

Anxiety and Depression Training with Dr. Ken Duffy

- Anxiety is apprehensive anticipation of danger or misfortune accompanied by feelings of worry or distress. Everyone experiences anxiety at times.
- Situational depression can happen at any age and is often the result of a situation or event that forces a person to cope with change. It often gradually lifts as the person adjusts to the change or situation: loss of a loved one, loss of a job, separation or divorce, etc.
- Depression is closely associated with a lack of confidence and self-esteem, inability to express strong feelings, or repressed anger. Feeling inadequate to cope with situations that arise in life can lead to such insecurity
- Anxiety almost always accompanies depression or is a prelude to it.
- When talking to someone you suspect is depressed or anxious, begin by asking if they have seen their physician and had bloodwork or a physical recently. Thyroid and other physical issues can affect mood and anxiety levels.
- Don't ask people *how* they feel, but *what* they feel.
- Take note of whether the person is a Christ follower or not. Don't beat them over the head with scripture, but actively listen to God as you listen to them, share hope, and if they are a Christ follower, share scriptures as the Lord leads.
- Ask if they are seeing a counselor or therapist. If they are, ask them if they have described all of what they are telling you with the professional they are seeing.
- When to refer someone to a specialist: If they mention an intention or plan to harm themselves or others. If the depression is ongoing beyond a few weeks.
- If you fear the person shouldn't be left alone, ask if you can drive them to urgent care or call a loved one to come get them.
- Sin can be a cause of anxiety or remorse, we should not try to mitigate or gloss over people's need to repent and make life changes. These feelings are meant to urge them to make changes. But we should not berate them either. We are to speak the truth in love and support their attempts to make changes.

Additional points:

Some seasons of life are simply difficult. Anxiety and depression are natural reactions to events that cannot be controlled. **It is not our job as Group leaders to make their problems go away.** But we can implement (and model for others in our Groups) these

practices: Listening, loving, praying, leading them to discover God's way, and encouraging.

When we listen, we do so without judgment. When we speak, we use words of empathy, encouragement, and hope. Try to encourage people toward self-care (Dr. Duffy commented that if the person stays up half the night and sleeps until 11 AM, you might ask if they could try going to bed at 10 PM and setting an alarm for 8 or 9 AM...but do not berate them for where they are).

Even those who need to be on prescription drugs for depression will find a better quality of life as their minds are renewed by spending time in God's Word and spending time in encouraging community because such community can be a physical manifestation of God's love for them.

As the leader, if something comes out during your time in Group and people realize a person is suffering from anxiety or depression, leave room for others in the Group to minister to the person. They may have recovered from something similar and can give hope to the individual.

However, you will need to use a balanced approach. Avoid letting the Group turn into a counseling session or support group every week. Do not let people who are not counselors give medical or other advice as if they were professionals.

Make sure you set personal boundaries. You are not to become your Group member's personal lifeline. Jesus is their savior and there are professional counselors able to work long term with them to help them acquire coping skills. That is not your job.

Thank you for your willingness to be the hands, feet, and heart of Jesus as you shepherd the members of your Group.

God's servant must not be argumentative, but a gentle listener and a teacher who keeps cool, working firmly but patiently with those who refuse to obey. You never know how or when God might sober them up with a change of heart and a turning to the truth, enabling them to escape the Devil's trap, where they are caught and held captive. -The Message, 2 Tim. 2:24-26