CHURCH-LEVEL MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

PRAYER PARTNER PROGRAM
Not only does prayer reduce stress, having a prayer partner helps build relationships. Research has shown that strong social relationships and connections are an important part of boosting and maintaining mental health.

“Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.” Jeremiah 29:12

SERVICE SATURDAYS (VOLUNTEER DAYS)
Giving back to the community helps us feel better about ourselves and makes us more satisfied with our lives. Some ideas for church wide service days include park clean up, food bank service, caring for the sick or new mothers.

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another in love.” Galatians 5:13

EXERCISE CLASSES
Exercise is a proven way to improve mental wellbeing. Exercise makes the brain release endorphins - hormones that make you feel good. Those who exercise also feel more confident in their appearance and more comfortable in their own skin. There is a link between physical wellbeing and mental wellbeing, showing those that take better care of their bodies tend to feel better than those that do not, as well as feel more confident in their appearance and comfortable in their own skin.

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
FAMILY PICNICS
Having a family picnic can help improve relationships and connections. Families can also be encouraged to bring family dogs to the picnic-playing with animals is a known stress reliever and mood enhancer.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

HOBBY NIGHTS
Making time for enjoyable activities is a crucial part in self-care and doing so in fellowship with other congregation members can be an even greater boost for mental health!

“So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31

EDUCATION ON MENTAL ILLNESS
Education from speakers or church leadership can help reduce stigma surrounding mental illness, educate the congregation on where to seek treatment if needed, and equip individuals to properly care for their neighbors that are suffering. See if there is a mental health professional in the congregation that would be willing to share or reach out to local non-profits or health educators through the health department to come and speak to the church.

“The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.” Psalm 116:5

SERVE MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTING FOOD AND DRINKS
A healthy diet is a key component in mental health promotion. While many churches serve light refreshments before or after services, the options may not always be the healthiest. If your church serves coffee, consider including tea as well, and always have water available. Additionally, make fresh fruit available and healthy grain options like granola bars. These foods contain nutrients vital to maintaining healthy brain function.

“A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.” Proverbs 11:25

A MINUTE OF QUIET PRAYER DURING CHURCH SERVICE
Allowing a minute for quiet prayer sometime during the church services provides congregation members a moment to reflect and pray over stresses in their lives. People often have trouble making quiet time during their daily lives, so doing so as a church will provide the opportunity and hopefully start to build a habit.

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Colossians 4:2
WALKING PRAYER GROUPS
A walking prayer group also encourages individuals to pray but does so while encouraging social connections and exercise. Get a group of individuals together to form this walking prayer group – walking through the neighborhood or in a local park, praying together over their community or whatever is in their hearts.

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20

GROUP MEALS
Having a meal together not only promotes fellowship but can also be used as a way to serve others and eat nutritious food. Try to plan a menu with nutritious options to encourage physical wellbeing as well.

“Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart…” Acts 2:46

COMMUNITY GARDEN
A community garden is a shared garden space, where members of the congregation can plant fruits and vegetables and enjoy the bounty of their work. Having a community garden does require work and commitment but serves as a perfect excuse to get outside and an encouragement to eat more fruits and veggies. Chances are, the garden will also promote relationships with congregation members using their green thumbs together.

“God said, ‘I have given you every plant with seeds on the face of the earth and every tree that has fruit with seeds. This will be your food.” Genesis 1:29

HOST AA OR OTHER SUBSTANCE HELP GROUPS
Because churches often have classrooms or even auditoriums that are not being used during weeknights, they are a great place to host AA or other similar type meetings. Of course, the church will only need to provide the space, while the meetings will be held by professionals. Making this type of meeting accessible in the community may help congregation members that may be suffering from addiction – and substance use has been seen to severely impact mental health negatively.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the resting of your faith produces perseverance.” James 1:2-3

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