



MENTAL HEALTH

Meeting Segment Guide

Produced by the Policy and Advocacy Team
as part of the *Social Justice Stocktake*



Today we will be taking some time to look at the issue of mental health, and specifically, how this impacts people.

The following resources have been created to assist you to run a 5-8 minute segment in your Corps' or mission expression Meeting, Team Meeting, ALT Meeting or any space where you gather with other people.

These resources are ready to print and use in your Meeting. Below you'll find:



TALKING POINTS



A PRAYER TIME GUIDE
(INCLUDING THREE WRITTEN PRAYERS)



EXTENDED SEGMENT OPTIONS



LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES

For further support in connecting with issues in your local community, contact us at policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au



Talking Points



INTRODUCTION

Today we will be taking some time to look at the issue of mental health, and specifically, how this impacts people. There may be sensitive themes discussed today, so if you feel that it would be helpful for you to talk to someone afterwards, please feel free to come and chat to us, or you can contact Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636 to chat through it with someone.

MENTAL HEALTH

» **Mental health is a central component of wellbeing.**

Everybody has 'mental health'. In the same way that each person has physical health and emotional health, our mental health makes up part of who we are.

» **Just like with physical health, mental wellbeing can fluctuate.** It is likely that we all have times when we experience better physical health, and times when we are not as healthy. Similarly, all sorts of things can impact our mental wellbeing and cause us to be not as mentally healthy. And like physical health, prolonged and serious unhealthy periods can become harder to recover from and develop into more illnesses.

» **The way in which we discuss our mental health is important.** Today we will be discussing 'mental illness', which is a clinically diagnosable disorder that significantly interferes with a person's cognitive, emotional or social abilities, but we will also be using the broader term 'mental ill-health' to include non-diagnosable disorders, which may be the result of life stressors, and are usually shorter and less severe.

» **Mental ill-health is one of the most pressing public health issues in Australia.** Every year, 3.2 million Australians experience an anxiety-related condition, and 2.4 million experience depression or

feelings of depression. Almost half of all Australians experience a mental disorder throughout their lifetime. These numbers are growing.

» **Depression, anxiety, affective disorders and other clinically diagnosable conditions** are common examples of mental illnesses, but it is important to recognise that less severe mental ill-health still undermines the mental wellbeing of many Australians. Many factors can contribute to a person experiencing mental ill-health, including financial difficulty, unemployment, homelessness, family and domestic violence, substance use disorders, and loneliness and social isolation. Sometimes, a person can experience mental ill-health with none of these factors present at all.

» **Almost all of The Salvation Army's services engage either directly** or indirectly with people experiencing mental ill-health. While some of our services have specific mental health professionals employed, it is vital that when these professional services are not available in a Salvation Army expression, we refer and support people to seek out appropriate professional help in addressing mental illness.

» **As we said, everyone has mental health, and it's important to note that mental ill-health does not discriminate;** it affects every demographic in Australia today. Nonetheless, the stigma around mental ill-health can often act as a barrier to people accessing help, and can sometimes cause people experiencing mental ill-health to withdraw or mask their illness, even from those close to them.

1. Women in Super. (n.d.). The facts about women and super. Women in Super. <https://www.womeninsuper.com.au/content/the-facts-about-women-and-super/gjumz3>
2. Workplace Gender Equality Agency. (2021, February). Australia's Gender Pay Gap Statistics (Factsheet). https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Gender_pay_gap_fact_sheet_Feb2020.pdf
3. World Economic Forum. (2021, March). Global Gender Gap Report. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
4. Ruppanner, L. (2017). Women still disadvantaged by the amount of unpaid housework they do, census data shows. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-11/women-doing-lions-share-of-housework-2016-census-release/8434340>
5. Workplace Gender Equality Agency. (2020, June) More women at the top proves better for business. <https://www.wgea.gov.au/newsroom/more-women-at-the-top-proves-better-for-business>
i. Hudson, V. et al. (2014). Sex & World Politics. Columbia University Press
Schleiman, S., Ruppanner, L. & Milkie, M.A. (2018) Who Helps with Homework? Parenting Inequality and Relationship Quality Among Employed Mothers and Fathers. J Fam Econ, (39), 49–65. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-017-9545-4>
McKinsey Global Institute. (2015). The Power of Parity: How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth. https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/industries/public/20and%20social%20sector/our%20insights/how%20advancing%20womens%20equality%20can%20add%20%20trillion%20to%20global%20growth/mgi%20power%20of%20parity_full%20report_september%202015.pdf



Talking Points



- » **It is vital that anyone experiencing mental ill-health** can access timely, non-judgmental, and effective support so that people can experience the wellbeing and flourishing that God has for them.
- » **As followers of Jesus, Scripture provides us with a beautiful concept: 'shalom'.** Often translated into 'peace' in English, shalom offers this sense of everything being brought into right relationship, so that there is wellness, completeness, flourishing, rest, security, safety, abundance, wholeness and goodnessⁱⁱ. Shalom includes the idea of integrated self, where body, mind and spirit are in a state of peace. We believe the Kingdom of God is an invitation to every person to journey toward shalom with Jesus.
- » **Scripture provides incredible insight into mental health and mental ill-health.** One example that we can look to is found in the Prophet Elijah's cry in 1 Kings. He says, "I have had enough, Lord ... Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4, NIV). Having been chased and continually threatened by King Ahab, Elijah collapses under a bush and calls for the Lord to end his suffering. Fear and despair have overtaken Elijah to the point of suicidal thoughts, yet the Lord does not chastise him for lack of faith or command him to repent and pray more. Instead, God approaches this weary and distressed man with compassion and hope. God attends to his physical needs by providing sustenance and space for rest, and provides Elijah with a colleague to share the ministry load.
- » **God's care for each and every person is holistic**
 - God cares deeply about every element of our lives, including our mental wellbeing. As followers of Christ,

we must follow His lead in recognising that every part of a person's life makes up the whole of who they are – a person with inherent dignity who is loved and valued by God.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- » **As the Church, there is much that we can do to respect and care for those experiencing mental ill-health.** We must always treat those with mental illness and mental ill-health with respect and dignity, in line with Jesus' call for us to love one another. We can express this in the offer of authentic friendship, a listening ear, practical support and encouragement. We also express this by supporting people with mental illness or ill-health to seek professional support.
- » **We can work against the stigma of mental illness and mental ill-health by intentionally educating ourselves.** As we learn more, we understand more about our own mental health, about other people and about where they are coming from. We must encourage others to be compassionate and understanding, and actively oppose this stigma when we come across it.
- » **Social relationships are critical for all of us, and yet those who are experiencing mental ill-health** often feel isolated or excluded from social settings. Studies have found that the majority of people experiencing mental ill-health feel isolated and lonely, but that 88% of sufferers also see relationships as important to managing their mental healthⁱⁱⁱ. Our churches and social services must provide welcoming, safe and inclusive spaces for people to find belonging and community.

ⁱⁱ Larsson, F. (1974). *My Best Men are Women*. Salvation Army Publishing



Prayer Time



Play one of the following songs, and ask people to spend some time in silent, individual prayer while the song plays.

[Cornerstone](#) – Reuben Morgan, Hillsong
Worship

[I Am Not Alone](#) – Kari Jobe

[Desert Song](#) – Brooke Ligertwood, Hillsong
Worship

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 777 – Mid All
The Traffic Of The Ways](#) ([lyrics](#))

Following this time of individual prayer, you may like to have three different people lead the group in the below prayers. These prayers are printed on separate pages for ease of distribution to your readers.





Prayer Time



Prayer for our community

Lord,

We are reminded from your Word that you do not look at outward appearances; you look at the heart. So often we build up facades to hide the things that worry us, afraid that if people truly knew us they would reject us. Thank you that your Word reminds us that in Christ we are truly known and thoroughly loved.

We hold this thought tenderly today, mindful that there are so many people in our community who experience mental ill-health. We cannot always see what is going on for people – their concerns, their confusion, or their needs. But we cherish that each person experiencing mental ill-health is also truly known and thoroughly loved in Jesus.

God, we would want to be your loving presence in the world. Holy Spirit, guide us to be your compassion and inclusion where we are

Amen.



Prayer Time



Prayer for Australia

Dear God,

Today, we uphold our health system in Australia before you in prayer. Thank you for the many allied health workers who bring comfort and support to those who are struggling with mental illness. We thank you for counsellors, psychologists, nurses, doctors, social workers, researchers and administrators, each playing their part to help those who experience mental ill-health. We pray for their encouragement and wellbeing. Please give them the wisdom and stamina they need each day.

We also pray for our governments in Australia, both at a State and Federal level. We ask you to be with our elected representatives and public health officials as they make the budgets, policies and laws that affect the most vulnerable in our community. May they be guided by your compassion.

Amen.



Prayer Time



Prayer for the world

Dear God,

Our prayers today are guided by our hope. While we love and walk alongside people who experience mental ill-health, our eyes are lifted to the promise of your Kingdom, where you will “wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will pass away”. Jesus, the whole Earth longs for such a day!

As we wait, we pray that you would move your Church to love well those who struggle with mental ill-health; that we would be your kindness, and offer the dignity and inclusion that reflects your heart.

God – who is Love: may we be like you.

Amen.



For an extended segment



If you would like to present an extended segment (that goes for longer than 10 minutes), here are some ideas that may take people deeper:

- » As a prayer activity, have cards available for people to write encouraging messages and prayers for those they know who are struggling with their mental health or other concerns.
- » Invite a local Social Worker/Community Worker/health professional who works in the area of mental health to share their insight on what this issue looks like in your local community. Alternatively, you could do some research into the prevalence of this issue in your local community and share your insights.
 - Places to start include:
 - [The Black Dog Institute](#)
 - [Beyond Blue](#)
 - [Lifeline](#)
 - [The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)
- » The clip “[I had a black dog. His name was Depression](#)” is a cartoon which provides an explanation of life with depression and the importance of getting help.
- » Read this article on mental health written by Matt Cairns for Others magazine. <https://others.org.au/features/condemnation-to-compassion/>
- » Have a discussion around attitudes to mental illness and how to create a culture of support for people who are struggling with mental ill-health.
- » Ensure that people attending the meeting have ready access to referral numbers, such as Beyond Blue, Lifeline and Kids Helpline. They may be displayed on a PowerPoint slide, or in electronic correspondence.



For an extended segment



USEFUL SONGS:

[Cornerstone](#) – Reuben Morgan, Hillsong Worship

[I Am Not Alone](#) – Kari Jobe

[Desert Song](#) – Brooke Ligertwood, Hillsong Worship

The Salvation Army Songbook No. 777 – [Mid All The Traffic Of The Ways](#) (lyrics)

The Salvation Army Songbook No. 754 – [Give Me A Restful Mind](#) (lyrics)

The Salvation Army Songbook No. 755 – [God Of Comfort And Compassion](#) (lyrics)

The Salvation Army Songbook No. 1003 – [O Lord, Whose Human Hands Were Quick](#) (lyrics)

For Kids:

- » It is really important to help children develop a vocabulary for their feelings and find safe ways to express them to trusted people. Provide some children's books that talk about feelings, such as Trace Moroney's "When I'm Feeling ..." books. Encourage children to draw/paint their own emojis on paper plates for different feelings and share them with a trusted adult.



Further Resources



For more information on this issue, and for further resources:

The Australian Government Department of Health has a list of national mental health and suicide prevention contacts, which is helpful in referral. <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/mental-health-and-suicide-prevention/mental-health-and-suicide-prevention-contacts>

Relationships Australia – Provides relationship support services to enhance human and family relationships. Phone: 1300 364 277 | 9am–5pm

If you'd like any further information on this resource please contact the Policy and Advocacy Team at policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au

Every person can make a difference.

Together, we can make an even greater difference.



