

Treatment Options

It is very important for individuals struggling with SMI to receive treatment as soon as possible. Research shows that the most effective treatment for SMI is psychotherapy and medication together.

Types of Treatment

- **Professional counseling:** Meeting with a licensed counselor who offers psychotherapy can help a person improve coping skills and manage symptoms. Look for counselors that used evidence-based treatment models such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), internal family systems (IFS), or Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR).
- **Medication management:** A psychiatrist or APRN can prescribe medication to help manage symptoms resulting from chemical imbalances in the brain.
- **Support groups:** Peer-led support groups for individuals with SMI and their families offer community, education, and peer support.
- **Family therapy:** Including family members in therapy helps strengthen family and couple relationships for people with SMI.
- **Inpatient hospitalization:** Treatment for SMI sometimes includes periods of hospitalization, usually for the purpose of medication adjustment and stabilization, or to protect the safety of the individual or others if he or she is having suicidal or homicidal thoughts or intentions.

If you are a caregiver for a person with SMI, know you are not alone and support is available.

About Urban Alliance

Urban Alliance is a Christian collective impact organization located in East Hartford, CT. Our goal is to create opportunities for people to achieve lasting change in their lives through the collaborative work of churches and organizations in our local community.

Your support helps mental health resources, like this brochure, get into the hands of the people who need them most.



urbanalliance.com



Serious Mental Illness



If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with serious mental illness, you are not alone.

SMI is a term used to describe mental health conditions that make it difficult for a person to care for themselves or others. It includes major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post traumatic stress (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder.

With early and consistent treatment, people with serious mental illnesses can manage their conditions, overcome challenges, and lead meaningful, productive lives.

Types of Serious Mental Illness

Mental illnesses are disorders that affect a person's thinking, mood, and/or behavior. They can range from mild to severe. A mental illness that interferes with a person's life and ability to function is called a serious mental illness (SMI).

Examples of Serious Mental Illness:

- **Schizophrenia:** a serious mental disorder in which people interpret reality abnormally. Schizophrenia may result in some combination of hallucinations, delusions, and extremely disordered thinking and behavior that impairs daily functioning, and can be disabling. People with schizophrenia require lifelong treatment.
- **Severe Bipolar Disorder:** formerly called manic depression, bipolar disorder is a mental health condition that causes extreme mood swings that include emotional highs (mania or hypomania) and lows (depression). When you become depressed, you may feel sad or hopeless and lose interest or pleasure in most activities.
- **Severe Major Depression:** a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Severe major depression can be treatment resistant, chronic and impair functioning.
- **Borderline Personality Disorder:** a mental illness that severely impacts a person's ability to manage their emotions. This loss of emotional control can increase impulsivity, affect how a person feels about themselves, and negatively impact their relationships with others.

Understanding SMI

Several factors may contribute to a person's risk of developing SMI, including:

- genetic
- brain structure and function
- environmental
- stressors

There is a link between SMI and physical problems in a person's brain structure. In particular, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are widely believed to be caused by an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain. There is much overlap in the areas of the brain impacted by these two disorders.

In the body of Christ, we seek God for all healing.

"Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord." (James 5:14)

Therefore it is important for believers to pray for physical, emotional, mental and relational healing for individuals with SMI.

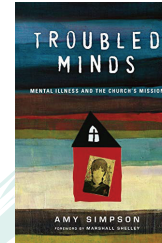
Sometimes people forget that most serious mental illness has a physical cause and attribute a person's struggles to poor character, sin, demons or other factors. This can add to the person's suffering by perpetuating stigma. Stigma is an unfair negative belief about a person or group of people. Stigma is common with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

It is important for people living with SMI to know they are "fearfully and wonderfully made," "loved by God" and given gifts to further His kingdom. Their primary identity ought to be rooted in Christ, not their illness. The body of Christ can affirm this by building relationships with individuals and families with SMI, finding meaningful ways for them to serve, and offering kindness and care when they are struggling.

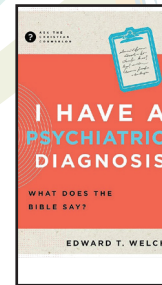
Helpful Resources



Matthew Stanford
Madness and Grace: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Care and Serious Mental Illness



Amy Simpson
Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission



Ed Welch
I Have a Psychiatric Diagnosis: What Does the Bible Say?

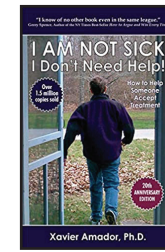
Helpful Scripture

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18)

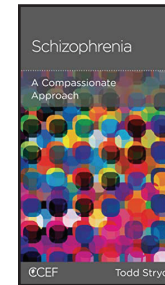
"I lift up my eyes to the mountains-where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

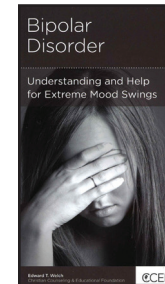
"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Psalms 139:14)



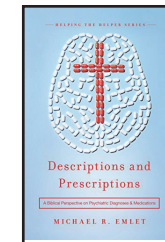
Matt Xavier Amador
I Am Not Sick, I Don't Need Help! How to Help Someone Accept Treatment



Todd Stryd
Schizophrenia: A Compassionate Approach



Ed Welch
Bipolar Disorder: Understanding and Help for Extreme Mood Swings



Michael Emler
Descriptions and Prescriptions: A Biblical Perspective on Psychiatric Diagnoses and Medications

Building a Network of Support

It takes a team to support someone with serious mental illness. Family, friend and clergy offer emotional, practical, relational and spiritual support. Professional counselors and psychiatrists offer clinical and medical interventions. Support groups offer community, compassion and support.

Find a Counselor & Psychiatrist

- **Charisnetworkct.org** offers a listing of CT professional Christian counselors.
- **Psychologytoday.com** offers a general listing of professional counselors.
- **Urbanalliance.com/help** offers a listing of CT behavioral health providers by county.



Find a Support Group

- **NAMI** offers support for individuals with mental illness and their family. Visit www.nami.org.

Immediate Support

- **Mobile crisis teams** visit people in their homes or in the community for crisis situations. **Dial 211** and ask for Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services.
- **National Suicide Hot line: Dial 988** for support
- If you or a loved one are not safe, **call 911 immediately** or visit the nearest emergency room.

SMI Advisor

- SMI Adviser offers researched, vetted and verified guidance to the best resources on SMI. Visit smiadviser.org

1 in 20 people suffer from serious mental illness.



(Prevalence and Treatment data taken from the National Institute of Mental Health)