

Prayer stations

Kinnecting with God's heart for good mental health

Use these kinaesthetic prayer stations to help people engage with general prayer for mental health issues, people suffering with particular problems, and those – including you – seeking to help. Each one details what if any equipment you need to get together in advance, instructions for setting up, and the text for the instruction signs you will need to display – (simply copy and paste these into a word document, enlarging the font so that the instructions are clear enough to read).

Used together, the stations should take around 60 minutes to work round, but if you have less time you can obviously leave out a couple. You can use them within an intercessions slot, have them set up as an installation for a special service or day of prayer where people can come and go independently and/or use them individually as prayer or intercession responses.

You might also like to use mp3 worship tracks of songs celebrating God's love for people in general and/or those which focus specifically on the safety and protection of his presence to create a playlist or CD to play in the background as people are moving round the stations.

Please be aware that mental health is a sensitive issue for many people – and many more will have been affected personally than you realise. Be aware of anyone who might need to talk and pray after, or during, a session using these resources, and make sure people know who and where to go if they want more information, need to seek help and advice. These organisations might be good places to direct people to for help: **Mind** 0300 123 3393 www.mind.org.uk **Re-think** 0300 5000 927 www.rethink.org **Sane** 0845 767 8000 www.sane.org.uk

If after taking part in these stations, you or others would like to find out more about how to tackle discrimination against mental health issues, contact: **Time to Change** 020 8215 2356 www.time-to-change.org.uk

1. What am I thinking?

Equipment needed: pens, paper and a copy of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

What am I thinking?

- Our mental health and that of others can be an emotive issue... take some time to reflect on your thoughts and feelings on this subject – however muddled they might be – before you come to pray.
- If it helps you, use pens and paper to jot down anything in response to some or all of the following prompts:
 - What emotions come to mind when you think about this issue? Are any of them uncomfortable?
 - What experiences are you remembering?

- Many people struggling with mental illness experience fear, and for many of us approaching the issue – whether we have been affected personally or not – it can be frightening too... we might feel like we don't understand much; we might have painful or disturbing memories; we might be confused about teaching we have heard about how spiritual issues relate to mental health...
- 2 Timothy 1:7 says – “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” And 1 John 4:18 says that “perfect love drives out all fear”.
- Give all that you have been thinking to God and ask him to fill you again with his love. Thank him that he desires everyone he has created to be free from fear. Ask him to help you intercede for this issue today, and to give you more understanding about our minds and how much he cares about them.

2. Well-rounded wellbeing

Equipment needed: pens, paper, multiple copies of a person outline on an A4 sheet of paper, such as the one provided at the end of this document and a print out of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Well-rounded wellbeing

- In Mark 12:29-31 Jesus says:
“The most important command is this... Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second command is this: ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself. There are no commands more important than these.”
- We were made for relationship – with God and with others. And we were made holistically – we have bodies, minds, hearts, spirits and souls which all interrelate in how healthy we are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
- Thank God that he has made us so intricately, designing the perfect way for us to be balanced and healthy – within ourselves and in our relationships with him and others.
- Take one of the sheets with a person outline on it and fill in the area around it with as many ideas as you can think of which contribute to good physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health... from good circumstances and relationships to sleep, healthy food, exercise to the spiritual disciplines and things that make us feel fully alive.
- Thank God for all the things you have written down which are all good gifts from him.
- (Take your person sheet with you to the rest of the prayer stations as you will need it again.)

3. Un-wellbeing

Equipment needed: whiteboard or flip chart and suitable pens, four balls of wool or thick thread in different colours, a print out of the statistics sheet ‘So many people... so many reasons’ provided in the additional resources section at the end of this document, and a copy of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need. On the flip chart or white board write the following headings up on the board, scattering them around the page so there is space to write around or underneath each one: 'chemical imbalance', 'hormonal imbalance', 'stress and anxiety', 'grief', 'difficult circumstances', 'broken relationships', 'physical health problems', 'past trauma'.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:**Un-wellbeing**

- Our mental health and well-being is affected by so many different things, and people struggling with recognised mental illnesses may be doing so for a complex reason of causes. Some are internal to the person, some are external, and often there are multiple causes... and further causes come into play as knock-on effects of the initial cause...
- Read the statistics provided on the sheet 'So many people... so many reasons'
- Look again at the sheet you brought with you from station 2... can you imagine the effect on your and others' mental health and general sense of well-being if these contributing positives were absent or insufficient?
- Have a think about some of the more specific negative triggers that might fit under the general headings listed out on the flip chart / whiteboard – write them up for others to see too.
- Using these, pray for everyone struggling with their mental health – particularly those who have multiple triggers active at the same time.
- Take a strand of each of the four colours of wool/thread and as you weave or twist them together, pray for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health to be restored to these people.
- Tie the strands round your wrist to remind you to pray for good mental health to be restored to all those who are struggling. Thank God that he can renew minds as well as heal bodies and pray for him to continue to work – directly and through the services and ministry of others.

4. Disconnected

Equipment needed: headphones, a CD or mp3 player, some music such as Jars of Clays 'Headphones' – or preferably a sound file of noise – and a copy of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:**Disconnected**

- Think back to station 1 and how God designed us to be in relationship...
- Loneliness, isolation and a sense of being disconnected from others can cause mental health issues, and are often the result of them (leading to a worsening cycle)... as many people withdraw, they can no longer fully function around others, or are even hospitalised in secure units.
- Put on the headphones, shutting yourself off from the world around you, and close your eyes... think about your good and bad experiences of being alone and offer these to God. Psalm 10:17 says "You, Lord, hear the desire of

the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry". And Psalm 68:6 says "God sets the lonely in families". Pray for God's presence to surround and comfort those who are isolated, and for his people to do so too.

- Now think about our society as a whole and how although our Western world may be considered 'developed', there seems to be a widespread prevalence of factors which can contribute to mental health issues such as:
 - More pressure to achieve and climb the career ladder, with many people suffering high stress at work.
 - More complex lives can contribute to higher stress levels and less time for cooking healthy meals, sleeping well and taking regular exercise – all of which help our mental wellbeing.
 - As we become more individualised and experience more family and community breakdown, and we spend more time online rather than with other people, more people become vulnerable to loneliness, isolation and mental illness.
- Take the headphones off as a symbol of choosing to leave individualism behind. Pray for God to heal and restore connectivity and community in our society.
- Before you leave this station, ask God to bring to mind if there might be one or two actions you could take to help you to connect to others more.

5. What does everyone else think?

Equipment needed: a print out of the poem 'When I feel like this' provided in the additional resources at the end of this document, a mask (this could be a simple cardboard cut out, a decorative theatre mask or even a balaclava) and a copy of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

What does everyone else think?

- Although mental health issues are talked about increasingly in both society and church, they are still surrounded by stigma and taboo – it's difficult to talk about them, and fear or shame surrounding how others do, or might, perceive their illness or possible illness can cause further problems for those who are struggling... Much remains hidden as a result.
- If you are comfortable to do so, put on the mask while you read 'When I feel like this' – a reflective poem written by an in-patient in mental hospital.
- Read the statistics below – how do they make you feel?
 - Mental health problems affect 1 in 4 people
 - 9 out of 10 people with a mental health problem are likely to experience stigma
 - In a recent Time to Change survey, 9 in 10 young people reported experiencing stigma from others as a result of their mental health problem. They described stigma as feeling:
 - isolated
 - shamed
 - misunderstood
 - criticised as a person...
 - .. and demeaned.

In fact, many said the stigma they received from friends, family, boyfriends or girlfriends, teachers and even doctors was worse than the illness itself.*

- Pray for less fear and more understanding and love in individuals, churches and society so that we see an end to stigma. Ask that God would help us all to be sensitively proactive when we sense people might be unwell mentally.
- Pray specifically for the media and the crucial role they play in shaping perceptions on this issue.
- Pray also that God would help those who are struggling to find safe people and places to be vulnerable and the courage to ask for help.

* The 'Time to Change' Programme

6. Seeking to understand

Equipment needed: a pile of stones (large enough to write on!), a permanent marker, a large glass bowl filled with water (but not so much that it will overflow when stones are placed in it), a Bible open at Psalm 139, a print out of the sheet 'Understanding more' provided at the end of this document, and a copy of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Seeking to understand

- There are many different types of mental health issues and illnesses and for most, a spectrum within them from mild to severe. Have a look at the sheet 'Understanding more' for some brief definitions of some of them.
- Take a stone and choose one condition that you would like to pray for:
 - Write the name of the condition on the stone and then hold it in your hand.
 - Thank God that he perfectly understands the complex causes and effects of this condition – and that he holds each individual currently struggling with it, or fearful that it will return.
 - Pray that he will help other people – especially researchers, medical and psychological professionals – to understand more about it.
 - When people feel isolated in their internal world, it can be frightening and seem like no one will be able to reach them, but Psalm 139 reminds us that there's nowhere we can go from God's presence.
 - Place the stone in the water and ask for God's safe and healing presence to be close to all who are struggling – and to minister to them directly, as well as through the care and help of others.
- Feel free to pray for as many different conditions as you want to.

7. Making caring connections

Equipment needed: pens, a print out of the sign you have made using the text below and ten post it notes or slips of paper with the following labels written on each one:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ○ medication and pharmaceutical/research professionals | ○ therapists – cognitive, behavioural, occupational, arts and creative |
| ○ counsellors and psychologists | ○ GPs, psychiatrists, keyworkers and nurses |

Prayer stations

- mental health care hospitals and day centres
- mental health charity support
- friends and family
- drop in centres

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- crisis centres
- telephone help-lines e.g. Samaritans, Mind Info-line

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Making caring connections

- Stretch out one of your hands flat and then cup the other one gently over the top of it.
- Think about God's caring and gentle hands, lovingly holding each individual who is struggling... and of other images of his care such as him being a shelter, a safe hiding place, a sanctuary and a protecting wing...
- Thank him that he is the ultimate example of care – ministering both lovingly and wisely.
- Choose one of the post-it notes representing different methods of care and groups of carers, and place it in the same cup-handed position to symbolise care. Pray for this method of care/group of carers to be more effective for the people it is seeking to help, and a truer reflection of God's love and restorative wisdom for the minds it/they are trying to heal.
- Repeat this for as many of the other treatments/groups you would like to.
- Now take all of the post it notes in your cupped hands – pray a blessing on the connections between different treatments, services and helpers who are treating the same individuals. And also for restoration, strength, inspiration and insight for those working so hard for others to receive healing.
- Before you leave this station, kneel and silently pray for anyone who is feeling absolutely desperate and at the end of their ability to carry on today – especially anyone who is considering suicide. Ask that God would minister hope to them directly, and send compassionate people to intervene.

8. Becoming a holistic body again

Equipment needed: pens, print outs of people outlines as for station 1, a ball of wool or thread differently coloured to those used at station 4, and a copy of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

For display:

Becoming a holistic body again

- Psalm 9:9-10 in *The Message* says:
"God's a safe-house for the battered, a sanctuary during bad times. The moment you arrive, you relax; you're never sorry you knocked."
Take a person outline and begin to dream big... Write on it some practical ideas of what a church might look like that was truly offering this kind of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual care in Jesus' name and power.

- Think about your church, and the church in general and use the questions below to aid honest reflection...
 - Is it ok to talk about struggling emotionally or mentally in your church culture?
 - How can the church better embody the love and welcome of Jesus to those who are struggling mentally? What does it have to offer – through what the Bible says, the Holy Spirit's love and power, and the practical care and community of its people?
- Offer your reflections and further questions to God and ask him to bring to mind any conversations or actions you might want to take as a result of today...
- Philippians 1:9-10 in *The Message* reads:

“So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush.”

Pray for church leaders and all involved in pastoral work specifically, and also for general members of church congregations, to have both wisdom and love together – knowing when prayer and caring support are helpful, and when professional help is needed.
- Take some thread and wrap it round the outside of the twist already round your wrist from station 3. Pray for the church to provide God's sanctuary and safety to those who are struggling mentally and emotionally and ask God to show you your part in this.

9. Still thinking

Equipment needed: A print out of some “Want to keep thinking about this?” cards you have made using the template provided in the additional resources section at the bottom of this resource, and a copy of the sign you have made using the text below.

Instructions for setting up:

1. In advance: Get together all the items that you will need.
2. On the day: Lay out the items and display a copy of the sign you have made.

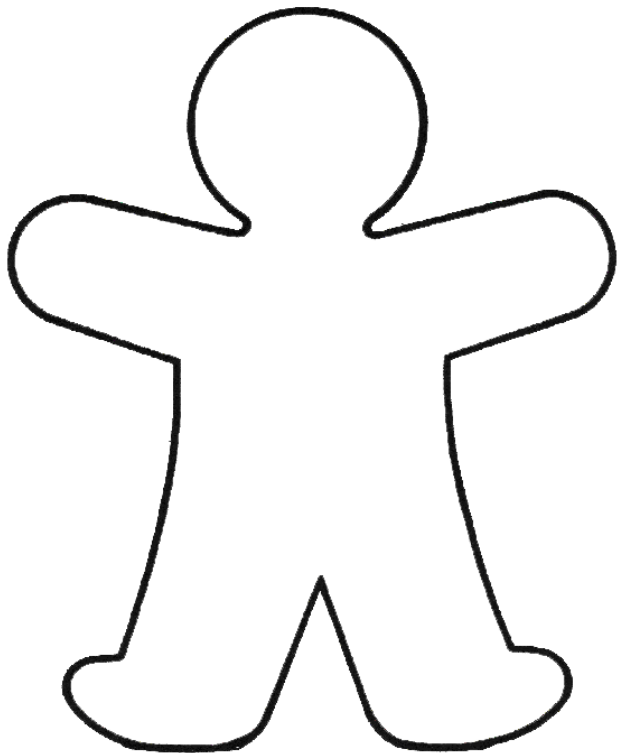
For display:

Still thinking

- Take a few moments of stillness before leaving this last station after all the information you have processed at the previous stations.
- Ask God for his help with any difficult emotions you might be feeling, and for his help in giving unresolved questions to him.
- Before you leave:
 - Pray a blessing on everyone else who is doing the prayer stations – that they would experience healing as they work round them, and that God would help them to process anything that's particularly difficult too.
 - Take an information card if you'd like to find out more after today.
 - If you feel it would be helpful, chat and pray with someone you trust about anything that's been raised during this time.

Additional resources to print out (as referred to in specific stations)

For stations 2 and 8 – Well-rounded wellbeing/Becoming a holistic body again



For station 3 – Un-wellbeing

So many people... so many reasons...

- The poorest fifth of adults are at double the risk of experiencing a mental health problem as those on average incomes.
- Having a low income, being unemployed, living in poor housing, low levels of education and membership of social classes IV (partly skilled people) and V (individuals with no skills) are all associated with a greater risk of experiencing a mental health problem.
- People who experience persistent pain are four times as likely to have an anxiety or depressive disorder as the general population.
- Workplace stress can frequently contribute to mental health problems. About two thirds of people with mental health problems believe that long hours, unrealistic workloads or bad management at work caused or exacerbated their condition.
- Studies have found that religious people, those who believe in a transcendent being or higher power, and people who belong to a community with others who share their values and offer support are more likely to recover from depression.
- Overall, people with common mental health problems are more likely to live in an urban area than in the country. However, among rural areas, the most deprived and remote areas have the highest overall levels of mental health problems and suicide.*

*The Mental Health Foundation

For station 5 – What does everyone else think?

When I feel like this

When I feel like this
My brain doesn't seem to work
I don't have the energy to converse
Walking down a busy city centre street
Is hard
Sitting outside a coffee shop
Having coffee on my own
Is difficult
I feel exposed, vulnerable
Subject to the judgement
If the many passers by
Does my facial expression look odd?
I have to take extra care at crossings
To take everything in.
I have to watch not to trip over
Any children who may be by my feet.
I have to negotiate pushchairs, old men
With walking sticks.
I sound like an old woman.
But I'm only 39.
Speech is tricky
The natural ebb and flow of conversation
Doesn't seem to be there.
I don't feel remotely interesting or entertaining
Everything takes energy and brain power
Which I don't feel I have right now.
The nurse told me, I will have to rethink my lifestyle, my job, what I am capable of doing
She said I've been given a serious diagnosis
And won't be able to go back to doing what
I was doing before
I think she is referring to when I worked in middle management
At a flash company
And when I ran my own business and lived
In a city centre pad for a while.
I think she is meaning, I will struggle with housing, finances and work and be able to give little and achieve not a lot
in life.
Whatever she meant, it felt like a dire prognosis
Basically back to the bottom of the pile.
My dreams, over.
The things I love, unattainable.
It felt like things I long for
Meals in restaurants, holidays, trips with friends
Would just cost too much now or I wouldn't be up to it.
I felt quite rubbish after that.
What do I have to look forward to now?
When your own brain has become a stranger to you
That you no longer recognise
And don't understand

And which operates in its own
 Unfathomable ways
 At a pace and in a fashion
 It alone decides
 Its a scary, lonely place.
 I take pleasure in the small things now
 The free things, the cheap things.
 A bright red poppy standing alone and wild
 Next to a lamppost
 The pigeons, chubby and content and comforting
 In the communal hospital garden
 A cup of tea. Mealtimes.
 An hour or two just resting or sleeping on my bed.
 A day without anything too stressful happening
 A surprise letter.
 The old things that brought me pleasure
 Having a laugh with friends
 A night out, dressed to the nines
 Chatting with interesting successful people
 Feel way out of my league right now
 I wouldn't have the energy or skills to carry them off, in my present state.
 You have to adjust
 But I just hope and I pray
 That life takes on some new meaning
 In some new way
 And that tomorrow
 Is a better day.

For station 6 – Seeking to understand

Understanding more... There are many different types of mental health issues and illnesses and for most, a spectrum within them from mild to severe. Some of the most common include:

- **Anxiety** can make you more fearful, alert, on edge, irritable, and unable to relax or concentrate. You may feel an overwhelming desire to seek the reassurance of others, to be weepy and dependent.
- **Bipolar disorder**, also known as manic depression, is a mood disorder characterised by swings in a person's mood from high to low - euphoric to depressed.
- **Dementia** is a decline in mental ability which affects memory, thinking, problem-solving, concentration and perception. Dementia occurs as a result of the death of brain cells or damage in parts of the brain that deal with our thought processes.
- **Depression** is a common mental disorder that causes people to experience depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration.
- **Eating disorders** are serious mental health problems more common in women. People with Anorexia Nervosa don't eat enough, usually because they feel their problems are caused by what they look like. People with Bulimia Nervosa can't stick to a healthy eating pattern. They tend to binge. This makes them feel guilty and out of control so they panic and punish themselves by starving, being sick, taking laxatives or over-exercising.
- **Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)** is a common form of anxiety involving distressing, repetitive thoughts.

- **Pervasive Developmental disorders (e.g. Autism spectrum disorders)** – PDDs, refers to a group of conditions that involve delays in the development of many basic skills. Most notable among them are the ability to socialize with others, to communicate, and to use imagination.
- **Phobias** are particular fears that are out of proportion to real dangers. It's possible to develop a phobia to almost any situation or thing, some of the most common include social phobia, agoraphobia, or fears attached to specific things, such as fear of heights.
- **Post-natal depression.** The term 'baby blues' is often used to describe a short period of mild depression that women may experience after having a baby. But between 8% and 15% go on to develop PND, which is much more severe. They may feel they can't cope with their baby and so feel guilty because of this. Or they may feel very sad and tearful. They may also feel anxious and worry about their own health and that of the baby.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder** is a reaction to very stressful and traumatising events. People experience flashbacks, panic attacks and other acute symptoms. It can be treated, so it is important to get expert help.
- **Psychosis** describes the distortion of a person's perception of reality, often accompanied by delusions (irrational and unfounded beliefs) and/or hallucinations (seeing, hearing, smelling, sensing things that other people can't).
- **Schizophrenia** is a serious mental illness characterised by disturbances in a person's thoughts, perceptions, emotions and behaviour. However many people diagnosed with schizophrenia, and some professionals, dispute whether there is such a condition. The causes are unknown but episodes of schizophrenia appear to be associated with changes in some brain chemicals.
- **Self-harm** is often associated with suicidal impulses and can involve self-injury or self-poisoning. It is defined as intentional harming of body tissue.
- **Sleep disorders.** There are more than 80 different sleep problems listed in the medical textbooks, ranging from the inability to get to sleep (insomnia) to the inability to stay awake (narcolepsy). Many sleep problems are temporary, but can also be a symptom of other conditions, such as depression.*

* [International Classification of Diseases](#) produced by the WHO, the [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders](#) (DSM-IV) produced by the [American Psychiatric Association](#) (APA)

For station 9 – Still thinking

<p><u>Want to keep thinking about all this?</u></p> <p>Find out where you can get help, or get involved with fighting discrimination: <i>Mind</i> 0300 123 3393 www.mind.org.uk <i>Re-think</i> 0300 5000 927 www.rethink.org <i>Sane</i> 0845 767 8000 www.sane.org.uk <i>Time to Change</i> 020 8215 2356 www.time-to-change.org.uk</p>	<p><u>Want to keep thinking about all this?</u></p> <p>Find out where you can get help, or get involved with fighting discrimination: <i>Mind</i> 0300 123 3393 www.mind.org.uk <i>Re-think</i> 0300 5000 927 www.rethink.org <i>Sane</i> 0845 767 8000 www.sane.org.uk <i>Time to Change</i> 020 8215 2356 www.time-to-change.org.uk</p>
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