



## **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT — Where to find help**

The latest statistics indicate that 1 in 5 Australians will experience a mental health disorder in any twelve-month period and a quarter of those will have more than one condition. In addition, one third of young people will have an episode of mental ill health by the age of 25. If you haven't personally struggled with mental ill health, it's highly likely that someone close to you has.

**If your life, or the life of someone you know is in danger, please call 000 for assistance or call Lifeline for around the clock crisis support 13 11 14.**

### **1. Your Growth Group**

One of the key ways we care for one another at Christ Church is through our Growth Groups. They provide small caring communities around God's word and prayer, where people can develop deeper relationships and live out the many one another commands of the New Testament. Talking with a Growth Group Leader, Community Leader, group member or a good friend may be all that is needed to help us work through our concerns. In our Growth Groups we therefore need to be willing to meet with one another outside of group time so that we can listen, pray, read the Bible and help in practical ways during times of need.

Some groups may have a lot of care needs at one time, or more complex needs that Growth Group leaders are not equipped for. Growth Group leaders can approach their Community Leader for additional support or leaders/members can contact a member of the ministry team, Jan Smith in the office or Sally Sims to request additional support, prayer, practical care and professional referral.

### **What type of situation or matter indicates that a person should be referred for additional help?**

- domestic abuse/family violence\*
- where there is a statutory requirement eg mandatory reporting of child abuse\*
- suicidal thoughts and severe mental illness,
- crises or traumatic life events,
- entrenched marital struggles/conflict,
- addictive behaviours,
- material and financial need beyond church resources,
- when the support needed is outside of the carer's expertise, training and skills.

In these situations, it's particularly important to make sure that the person being cared for is referred to someone at church with more experience or to an appropriate professional. In

addition, there are certain situations (\*) which should be brought to the attention of the ministry team because of safe ministry responsibilities and requirements.

If you, or someone you know needs more support than they church community can provide, we also suggest that a good next step is to speak with a GP.

## **2. Your GP**

Your General Practitioner is the first port of call for all physical and mental health concerns. If you're feeling overwhelmed and not sure where to go, your GP is a good place to start. GPs are confidential and appropriately trained in the management of mental health concerns. They can make mental health assessments, draw up personalised mental health care plans (which will help offset the cost of counselling), prescribe medication and make referrals to psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers.

## **3. Counsellor, psychologist or psychiatrist?**

**Counsellors** use talk-based therapy to help people to develop self-understanding and make changes in their lives. Training approaches vary but recognised training will often be in the form of an Advanced Diploma or Graduate Diploma. There is no need for a referral.

**Psychologists** are specialists in human behaviour, development and functioning. Common therapies include cognitive behaviour therapy, psychotherapy, solution focussed therapy and narrative therapy. In order to become a Registered Psychologist, it takes undergraduate study, followed by two years of supervised experience, or the completion of a postgraduate degree in Clinical Psychology to become a Clinical Psychologist. A referral is usually not necessary, however a letter of referral or mental health care plan from your GP will help to reduce the costs involved.

**Psychiatrists** are specialist medical doctors who specialise in diagnosing and treating mental illness. They have a broad knowledge of biological as well as psychological issues and can provide a range of therapies for a variety of disorders, including complex and serious mental health concerns. They prescribe medication for symptom relief, alongside their use of psychological therapies. A letter of referral by a GP is normally required.

## **4. Christ Church Christian Counselling Directory**

The Christ Church counselling directory includes Christian practitioners who have been made known to us through personal experience, recommendation from others, or research. However, this doesn't mean that they will be right for everyone, so we encourage you to continue to search for a practitioner that suits you. It's often helpful to have a therapist who shares your Christian worldview and understands the reasons behind your decisions and desired outcomes. While the best person for you to see may be a Christian, particularly in matters related to marriage, mental health and parenting, sometimes you may determine that the best person in a given situation is not a Christian, that's ok. A good therapist will draw on research-based therapies and theories to assist you to find your way forward.