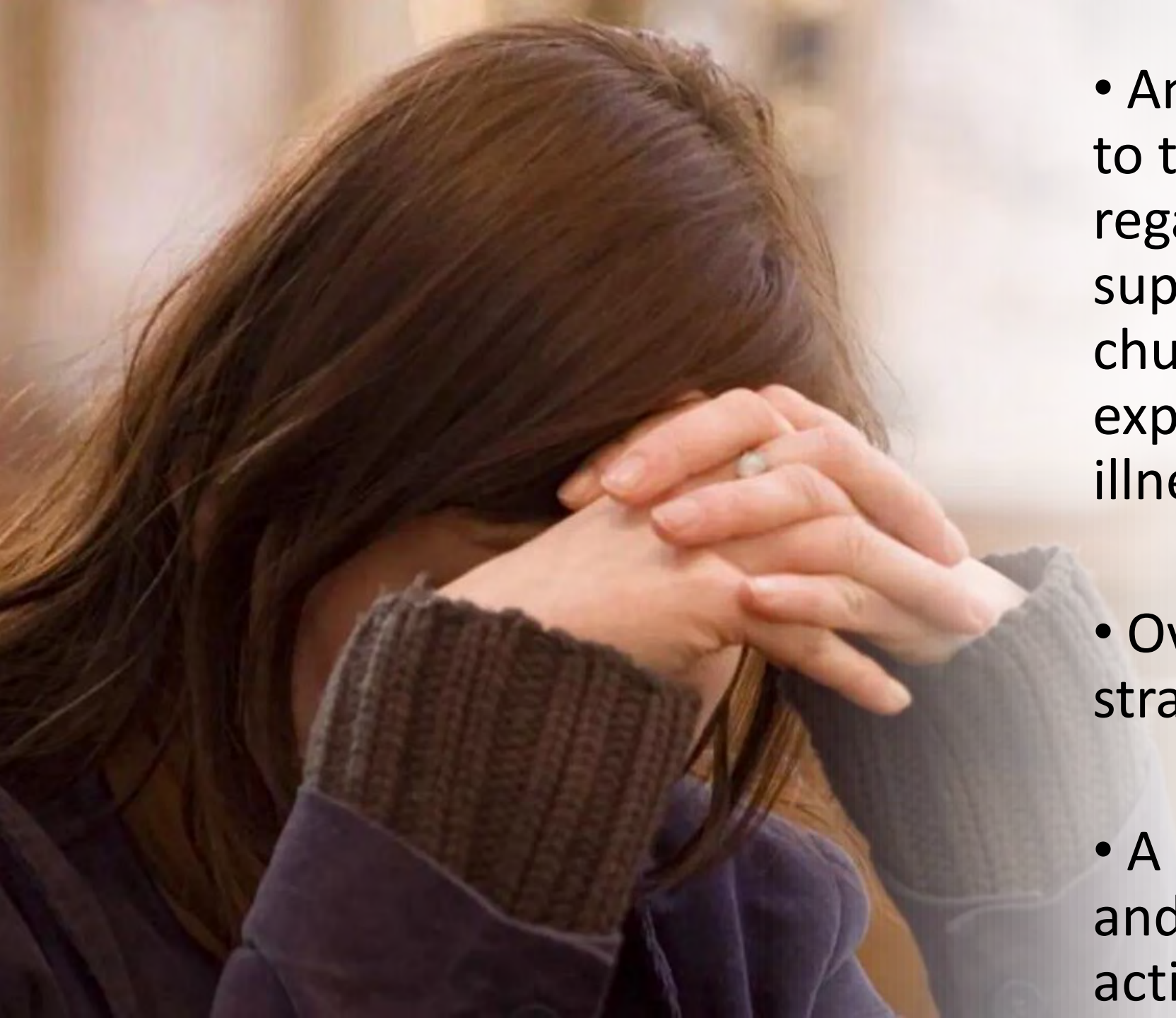




Providing
understanding
and Mutual Support
when people experience
mental illnesses
in our churches
and communities.

- Laurel St. Mennonite Church, Lancaster.
 - Church leader in 5 churches & mission field
-
- Eastern Mennonite University
 - Mental health / Stigma
 - Masters & LCSW in Clinical Social Work
 - 20+ years working in all levels of MH/SA
 - Treatment/support programs. (1000+ stories)
 - ED of [We Rise International](#) / Program Manager and lead trainer – Churches Care Program





- An overview of key issues to think about regarding and ways to support people in our churches who are experiencing mental illnesses/struggles.
- Overview of support strategies.
- A Q&A discussion of why and how we can take action to increase support

**What do we mean by
Mental Illnesses?**

**Major Depression (mild,
moderate, severe)**

Bipolar Disorder

**Seasonal Affective
Disorder**

Post-Partum Depression

**PTSD (Post Traumatic
Stress Disorder)**

Eating Disorders

**Schizophrenia
&
Schizoaffective Disorder
&
other illnesses that cause
psychotic symptoms**

**Panic Disorder (Panic
Attacks)**

**MENTAL
HEALTH
MATTERS**


**Mental Health
struggles
are an "US" Thing
Not a
"THEM" Thing.**

Mental Health By the Numbers


- 1 in 5 U.S. adults live with a mental illness (51.5 million in 2019).
- *Mental Illnesses do not discriminate (Christians)*
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in U.S.
- Only half of people with mental illnesses receive treatment.
- 11 years is the average length of time people experience symptoms before they get into treatment.
- 25 percent of people who experience a mental illness say the first place they reached out to for help was not a doctor's office, counseling office, or clinic -- it was a local church.



Poll # 1

- 
- Knowing that mental illnesses are common in society and also in our churches – what is the experience that people report they have when they seek support for a mental illness or mental health needs in Christian churches?

A 2013 study on ‘mental illness in the church’ conducted by Christian research organization Lifeway Research found that

- 55% of people surveyed who did not currently attend a church, and even
 - 21 % of surveyed Christians who *did* currently attend a church, responded that they ‘did not think that a church would welcome them if they had a mental illness.’
- 

*Do to others as you would
have them do to you..."*
Luke 6:31



- 1.) Making change in our entire church...**
- 2.) Supporting Individual People**

Church-Wide Change...

Churches should actively & intentionally:

Increase Awareness

- Mental illnesses & mental health struggles are common and treatable.

Reduce Stigma/Normalize MH

- YOU are not broken, nor to blame, nor a bad Christian, nor diff. than the rest of us.
- There is no shame in experiencing mental health symptoms or struggles.

Make support available/

Share Support Resources - linking and assure procedures for accessing support are well-shared and repeatedly mentioned/distributed.



Strategies to actively & intentionally:

Increase Awareness

Provide education to the congregation about mental health & addiction topics

- mental health minute
- mental health articles in church publications
- Mental health events, speakers.
- Adapt education to be age-appropriate for each group in the church





Trauma is like a speeding train.

Talk about it with people who care.

Talk about it...

Stop the train.

Support each other in picking up the pieces & talking about the pandemic & other stressful experiences to help reduce long term mental health struggles.

For people to feel comfortable enough to reach out and seek mutual support when they experience a mental illness or addiction, we need to *actively* and *continuously* make our churches SAFE places to talk about & acknowledge that we're struggling with mental health or addiction symptoms.



Strategies to actively & intentionally:

Reduce Stigma/Normalize MH

Mental health struggles (and addictions) are a part of life. YOU are not broken, nor to blame, nor a bad Christian, nor diff. than the rest of us. There is no shame in experiencing mental health symptoms or struggles.

- Talk about and normalize mental health struggles from the pulpit or the front of the church.
- Talk about and normalize mental health topics and mutual care in our small groups, disciple groups, Sunday school classes, youth group, regularly and intentionally.
- When stigma shows up, stomp it out...

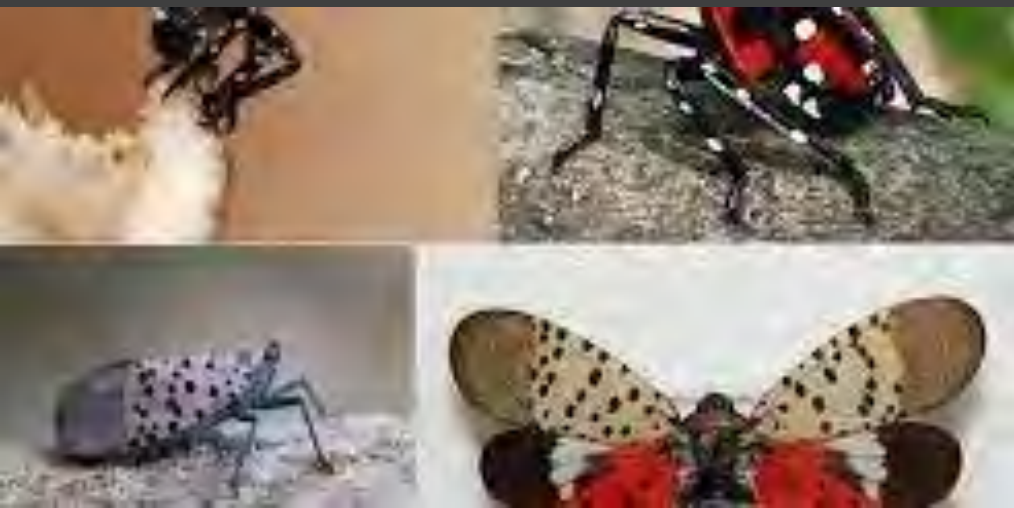
...The Church has approved this message..





Japanese Lantern Fly

Stomping out stigma
when it crops up
makes your church a
SAFER place to seek
support for MI/SA



If you see something. Say something... Stomp the stigma!

Examples of actions or statements that show stigma?
And stigma reducing responses.

Churches should actively & intentionally:

Increase Awareness

- Mental illnesses & mental health struggles are common and treatable.

Reduce Stigma/Normalize MH

- YOU are not broken, nor to blame, nor a bad Christian, nor diff. than the rest of us.
- There is no shame in experiencing mental health symptoms or struggles.

Make support available/

Share Support Resources - linking and assure procedures for accessing support are well-shared and repeatedly mentioned/distributed.



Strategies to actively & intentionally:

Make Support Available/ Share Support Resources

- Post a list of mental health and addiction counselors, treatment programs and support resources in an accessible place and regularly remind everyone in the church where to find it. Bulletin Board – Website...
- Mention mental health and addictions support resources regularly in the bulletin or other Weekly or monthly church communications.
- Have an official support system and plans in place for when someone in the church experiences a mental health or addiction struggle. *This should include church-based support plus referrals/linking to professional treatment.*
- Some churches can provide mental health, addiction, or other types of support groups.






Churches can Provide Support :

**But Sometimes we're not
so sure how to provide
that individual support...**

Church Congregations already
have more systems and
human resources in place to
provide this kind of support
than any other group of people
on the planet.



These are all important reasons why we as Christians and Churches need to be prepared to effectively support each other with mental illnesses & other mental health needs.

Let's think about how we're doing so far...

Poll # 2

Providing Mutual Support

MUTUAL means...

- We're in this Together
- We're a Team
- We are equal
- Today I support you. Tomorrow or yesterday you did or will support me.



Mental Illnesses/Trauma/Grief affect us:
Physically/Medically; Emotionally; Socially; Spiritually

SUPPORT (steps/strategies)

- Become knowledgeable
- Pay attention (*if you see something, say something*)
- Reach out
- Ask (how I am really?)
- Listen (without judgement)
- Care (show it & say it)
- **NORMALIZE IT**
- Help me connect to support & treatment when needed
- Walk with me on the journey
- Stick with me no matter what
- Keep learning with me
- Support my support people
- Make sure we both get outside help & support when we need it
- Self-care (*put on your own mask first...*)

So, what kind of support do people need?

Social – babysitting, rides to appointments, help with life tasks during emergencies

Emotional – encouragement, listening, emotional support

Physical/Medical -- linking to mental health treatment/Counseling/Medical care

Spiritual – nonjudgemental spiritual support re: tough spiritual questions

So how can we support each other & our neighbors better?

- Church-Wide Change
(normalize/Reduce Stigma)
- Support
- Referrals/Linking
- Accompaniment on the journey
- Support the Support People





Remember your OWN self Care!



Mutually Supporting/Walking with Someone = Team Effort

Support Teams

Mental Health Support
Team/Addictions Support Team

Circles of Care and Support

Support Groups

Referrals to Professional MH or SA Treatment

Be Prepared

Be prepared – have a list of Mental Health/Addictions treatment providers available at the church

Ask/Listen

Talk with the person (and their support person) about whether treatment is already in place & helping.

Refer/Connect

If not, help connect them with community treatment resources.

Mental Health or Addictions Outpatient Counselor: Develop Church List

- Insurance Company List
- Community Mental Health Agencies
- Psychologytoday.com
- Mental Health Services (County) Referral Agency
- Emergency Mental Health Services (County Agency or Private MH Hospital)

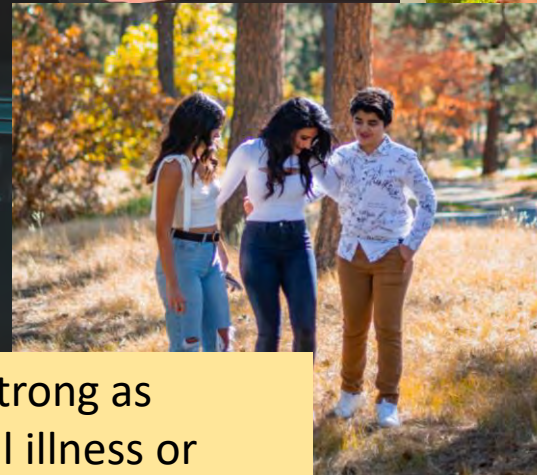


Supporting the Support People

They: Go to appointments with you, call the insurance company for you, make sure you remember your meds; take you to detox or the ER, cancel their plans when you can't go, fight for you, hope for you, pray for you, worry for you...argue with you... they love you.



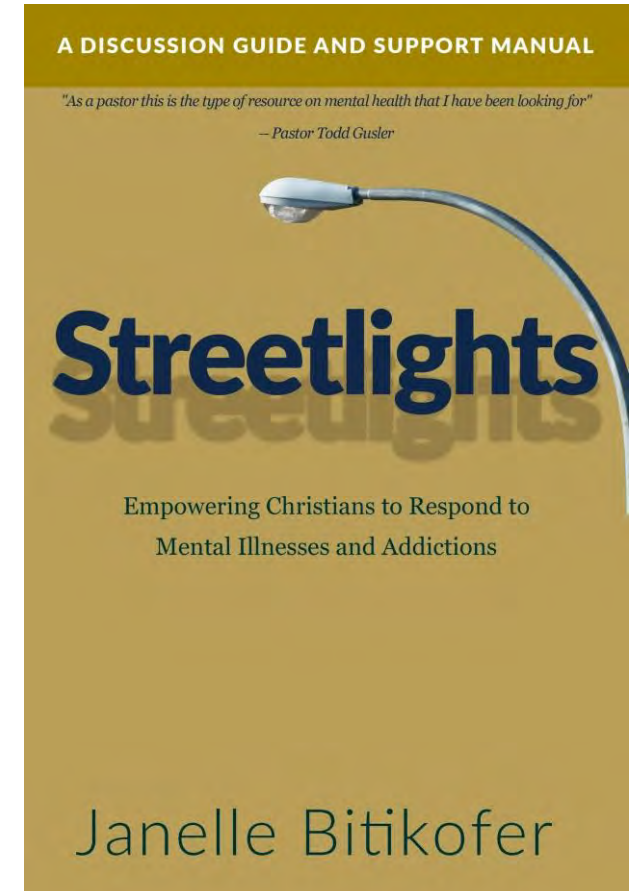
They are there when the sun goes down; when the world walks out; when emergencies strike at 3 am...



Supporting the support people helps them stay strong as they support the person experiencing the mental illness or addiction.

Family: parents, spouses, boyfriends/girlfriends, brothers, sisters, children, best friends...

- Additional Resources for Christians and Churches:
- 1.) Streetlights Book
- 2.) Churches Care Program



<https://streetlightsbook.com/>

The Churches Care Program

Chambersburg - Philadelphia - Lancaster...

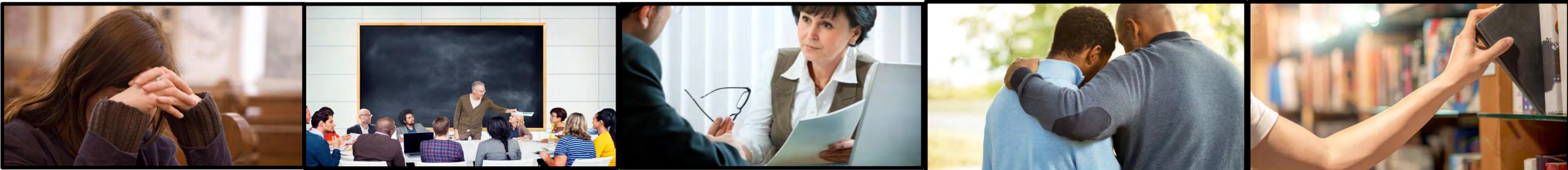
- **Training for Church Leaders**
- **Clinical Consultations**
- **Church Assessment**
- **Educational resources for Congregations**
- **Networking with other Churches**



The Churches Care Program

Your church can receive the 18 months of mental health and addiction training and support by sending a church leader to an upcoming Churches Care training

Lancaster, PA November 20 & Dec 4, 2021,
Philadelphia, PA February 26 & March 5, 2022



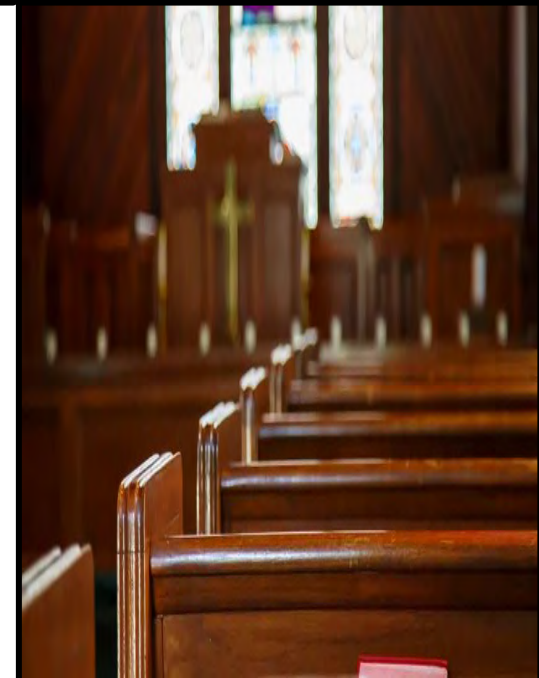
Learn More & Register for Churches Care Lancaster:

<https://emu.edu/lancaster/churches-care>

<https://na.eventscloud.com/ereg/index.php?eventid=632131&>

Want info about bringing Churches Care to your area or attending Churches Care Philadelphia? Contact Outreach@weriseinternational.org

Learn More about Churches Care: <https://weriseinternational.org/mental-health-%26-addiction>



**Mental
Illnesses &
Mental Health
Struggles are
an "Us" thing.**

**And there is
no shame in
that.**



Resources:

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) – Phone: 273-8255 or click this link for the live-chat online option

[The Churches Care Program](#) through We Rise International – Training and Support Program that empowers churches to support and assist people in your church and community who are experiencing a mental illness or addiction.

[Mental Health America](#) - Free Support Groups across the U.S.

[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) – Free Support Groups in your area for people experiencing a mental illness, and for their family/support people; Also provides mental health education

[Psychologytoday.com](#) – website to find mental health counselors in your local community/area anywhere in the U.S.

[Anabaptist Disabilities Network](#) – blog posts about supporting people experiencing a mental illness

[Streetlightsbook.com](#) – information on how your church can use Janelle’s book *Streetlights* as a resource

[SAMHSA.gov](#) -- Links to connect people to treatment and information

Contact Janelle: Janelle@weriseinternational.org Website: [We Rise International](#)