

Promoting Spiritual and Religious Participation among Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities: A Factsheet and Resource Guide



Temple University
Collaborative

On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities

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Introduction

Engaging in spirituality and/or religion is an important area of community participation that has health benefits. Some health benefits may include improvement in physical and mental health functioning. For example, some faith communities offer programming such as exercise groups and cooking events, which may increase physical activity and healthy eating. Spiritual practices such as yoga and meditation can help with managing blood pressure.¹ Similarly, faith leaders and members of a religious community can provide opportunities for individuals to connect with other members to increase their mental health through social support. Some religious activities that could increase social relationships include participation in worship services, ministry activities (e.g., volunteering in nursing home facilities), and attending support groups. The purposes of this fact sheet are to describe the health benefits of spiritual and religious participation and to provide resources to support people with serious mental illnesses with engaging in this area.

What are some of the benefits of engaging in spirituality and religion?

As mentioned earlier, there are variety of health benefits for individuals who participate in spiritual or religious activities. Spiritual and religious activities are not just important for some individuals or groups, but for everyone who is interested in this area of community participation. But what does research tell us about the health benefits among the general population and people with serious mental illnesses?

Benefits in the General Population

Research has shown that some of the positive health outcomes that have been found in the general population regarding faith and spirituality involves physical health and mental health.

- Community participation in spiritual and religious activities can help lower rates of heart disease, cirrhosis, stroke, kidney failure, coronary disease, and mortality.²
- In addition, spiritual/religious participation can help lower rates of suicide, improve psychological functioning, create healthy habits, increase longevity, and promote marital stability.³

¹ Manchanda, S.C., Madan, K. Yoga and meditation in cardiovascular disease. *Clin Res Cardiol* **103**, 675–680 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00392-014-0663-9>

² Thoresen, C. E., & Harris, A. H. S. (2002). Spirituality and health: What's the evidence and what's needed? *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 24(1), 3-13. doi: 10.1207/S15324796ABM2401_02

³ Seybold, K. S., & Hill, P. C. (2001). The role of religion and spirituality in mental and physical health. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10(1), 21-24. doi: 10.1111/1467-8721.00106

Benefits for People with Serious Mental Health Conditions

The findings above related to positive health outcomes also apply to people with serious mental illnesses. For people with serious mental illnesses, some of the positive health benefits regarding spiritual/religious participation include increased social support.

- People with serious mental illnesses who receive support from their faith community tend to be able to maintain their recovery.⁴
- People with serious mental illnesses who identify as spiritual and religious tend to have better outcomes related to recovery, hope, quality of life, social inclusion, and empowerment.⁵

Resources

The Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion has developed several resources to support people with serious mental illnesses with participation in spirituality and religion:

[Examples of faith-based initiatives to help individuals with mental health conditions participate in religious organizations:](#)

This resource provides information for faith-based communities, religious congregations, and mental health organizations about how to support people with serious mental illnesses with engaging in religious congregations.

[A fact sheet for consumers on welcoming congregations to religious communities:](#)

This resource provides information for people with serious mental illnesses to understand some of the barriers to community participation in their faith communities as well as some of the ways that they can increase their engagement in religious congregations.

[A fact sheet for providers on welcoming congregations to religious communities:](#)

This resource provides information for mental health providers to understand some of the barriers experienced by people with serious mental illnesses regarding participation in faith communities. It also describes strategies that may be helpful to increase engagement in this area.

[The role of peer specialists in helping people connect to religious organizations of their choice:](#)

This resource provides information for peer specialists in supporting people with serious mental illnesses to connect to religious congregations in their faith communities.

⁴ Webb, M., Charbonneau, A. M., McCann, R. A., & Gayle, K. R. (2011). Struggling and enduring with God, religious support, and recovery from severe mental illness. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 67(12), 1161–1176. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20838>

⁵ Corrigan, P., McCorkle, B., Schell, B., & Kidder, K. (2003). Religion and spirituality in the lives of people with serious mental illness. *Community Ment Health J*, 39(6), 487-499. doi: 10.1023/b:comh.0000003010.44413.37