

## Mental Health Does Not Discriminate

Article submitted by Kim Smith, Guardian Angels Catholic Church



**"Religious traditions are coming to a more complete understanding of mental illness to see that mental health care is a gift from God that can help all people find healing and hope."**

Mental illness does not discriminate based on religion. It is part of the human condition, and people from all religious traditions are affected.

Just as physical illnesses such as cancer and heart disease impact people regardless of a person's religion, the same is true for mental illness. Depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other mental illnesses impact all people.

Religious traditions can offer significant mental health benefits, such as coping mechanisms, social support, and a sense of purpose. But we need to be careful that erroneous religious interpretations are not allowed to promote stigma and even worsen a person's suffering. For example, by suggesting that someone with a mental illness is bewitched or possessed by evil and needs to be excluded from the community.

The good news is that most religious traditions are coming to a more complete understanding of mental illness and understand that there are complex biological, biochemical, psychological and psychiatric conditions that affect people's mental wellbeing. Good mental health care that includes therapy and psychiatric drugs is seen as a gift from God that can be used to the good to relieve suffering and make a person whole.

The scientific data is clear; religion can be a protective factor and a source of spiritual renewal that helps all people find healing and hope amid mental health challenges.

Faith and mental health care go together. All religious traditions can work together to promote good mental health care.

<https://www.catholicmhm.org>

**Deacon Ed Shoener**

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