

Indiana Mental Health Roundtable

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

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Association*

Islam and balanced health

- ❖ Physical health: Doctors
- ❖ Mental health: Therapist/Psychiatrist
- ❖ Spiritual health: Imams
- ❖ Emotional health:
Therapists/Teachers/Parents

Protecting mental health in Islam

- ❖ The entire body, including mind, is a Divine gift that must be preserved.
- ❖ Mental health is one of the 5 purposes of Islamic Sharia
- ❖ Anything that is harmful is forbidden: Risky behaviors, Intoxicants e.g. alcohol, all nonprescription drugs
- ❖ Promoting stress and anxiety free life: Healthy family institution, second chance, trusting Allah, destiny, life hereafter.
- ❖ Supplications and prayers for mental wellness.
- ❖ Engaging in prayers and meditation at least 5 times a day.
- ❖ Mental fitness: encouraging thinking, reflecting, and contemplating in nature, and avoiding superstition.

The condition of mental health in the Muslim community

- ❖ **Diversity:** ethnically, racially, nationality, race, socioeconomically.
- ❖ **Generational gap:** immigrants, refugees, and their children
- ❖ **Stigma:** Mental health = Crazy, weakness in your faith
- ❖ **Confusing:** confusing mental illness for demons, evil eye, discipline, and behavioral issues.
- ❖ **Sin:** never expose your sins, such as sexual abuse, suicidal thoughts.

Addressing mental illness in the Muslim Community

❖ Proactive measures:

- Strengthening faith and spirituality. It helps!
- Spreading hope, tolerance, and fraternity in the community
- Conducting workshops and delivering Friday sermons about mental health and drug addiction.
- Weekly youth programs with mental wellness check sessions.
- Intercepting suicide: monitoring social media, creating grassroots mental health advocates.

Addressing mental illness in the Muslim Community

❖ **Reactive measures:**

- **Health ecosystem:** Faith + Family + Friend + Community.
- **The power of collaboration:** Triage by the Imam
- refer to a community therapist/psychiatrist -
Imam meet family to educate them - frequent
visiting the patient - involving the patient in
community and social services.

Mental illness stories went wrong

- ❖ She was abused by her teacher, but no believed her, then**
- ❖ A successful doctor, then**
- ❖ A girl graduated from high school, then next day...**
- ❖ We just had dinner together, then**
- ❖ We were just playing, then we went to store, then**
- ❖ He loved his mother, then now ...**

Recommendations

❖ Faith leaders

- Learn and educate ourselves about mental health.
- Meeting people where they are physically, mentally, and spiritually.
- Using Technology: Social media, virtual session.
- Using the pulpit for mental wellness just like we use it for spiritual wellness.
- Remembering that our audience and communities are diverse, e.g. intellectually, culturally, generationally.
- Being vulnerable and share some of our own mental health struggles.
- Listening more than preaching! People need a compassionate ear, nonjudgmental mind, and validation.
- The hospitals are for sick people, so remember the mosque is a spiritual clinic and safe zone for imperfect people.
- Saving a life must be a top priority, and stop dispatching people to the hellfire!

Recommendations

❖ **Government:**

- Collaboration is a power. COVID-19 is an example!
- Revising mental health policies frequently and involving all sectors.
- More training for first responders, e.g. MCAT unit with IMPD.
- Investing more in faith-based organizations to partners
- People who are mentally ill they don't belong to jail, they belong to love, care, empathy
- Addiction is not always a crime!

Recommendations

- ❖ **General public: Family, friends,**
 - Learn the 101 of mental health and who to respond to suicidal person.
 - Be patient: if your friend is not following your advice, don't take it personally. They are in a deep hole!
 - Listen, listen, listen
 - Make sure you wear your oxygen mask before you help someone else.