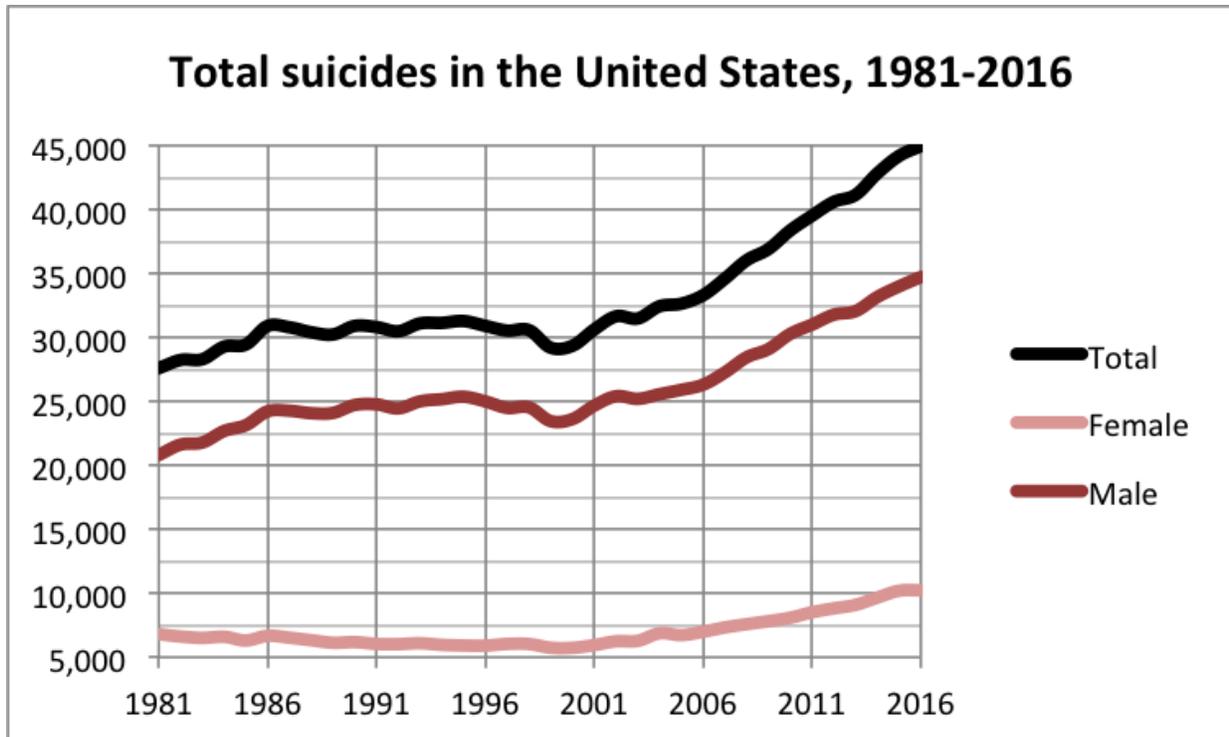
Walking with God, who always sees us and loves us, brings a new integrity and sense of self. We cannot and do not simply blend into each new setting, saying the things we need to say to get the most benefit out of the situation. We are not merely a set of dramatic roles, changing every time we play to a new set of spectators, because God is our primary audience every moment.

So who am I? If I am a Christian, I am who I am before God. Those things God affirms are the true me; those things he prohibits are the intrusions of the foreign matter of sin and not part of the person I was made to be and the spirit is bringing about. Even as I age and sense some physical deterioration, I sense my true identity becoming clearer and my true self becoming stronger. 'Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all' (2 Corinthians 4.16-17). There is nothing more valuable than this new identity. 'What does a man gain by winning the whole world,' Jesus said, 'at the cost of his true self? What can he give to buy that self back?' (Mark 8.36-37)

The great paradox is that we 'find' our selves, this unconquerable identity and confidence, only through humbling ourselves, giving up the right to self-determination, and following Christ. 'Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it' (Matthew 10.39). That is, when we stop trying to find and serve ourselves and instead give ourselves in service to God and others as we put our faith in Christ, we will find ourselves. This is, of course, the path of Jesus, who had the greatest glory and honor but gave it away in order to save and serve us (Philippians 2.1-11) and, as a result, now has an even greater glory and honor than before.

The Christian gospel offers us the most invincible, confident assurance of our own worth and yet at the same time requires humble service and the loss of our autonomous independence. Therefore it creates a culture neither of self-realization and promotion nor of self-abnegation and denial. It brings neither and yet in the best sense fulfills both. It neither inflates nor crushes the ego. Neither the society nor my own feelings control me and tell me who I am. 'It is the Lord who judges me' (1 Corinthians 4.4).

A God-based sense of identity and worth maximizes and balances humility and confidence. However, if we also need hope, we need to know that this life is not all there is—that if we stick it out, eventually our pain will end, and we will enjoy the wholeness and peace. Unfortunately, for so many Americans, hopelessness creeps in with the end result of suicide. See chart on the next page.



Total suicides in the United States, 1981–2016. Data from [CDC WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports](#).

1 Peter 1:3-5 However, God has planned a beautiful hope for us that will not perish or fail. He guards it with His immense power until it is revealed in the last time. This is not a trite or quick answer to people. No, it is a profound truth that grows in our hearts like a seed planted in fertile soil. Our confidence is not based in wishful thinking or mythology, but in the historically verifiable event of Jesus' of Nazareth's resurrection from the dead. It's through his resurrection that we too look forward to a bright new day of hope in the Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Behavioral health research has shown that depression and anxiety are both prompted by genetic and environmental factors. Parents who have a history of depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and or suicidality will most likely raise children that will tend to respond to life in depressed and or anxious ways. Depressive episodes are the “blues” that happen once in a while. Some people are “Eeyore-like.” It is like the glass is always half empty.

These are criteria for major depressive disorder. If a person appears to meet most of the following criteria, this person needs to be referred to a primary care doctor or a licensed counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or trained minister. When the depression is regulated, the person is able to receive professional help.

Major Depressive Disorder: If a person nearly every day shows these behaviors that cause **impairment** in living life:

1. clearly cannot get out of bed, shower, do any fun activities he used to do,
2. has substantially decreased or increased food intake,
3. may be more irritable than normally, insomnia or hypersomnia (cannot sleep),
4. fatigue and loss of energy,
5. diminished ability to concentrate,
6. indecisive
7. feelings of sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness, over a significant period of time each day.

Panic Attacks: If the person is having reoccurring panic attacks or is unable to leave home or go to work, then refer the person to a professional (primary care doctor or a counselor or psychiatrist).

A panic attack is the abrupt onset of intense fear or discomfort that reaches a peak within minutes and includes at least four of the following symptoms: palpitations, pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate. Also may include sweating, trembling or shaking, sensations of shortness of breath or smothering.

How to get over a panic attack when one begins. “Ride the wave – it’s a physiological problem.” No one dies of a panic attack. The person just “feels” like that is what is happening.

When and how to engage with someone who has depressive episodes and heightened anxiety:

Depressive episodes are generally found when someone has a lot of stress, anger, hopelessness, and/or grief. We all have episodes of feeling “blue” or “down.” Many times we perceive ourselves as a victim and find it difficult to seek solutions to our difficulties.

Depression and anxiety are, as are most all personality characteristics, morals, and values we have, both genetic and environmental. Parents who have a history of depression and anxiety will most likely have children that will tend to respond to life in depressed and or anxious ways.

Sometimes the episodes are seasonal.

Working with someone who is experiencing a depressive episode:

1. Look for a bit of history of what appears to be the problem.
2. Be aware of suicidality or homicidal thoughts. Suicidality – pay attention when someone talks about everyone being better without that person there; giving things away, saying “goodbye” to friends and family in a back-handed way; thought through a plan and has it in place (i.e. pills, rope, drive a car off the road, cutting, gun, etc.).
4. Look for times when the person was not depressed and what was different in his life.
5. In your mind, assess how the person is applying spiritual resources to the problem.
6. Try as soon as the first meeting to take a small step for resolution. After listening to the problem and some solutions, help the person to come to an agreement to take some positive step in a helpful direction.

People may change when they see a different perspective and practice reacting differently to the problem.

1. It is important to have a basic knowledge about depression and anxiety.
2. Use your good listening skills.
3. Sometimes even changing the way the problem is defined can help.
4. Instead of looking at the end goal of not being depressed, look at one thing about the situation that can be helped right now. Help the person figure out what this could be and how to actually act on it. This needs to be something small and very manageable so that success is all but guaranteed. Adding one small success to another soon makes for big changes.

Grieving can look a lot like depression. Always ask for professional assistance when you are wondering about what the problem may be.

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Ask about the use of stimulants, coffee, tea, sodas, and general diet. General good care of our body is a big step to alleviating depression, anxiety and panic.

Looking at the situation from another perspective can be helpful for the person to look at solutions differently. Do not overdo this.

We cannot pressure people into making changes. It may work for the short term, but more lasting changes are not made. Change has to come from within a person. Yahweh heals the heart, and people are delivered and healed. At first, stay with changes that are effective and not on the ones the person wants to avoid. Work with the strengths of the individual and then bring along changes in weaker areas.

When and how to work with someone who struggles with anxiety.

Whether depression or anxiety, the methods of listening are very much the same. If a person is anxious, talk about just one stressor that could be thought of in a different light or perspective. Sometimes, because we have a lot going on, we then tend to pile on more and more to make it worse, rather than deal with one thing at a time and move on to the next. When we are anxious, we are not able to function rationally. We find it difficult to make decisions about what to do first or second. All have equal importance to one who has tendencies for anxiety.

A formula that does help with anxiety.

God help me; am I dying here; what really is the problem? God and I can handle that; RELAX.

Telling a person there is nothing to worry about does not help. Buying into the anxiety doesn't help either, i.e. "Oh my, that is horrible...I don't know how you will ever get out of THIS!", or "God will fix everything. Be happy, don't worry." No statements like, "Just pray about it," "It's not so bad," "Jesus is the answer."

1. **Responding** is a part of the process of listening. Last week, we discussed more of the listening part. Our responses will be more appropriate if we have done a good job of actually listening not to just what the words are that the person is saying, but to get to the emotions behind the words.

The discovery stage is when you ask clarifying questions. (Remember, if you are looking for the truth of the situation, you will never really find it. Everyone has his or her reality of a situation and the absolute facts are not totally necessary.)

2. **Comforting** is needed for those in emotional pain. Just your presence many times is comforting. Words at times are secondary. A person needs to feel your presence and ability to sit alongside of them and not get overwhelmed with the difficulties.

Crying – let people cry. Do not hurry the process.

People in pain are comforted to know they are not alone. For self-reflection, describe how you felt sometime when someone comforted you. What did the person say or do that helped you feel comfort?

3. **Encouragement** – Some will not accept encouraging words. They long to hear them, but they are not able due to the pain to receive them. Don't argue with them, just be encouraging.

Examples: "I'm so proud of you for being honest about what happened to you. You have made tremendous progress, and you're on your way to making a lot more." Make sure your words are true and genuine.

4. **Provide information** – Some people are rigid in their thinking, and some are not deep thinkers. Some "think" with their emotions. Especially if there is a recent trauma, the person is not necessarily going to have linear, logical thinking. Learning to listen to both types of "stories" will enable you to be a well-rounded helper.

5. **Important information is to live a balanced life.** Brain inflammation and immune system issues, foods one eats (sugar especially), exercise, what we think about, are all important areas of our lives.

6. **Correcting** – Gal 6:1-2 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

When we tell people the truth of the Word, we are loving them. When we encourage obedience to the Word, we are loving them. We cannot manipulate, coerce, or demand compliance. The individual has to come about decisions from the heart, through Scripture and prayer. Communicating with grace and truth will bring about a better opportunity for the person to really decide to make changes. When a conversation you have had with someone gets away from the Word, how do you bring it back to the Word?

7. **Referring** - Have a good referral list.

Emphasizing the person's strengths is a very godly way to encourage change. A person who is seriously anxious needs to accept the truth that God will take care of things, but just cannot believe it, even when things turn out okay. There is a brokenness generally of trust and a need for control that pushes a person to be so very anxious. The real bottom line is not understanding who Yahweh is and how much He loves us. A person with anxious thoughts is generally always thinking, "What if?" "in an unbridled way of thinking. The Shunamite woman said, "...all is well."

Helping a person gently to take steps in trusting Yahweh to guide, protect, and care for her needs by using good listening skills listed is a very beneficial way towards growth.

Community Activities:

Example:

You: As you look at your situation, what would you say would be the first small indicator that you are beginning to get better?

Person: I don't know. Umm, maybe I would go for a while without being depressed.

You: Well, that would be our goal. But what would be the first small step in that direction? What would be the first little thing that would tell you that you were beginning to feel better?

Person: I don't really know.

You: Let me ask you this. What is the first thing that your husband would notice as you began to get better? What would tell him that you have begun to change?

Person: That I would pray with him once in a while. I won't do that now. I don't get answers to prayer anymore.

You: So praying with your husband once in a while would be noticed as a positive step?

Person: Yes, he really thinks it will help me.

You: In the past, have you prayed together, and things have gotten better?

Person: Yes, a few months ago, we were praying, and I felt much closer to him and to God. But now, I just don't want to and am so tired I haven't wanted to.

You: Ok, you know this has helped you before, and you know the Scriptures about how important prayer is, so maybe by doing this again once a week you will begin to feel better like you did before. (If the person is unaware of verses then take her to the Bible for suggestions for her to select from.)

Maybe in this situation, the person may talk about feeling distant from Yahweh and Jesus Christ, or talk about how hard it is to pray aloud, or some other thing. Making small, tiny steps will add up to great big changes. It is also good to let the person figure out what the steps would be on their own. You can guide that process if the task gets too large or gets off the mark.

Community Group process: Find a partner and each one take a turn talking about a real or made up situation that includes something about anxiety and depression. Try to help the person figure out what little steps to take would look like. Set a soft deadline also.

Possible ideas: fear of speaking in front of people; boss at work is too demanding; don't like crowds; God likes everyone else but me; nothing ever goes right for me; I'm too old to change; too many financial bills after Christmas; dealing with driving to work in the snow.

Community Group Activity – Self-Reflection Questions:

1. On a scale of 0 (not good at all) to ten, how well do you “read” people?

Mary Ann Yaconis is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Mary Ann Yaconis' Personal Meeting Room

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/7030896537>

Meeting ID: 703 089 6537

One tap mobile

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+16699009128,,7030896537# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 703 089 6537

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/aer0UdQmK>

Carl Rogers (1902-1987), a psychologist who graduated from Rogers Columbia University and non-denominational Union Theological Seminary, developed a theory of Humanistic counseling that is client-centered and based on “unconditional positive regard.”

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change. Carl Rogers

The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change. Carl Rogers

CONGRUENCE (GENUINENESS)

Congruence refers to being real, authentic, and genuine with others.

It's called *congruence* because a person's inner experience and outward expression match. In being authentic, the listeners are trustworthy, which helps in building a good relationship. It also serves as a model for others, encouraging them to be their true selves, expressing their thoughts and feelings, without any sort of false front.

UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD and ACCEPTANCE

Unconditional positive regard means the listener genuinely cares for the person speaking and does not evaluate or judge their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors as good or bad. Each person is accepted and valued for who they are, as they are, without stipulation. Those we help need not fear judgment or rejection from us.

ACCURATE EMPATHIC UNDERSTANDING

Accurate empathic understanding means that you, the listener, understands the person's experience and feelings in an accurate and compassionate way. You recognize that each person's experience is subjective and therefore you strive to see things from the person's unique perspective. An important part of accurate empathic understanding is for you to convey that you “get it” by reflecting the person's experience back to him. This encourages the person to become more reflective with themselves, which allows for greater understanding of themselves.

If you've ever had an experience where you felt like someone just really got you...they completely understood where you were coming from, or could truly relate to the way you felt – that's accurate empathic understanding.

Rogers asserts that empathy helps others (1) pay attention and value their experiencing; (2) see earlier experiences in new ways; (3) modify their perceptions of themselves, others, and the world; and (4) increase their confidence in making choices and pursuing a course of action.

Jeanne Watson (2002) states that 60 years of research has consistently demonstrated that empathy is the most powerful determinant of client progress in therapy. She puts it this way: “Therapists need to be able to be responsively attuned to their clients and to understand them

emotionally as well as cognitively. When empathy is operating on all three levels – interpersonal, cognitive, and affective – it is one of the most powerful tools therapists have at their disposal.”

References

1. Watson, J. C. (2002). Re-visioning empathy. In D. J. Cain (Ed.), *Humanistic psychotherapies: Handbook of research and practice* (pp. 445-471). American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.
2. Corey, Gerald. *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Belmont. Thomas Learning, Inc. 2005.