

Supporting Faith Communities During COVID-19

The daily stress caused by the virus, social distancing and a deep financial crisis have had a big impact on all people in our community. It is normal to experience feelings of isolation, anxiety and uncertainty in this abnormal situation. Prioritizing your mental health and staying connected is more important than ever.

To best assist members in your Faith Community that may be impacted:

1. Remind Members that its ok to not be ok

Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. Remind members that it is natural to feel **stress, anxiety, grief and worry** during the COVID-19 outbreak. Encourage them to practice healthy coping activities such as deep breathing, meditation, exercise, establishing a routine and taking a break from the news or social media. If their distress becomes too much, encourage them to seek professional help. It is also important to keep in mind that this has impacted everyone in our community and that even as a Leader, we can feel helpless. It is important to care for your own mental health needs at this time too. Take advantage of resources offered by your denomination and your colleagues. Lean on trusted leaders in your faith community to share in the caring of your community.

2. Encourage open communication

Individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression may be experiencing an increase in their symptoms at this time. It is critical to understand that additional patience in understanding the needs and concerns of your members will be very important. Staying connected with members is more challenging as we are working from home, but there are ways to check-in with members such as scheduled phone calls, holding services on-line, or having smaller prayer groups meeting by Zoom, etc.

3. Local Mental Health Resources

You will find a listing of available resources for businesses on the Gazette website. There are several local mental health agencies currently providing services by phone or telehealth. Most local mental health agencies have immediate openings.

In addition, crisis hot lines or warm lines are available:

- Foundation 2 Crisis Line at 319-362-2174
- Abbe Health Warm Line at 844-775-WARM (9276)
- Your Life Iowa at 855-581-8111 (talk) or 8550-895-8398 (text) yourlifeiowa.org for information or chat

Visit MakeItOK.org/iowa to learn more about mental health resources.

Additional information can be found at National Alliance on Mental Illness NAMI's [COVID-19 Information & Resources](#).