

# Partner with Mental Health

by  
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# Contents

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Story Ministry: Where Hope Blooms in the Shadows of Mental Health.....	1
Story Ministry: Weaving Hope and Support for Families in Need .....	3
Launching a Mental Health Program at your Church.....	5
Who Can Benefit from Our Support Group: .....	8
Ready to Launch Your Support Group? Here's What You Need: .....	10
Time Commitment for Hosting Your Support Group: .....	12
Financial Costs of Running Your Support Group: A Breakdown.....	14
Building a Village of Hope: Utilizing Volunteers in Your Support Group.....	16
Childcare in Your Support Group: A Balanced Consideration .....	18
Crisis Intervention Process:.....	22
Group Rules for a Safe and Supportive Journey: .....	24
The Unsung Heroes: Supporting Families and Caregivers .....	27
Building Resources Together: Empowering Families in Mental Health and Recovery .....	29
When Your Church Joins Our Program: A Ripple of Hope .....	31
Partnering for Impact: Unlocking the Benefits of Collaboration .....	35
Building Together, Brick by Brick: An Equitable Partnership Approach .....	37
Ready to Build Hope for Families? Take the Next Step with Story Ministry: .....	39



# Story Ministry: Where Hope Blooms in the Shadows of Mental Health

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For too long, mental health has been a silent struggle, shrouded in stigma and confusion. Churches, eager to offer support, often find themselves lost, unsure of how to navigate this complex landscape. But what if there was a simple, effective way to break the silence and bring hope to families battling these challenges?

Story Ministry steps in as a beacon of light, offering a unique approach that empowers churches to become a haven for mental health well-being.

Forget the one-size-fits-all approach. We understand that mental health isn't just an individual's burden; it impacts the entire family, creating a ripple effect of worry and stress. Instead of focusing solely on the patient, Story Ministry empowers churches to embrace the family as a unit of support.

## **Here's where our magic lies:**

- Simple yet effective programs: We provide churches with easily implementable tools and resources, tailored to their specific needs and capabilities. No need for extensive training or specialized expertise – just a willing heart and a desire to make a difference.
- Family-focused approach: We equip churches to offer invaluable support to the families and caregivers of those struggling. This can include workshops on coping mechanisms, support groups for navigating emotional turmoil, and practical resources to ease daily burdens.

- Unlocking existing potential: We believe every church already possesses the people and resources needed to help. Story Ministry acts as a catalyst, guiding churches to recognize their strengths and deploy them effectively.

By focusing on families, Story Ministry alleviates the pressure on churches to directly handle complex mental health cases. This allows churches to do what they do best – provide love, community, and a safe space for healing.

Imagine a church where families facing mental health challenges find not judgment, but understanding and support. Where whispers of fear are replaced by open conversations and shared hope. Where caregivers find solace in knowing they're not alone, and children discover a community that embraces their unique journey.

This is the vision Story Ministry brings to life. We are not just advocates for mental health awareness; we are architects of hope, building bridges of compassion and resilience within the heart of every church community.

Join us, and let's rewrite the narrative of mental health, one story, one family, one church at a time.

# **Story Ministry: Weaving Hope and Support for Families in Need**

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Story Ministry isn't just a program; it's a tapestry woven from the threads of compassion, faith, and lived experience. We are a church ministry born not from theory, but from the raw emotions and deep understanding of families and caregivers facing the challenges of mental health and recovery.

## **Our story began with a shared yearning:**

- We, too, have walked the path of mental health and recovery alongside our loved ones.
- We know the overwhelming emotions, the relentless demands, and the silent ache of navigating these complex journeys.
- But amidst the darkness, we found a guiding light: the unwavering hope of faith and the unwavering support of community.

## **That's where Story Ministry steps in.**

- We are not simply resource creators; we are fellow travelers, sharing our stories and insights to illuminate the path for others.
- We believe in the power of faith, in the strength of family, and in the healing balm of community.
- We create resources that resonate with lived experiences, offering practical guidance, spiritual encouragement, and a sense of belonging.

## **Our mission is clear:**

- To create a safe haven for families and caregivers, a space where they can find understanding, support, and hope.

- To equip them with practical tools and resources to navigate the challenges they face.
- To empower them to find their voices, share their stories, and connect with others on similar journeys.
- To celebrate their victories, big and small, and remind them that they are not alone.

**We invite you to join us in this tapestry of hope.**

- Whether you are a family or caregiver seeking support, a church looking to make a difference, or simply an individual touched by these challenges, your story matters.
- Together, we can weave a stronger, brighter future for families facing mental health and recovery challenges.

# Launching a Mental Health Program at your Church

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## I. Building the Foundation (4-6 weeks)

- **Initial Meeting:**
  - **Discussion:** Meet with your team and church leadership to discuss the specific mental health program, its goals, and target audience.
  - **Resource Assessment:** Identify needed resources (personnel, facilities, budget) and potential funding sources.
  - **Leadership Recruitment:** Recruit and select individuals passionate about mental health and willing to lead the program.
  
- **Prayer and Planning:**
  - **Dedicate the program to God:** Host a prayer session with your team and church leadership to seek God's guidance and blessing for the program.
  - **Develop a strategic plan:** Define the program's objectives, target population, key activities, and timeline.
  - **Secure approvals:** Obtain necessary church approvals and permissions to launch the program.

## II. Training and Equipping Leaders (30 days)

- **Comprehensive Training:** Provide a 30-day training program for program leaders, covering:
  - **Mental health awareness:** Educate leaders on various mental health conditions, their symptoms, and best practices for support.
  - **Program-specific skills:** Train leaders on the specific program's methodology, activities, and resources.

- **Leadership development:** Equip leaders with skills like communication, conflict resolution, and group facilitation.
- **Mentorship and Support:**
  - **Assign mentors:** Pair each leader with a qualified mentor for guidance and support throughout the training and beyond.
  - **Weekly Calls:** Schedule regular phone calls for progress updates, problem-solving, and encouragement.
  - **Monthly Meetings:** Facilitate monthly in-person meetings for peer support, knowledge sharing, and team building.

### **III. Program Launch and Promotion (2-4 weeks)**

- **Introductory Video:** Develop a video that clearly explains the program's purpose, benefits, and target audience.
- **Promotional Materials:** Create social media and email templates for the church to easily promote the program.
- **Launch Event:** Organize a launch event to introduce the program to the church community, featuring presentations from leaders and testimonials from participants.

### **IV. Ongoing Support and Expansion (ongoing)**

- **Resource Library:** Maintain a resource library for program participants, including information on local mental health services, support groups, and self-help materials.
- **Ongoing Training and Development:** Offer ongoing training and development opportunities for program leaders to stay updated on best practices and address new challenges.

- **Feedback and Evaluation:** Regularly collect feedback from participants and leaders to assess the program's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- **Expansion Opportunities:** Explore opportunities to expand the program's reach, such as partnering with other churches or community organizations.

**Focus:**

- **Families and Caregivers:** Emphasize the importance of supporting families and caregivers of individuals struggling with mental health.
- **Strengthening the Core:** Offer resources and support to families, aiming to build their resilience and coping mechanisms.

## **Who Can Benefit from Our Support Group:**

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Our support group welcomes anyone navigating the complex challenges of mental health, addiction, and loss. Whether you're directly impacted or supporting someone who is, we offer a safe and understanding space to connect, share, and learn from each other's experiences. Here are just a few examples of who might find particular value in our group:

### **Families Facing Mental Health and Addiction:**

- Parents of children struggling with addiction, depression, anxiety, or other mental health challenges.
- Spouses or partners of individuals with mental illness or substance abuse issues.
- Siblings or adult children caring for loved ones with mental health needs.
- Families coping with the aftermath of overdose or suicide.

### **Individuals Affected by Loss and Trauma:**

- Individuals grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide, overdose, or any other cause.
- Survivors of trauma related to mental illness or addiction.

### **Professionals Supporting Others:**

- Nurses, social workers, therapists, and other healthcare professionals working in mental health and addiction treatment.
- Police officers, firefighters, and first responders who regularly encounter individuals experiencing mental health crises.

- Educators, clergy, and other community leaders supporting individuals and families facing mental health challenges.

**Anyone Seeking Support and Connection:**

- Individuals looking for a safe and understanding space to share their experiences and feelings.
- People seeking to learn more about mental health, addiction, and coping strategies.
- Those searching for connection and support from others who understand their journey.

## **Ready to Launch Your Support Group? Here's What You Need:**

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### **Space for Hope and Healing:**

- Find a safe and private space: Ideally within the church, a comfortable room with minimal distractions and good acoustics.

### **Leaders You Can Lean On:**

- Recruit supportive group leaders: Look for individuals willing to commit to a 4-6 week training program to equip them with facilitation skills and knowledge.

### **Fueling Open Conversation:**

- Guide your group with a shared book: Consider whether participants will purchase their own books or if the church will sponsor them.

### **Finding the Right Rhythm:**

- Start modestly with monthly meetings: As your group grows, you can increase frequency to bi-weekly or weekly sessions.

### **Nourishing Connections:**

- Think beyond dry meetings: Consider offering healthy snacks and drinks to foster community and shared experience. Eating together encourages connection and support.

### **Managing Your Group Effortlessly:**

- Get organized with a group management system: We can provide one for you, making organization and communication a breeze.

## **Supporting Our Mission:**

- Our services are free to churches: We do, however, humbly request a monthly or quarterly tithe contribution to sustain our ministry and resource development. Your support enables us to empower groups like yours.

Remember: Launching a support group is about creating a sanctuary of understanding and hope. By addressing these key aspects, you can lay the foundation for a thriving community where individuals can heal, connect, and find strength in unity.

## Time Commitment for Hosting Your Support Group:

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The time commitment for hosting your group depends on several factors, including:

- **Frequency:** Meeting monthly requires less time than weekly or bi-weekly meetings.
- **Food:** Providing food adds prep and cleanup time, but it can also build community and engagement.
- **Resources:** Delegate tasks and utilize volunteers to ease the workload.

Here's a breakdown of the typical time involved:

### Without Food:

- Pre-meeting: 30 minutes for setup and leader preparation.
- Meeting: 2 hours for group discussion and activities.
- Post-meeting: 30 minutes for cleanup and communication.
- 4 hours per month for member outreach and encouragement.

### With Food:

- Pre-meeting: 1 hour for food setup, leader preparation, and group space setup.
- Meeting: 2 hours for group discussion and activities, including eating.
- Post-meeting: 1 hour for food cleanup and group space breakdown.
- 4 hours per month for member outreach and encouragement.

### Additional Tips to Save Time:

- Delegate tasks: Assign food preparation, setup, and cleanup to volunteers.

- Utilize a group management system: Streamline communication and attendance tracking.
- Encourage member support: Foster a culture of mutual support within the group.
- Pray and reflect: Set aside time for personal reflection and prayer to strengthen your leadership.

Remember: The time commitment is an investment in creating a supportive community for your members. By planning, delegating, and building a strong group dynamic, you can make your support group a rewarding and impactful experience for everyone involved.

# Financial Costs of Running Your Support Group: A Breakdown

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Keeping your support group accessible and sustainable requires careful planning and consideration of potential costs. Here's a breakdown to help you budget:

## Leaders:

- **Volunteers:** We recommend starting with passionate volunteers from your congregation. This reduces initial costs and fosters community ownership.
- **Paid Leaders:** As the group grows, consider offering modest stipends to committed leaders.

## Space:

- **Church Space:** Utilize available church space whenever possible to minimize rental costs.
- **Rented Space:** If church space isn't available, seek sponsorships or partnerships with community organizations for discounted rental rates.

## Utilities:

- **Lights and Power:** Coordinate group meetings with existing church activities to share utility costs.
- **Access:** Assign a volunteer or church staff member to open and close the building if necessary.

## Books:

- **Member Purchases:** Encourage individual book purchases on Amazon (\$17.77 per book).

- **Church Bulk Purchase:** Consider buying books wholesale (\$11 per book) for larger groups. Starting with 20 books for \$220 is a good initial investment.

### **Food and Supplies:**

- **Volunteers:** Recruit volunteers for food preparation and service to minimize costs.
- **Snacks:** Budget \$25-50 per group for snacks unless volunteers provide them.
- **Meals:** Expect \$75-150 per group for provided meals, depending on volunteer support and menu complexity. These figures are based on a 10-20 person group.

### **Additional Considerations:**

- **Marketing and Promotion:** Utilize free channels like church announcements and social media to spread awareness.
- **Unexpected Expenses:** Allocate a small contingency fund for unforeseen costs.

Remember: These are estimated costs, and actual expenses may vary based on your specific circumstances, group size, and chosen options. Carefully consider your resources and adjust the budget accordingly.

By planning strategically and leveraging volunteer support, you can keep your support group financially sustainable and accessible to all who need it.

# Building a Village of Hope: Utilizing Volunteers in Your Support Group

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In every faith community, volunteers are pillars of love and service, embodying the hands and feet of Jesus. When it comes to your support group, their contributions can be invaluable, easing the burden on leaders and enriching the experience for everyone involved.

## How can volunteers help?

- **Setting the stage for healing:**

- Assist with setting up and decorating the group space, creating a warm and welcoming environment.
- Help prepare and arrange refreshments, fostering community during shared meals.

- **Lightening the load:**

- Take on administrative tasks like attendance tracking and communication.
- Assist with setup and breakdown of furniture or equipment.
- Facilitate activities or offer one-on-one support to group members.

- **Sharing their gifts:**

- If gifted in cooking, volunteers can provide homemade meals, adding a personal touch and warmth.
- Talents in music or art can be incorporated into group sessions, fostering deeper connection and expression.
- Skills in childcare can assist parents during meetings, allowing them to fully participate.

Remember, every volunteer, regardless of their role, contributes meaningfully to the group's success. By utilizing their gifts and passions, you build a tapestry of support, reflecting the diverse talents within your church community.

More than just tasks, volunteerism is a sacred act of service. It allows individuals to contribute to a greater good, using their God-given skills to touch the lives of others. In your support group, volunteers offer not just practical assistance, but also empathy, compassion, and shared faith.

By engaging volunteers, you empower them to serve and grow spiritually, while creating a stronger, more cohesive support system for your members. Embrace the "all hands on deck" spirit, and watch your group blossom into a beacon of hope and healing within your church community.

## Childcare in Your Support Group: A Balanced Consideration

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Whether to offer childcare in your support group is a crucial decision with pros and cons to weigh carefully. Here's a balanced approach to consider:

### Factors to Consider:

- **Church Equipment and Safety:** If your church lacks a dedicated, secure space with qualified childcare personnel, offering childcare might not be feasible or responsible. Safety is paramount.
- **Group Dynamics and Growth:** Initially, focusing on establishing group dynamics and cohesion without childcare demands can be beneficial. As the group grows and your understanding of its needs deepens, you can revisit the childcare question.
- **Family Demographics:** If your target group primarily consists of parents with young children and limited childcare options, offering childcare can significantly increase attendance and engagement. Consider conducting polls or surveys to gauge the need.
- **Volunteer Resources and Time:** Providing childcare requires additional volunteers and dedicated time for setup, supervision, and activities. Ensure these resources are available before committing to childcare.
- **Integration and Community Building:** Ideally, children can participate in some aspects of the group experience, fostering family connection and building a stronger sense of community. Consider having them join the group for shared meals or opening activities before going to a separate supervised space.

Ultimately, the decision to offer childcare rests with your church and its unique circumstances. Carefully weigh the factors and assess your

resources before making a choice. Remember, both serving families with childcare and focusing on establishing group dynamics without it can be valid options depending on your context.

We recommend open communication within your church community. Discuss the needs and challenges, explore feasibility, and involve families with young children in the decision-making process. Together, you can find the approach that best supports your growing support group.

I hope this balanced perspective helps your church make an informed decision on offering childcare in your support group.

**Navigating conflict in a support group** requires sensitivity and skillful communication to maintain a safe and healing space for everyone. Here are some steps you can take when tension arises:

### **1. Acknowledge and Address the Issue:**

- Don't ignore the tension. Briefly acknowledge it in a calm and neutral manner, stating that you've noticed a shift in the dynamic.
- Avoid assigning blame or taking sides. Focus on the current situation and how it's impacting the group.

### **2. Create a Safe Space for Dialogue:**

- Encourage open and honest communication, emphasizing respect and understanding.
- Remind members of the group's ground rules for respectful dialogue.
- Consider offering a private space for individuals to express their concerns.

### **3. Facilitate Listening and Understanding:**

- Encourage active listening, where each member hears and seeks to understand the other's perspective.
- Avoid interrupting or judging. Allow each person to share their feelings and experiences.
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure everyone feels heard and understood.

### **4. Focus on Common Ground:**

- Guide the conversation towards finding common ground and shared interests.
- Identify areas where members can agree or at least empathize with each other's experiences.
- Emphasize the group's shared purpose and the importance of working together.

### **5. Seek Solutions Collaboratively:**

- Encourage members to brainstorm solutions that address everyone's concerns.
- Avoid imposing solutions or making decisions on behalf of the group.
- Facilitate a collaborative process where everyone feels empowered to contribute.

### **6. Prioritize the Group's Well-being:**

- Remember, the ultimate goal is to maintain a safe and supportive environment for all members.
- If the conflict escalates or becomes disruptive, consider taking a break or postponing the discussion.

- If necessary, intervene to redirect the conversation or set boundaries to ensure respectful interactions.

**Additional Tips:**

- Remain neutral and avoid taking sides.
- Use "I" statements to express your own feelings and observations.
- Focus on the present issue and avoid bringing up past grievances.
- Encourage members to focus on solutions rather than dwelling on problems.
- If needed, seek external help from a conflict resolution expert or therapist.

Remember, navigating conflict can be challenging, but by approaching it with sensitivity, empathy, and a commitment to finding solutions, you can maintain a supportive environment where everyone feels safe and respected.

# Crisis Intervention Process:

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While every crisis is unique, there are general steps that can guide you through assisting someone in distress. Remember, this is a framework, and your specific actions will depend on the individual and the specific situation.

## 1. Safety and Stabilization:

- Immediate Danger:
  - Assess for risk of harm to self or others: Check for potential weapons, suicidal or homicidal threats, and extreme agitation.
  - If immediate danger is present, call emergency services or take necessary steps to ensure safety.
  
- De-escalation:
  - Create a calm and safe environment.
  - Actively listen without judgment.
  - Validate the person's feelings and experiences.
  - Avoid arguing or giving unsolicited advice.
  - Use grounding techniques, such as deep breathing or mindfulness exercises.

## 2. Information Gathering and Assessment:

- Gather information about the crisis and its triggers.
- Assess the person's level of functioning, including: mental state, physical health, substance use, and social supports.
- Identify any potential risk factors, such as past suicide attempts, family history of mental illness, or recent trauma.

## 3. Planning and Support:

- Develop a safety plan with the person, identifying specific steps they can take to stay safe in the short-term.

- Connect the person with appropriate resources, such as: mental health professionals, crisis hotlines, support groups, or social services.
- Consider the need for hospitalization or other intensive interventions.
- If the person is a minor, involve their parents or guardians in the planning process.

#### **4. Follow-up and Support:**

- Check in with the person regularly in the following days and weeks.
- Offer ongoing support and encouragement.
- Assist the person in connecting with longer-term mental health services.
- Monitor for any potential signs of relapse or deterioration.

#### **Additional Tips:**

- Prioritize your own safety and well-being.
- Seek professional help if you are feeling overwhelmed or unsure of how to proceed.
- Remember, you are not alone. There are many resources available to help you support someone in crisis.

#### **Resources:**

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
- The Jed Foundation: <https://jedfoundation.org/>

## **Group Rules for a Safe and Supportive Journey:**

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Together, we are building a community of healing and hope rooted in faith and respect for all. These guidelines help us create a safe space for sharing, learning, and growing together.

### **Do's:**

- Come with an open heart and mind: Be willing to listen and learn from others' experiences.
- Respect everyone: Treat each other with kindness, compassion, and understanding.
- Share openly and honestly: Express your feelings and experiences without judgment.
- Maintain confidentiality: Respect the privacy of others and what is shared within the group.
- Offer support and encouragement: Be a source of strength and hope for one another.
- Focus on the present and future: Let go of past hurts and work towards positive change.
- Practice active listening: Pay attention to others without interrupting or giving unsolicited advice.
- Seek help when needed: Don't hesitate to ask for support from the group or other resources.
- Remember, we are all on our own journeys: Be patient with yourself and others.

### **Don'ts:**

- Engage in violence or threats of violence: This includes physical, verbal, or emotional aggression.

- Use drugs or alcohol: This is a safe space for clear and mindful communication.
- Discriminate or judge others: We are all here to grow and learn from different perspectives.
- Gossip or share confidential information: Respect the privacy of others and what is shared within the group.
- Interrupt or talk over others: Everyone deserves to be heard and respected.
- Give unsolicited advice or criticize: Offer support and encouragement instead of judgment.
- Focus on the past: We are here to work towards healing and growth, not dwell on past hurts.
- Make assumptions or generalizations: Each person's experience is unique.
- Seek professional help within the group: This is a support group, not a substitute for professional therapy.

Remember: These guidelines are meant to create a safe and supportive environment for everyone. We are all on this journey together, and we are here to help each other grow and heal.

In addition to these guidelines, we invite you to hold these values in your heart:

- Love: Treat everyone with love and compassion, reflecting the love of Jesus.
- Forgiveness: Let go of past hurts and forgive yourself and others.
- Hope: Believe in the possibility of healing and growth.
- Faith: Trust in God's guidance and support throughout your journey.

By following these guidelines and holding these values in our hearts, we can create a truly transformative experience for everyone in this group.

## The Unsung Heroes: Supporting Families and Caregivers

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In the tapestry of every family, there are threads of strength and resilience woven around a core of unwavering support. These threads, often overlooked, belong to the families and caregivers who hold the fabric together. They are the pillars on which families stand, the anchors in life's storms, the silent heroes who navigate challenges unseen.

Yet, these vital individuals often find themselves isolated, grappling with burdens in the shadows. Society may not fully equip churches or communities to recognize their struggles, leading them to feel alone and misunderstood.

This isolation, regardless of their background – rich or poor, black or white – creates a ripple effect, impacting not just the individual, but the entire family and community.

Why is supporting these unsung heroes so crucial?

- They are the lifeline: Families and caregivers provide the emotional, physical, and practical support that keeps families functioning. Without them, the foundation crumbles, impacting children, spouses, and the broader community.
- They are the silent warriors: They face immense challenges, often unseen, from navigating chronic illness to managing disabilities, mental health struggles, or addiction. Their resilience fuels the family's strength.
- They are the unsung teachers: By navigating these challenges, they learn invaluable lessons about empathy, compassion, and problem-

solving, skills that benefit not just their families but the entire community.

So how can we, as a community, ensure these heroes are not left to fight alone?

- Open our eyes: We must break down the barriers of isolation and actively recognize their needs. By listening, understanding, and offering support, we can create a community of care that empowers them.
- Equip ourselves: Churches and communities can invest in resources and training to better understand and address the challenges faced by families and caregivers. This can range from providing support groups and respite care to offering practical resources and emotional guidance.
- Celebrate their strength: Let's recognize their sacrifices and celebrate their resilience. Applauding their efforts and acknowledging their importance fosters a sense of validation and belonging, empowering them to continue their vital work.

By supporting these unsung heroes, we strengthen the very fabric of our community. We lift the burden of isolation and replace it with a web of compassion, understanding, and practical support. Remember, the well-being of families and caregivers directly affects the well-being of us all. Let's be the community that embraces them, celebrates them, and empowers them to continue their invaluable work.

## Building Resources Together: Empowering Families in Mental Health and Recovery

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At the heart of our mission lies a fundamental belief: true strength in the face of mental health and recovery challenges emerges from collaboration.

We understand that families and caregivers are the unsung heroes on the frontlines, navigating complex journeys alongside their loved ones. That's why we actively engage with them, not just as recipients of our resources, but as partners in creating them.

Our process is driven by a deep commitment to co-creation:

- **Assessing Needs:** We begin by listening intently to families and caregivers. We conduct in-depth interviews and attend support groups alongside them, immersing ourselves in their experiences and identifying specific needs and gaps in existing resources.
- **Building Trust and Collaboration:** We foster a safe and supportive environment where families feel empowered to share their honest perspectives and insights. We listen without judgment, acknowledging the unique challenges and triumphs of each family's journey.
- **Collaborative Resource Creation:** We work hand-in-hand with families to develop resources that resonate with their lived experiences. This includes brainstorming ideas, crafting content, and testing materials to ensure effectiveness and cultural relevance.
- **Empowerment and Recognition:** We celebrate the contributions of families and caregivers. Their voices and stories are woven into the fabric of our resources, amplifying their perspectives and empowering others facing similar challenges.

This collaborative approach ensures our resources are not simply theoretical, but practical and grounded in the realities families encounter. It fosters a sense of ownership and trust, leading to greater engagement and impact.

By working together, we create more than just resources. We build a community of support, where families and caregivers feel heard, valued, and empowered to navigate their journeys with confidence and hope. We believe in the collective wisdom and resilience of families, and their involvement is the cornerstone of our success in making a meaningful difference.

If you are a family or caregiver facing mental health or recovery challenges, we invite you to join us in this collaborative effort. Share your voice, your experiences, and your hopes for the future. Together, we can build a brighter path for families navigating these complex journeys.

## When Your Church Joins Our Program: A Ripple of Hope

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Imagine a world where churches transform from sanctuaries of Sunday worship into beacons of support for families facing mental health and recovery challenges. A world where faith becomes a guiding light on the path to healing, and where communities embrace these families with open arms and unwavering compassion.

This is the vision we strive for, and when your church joins our program, you become a vital part of the solution. Your commitment doesn't just open doors for your own congregation, but creates a ripple effect of hope that extends far beyond your walls.

### **Here's how your partnership empowers us to make a difference:**

**More Safe Spaces:** With your participation, we can expand our reach, offering more support groups and resources to families in need. Your church becomes a safe haven, a place where families can find solace, share their struggles, and connect with others on similar journeys.

**Deeper Insights:** Your feedback is invaluable. By collaborating with you and understanding the unique needs of your community, we can tailor our resources and programs to be more effective and impactful. Your voices become the compass that guides us in creating a truly supportive environment.

**A Stronger Network:** Your church becomes a vital link in a growing network of care. We can work together to connect families with additional resources, healthcare providers, and community support

systems. This collaboration ensures no family walks alone, and every individual receives the comprehensive support they need.

**Empowering the Church:** By participating, you equip your own church with the tools and knowledge to better support families within your congregation. We provide training, resources, and guidance to help your church members become pillars of strength and understanding.

**Building a Brighter Future:** Your commitment creates a ripple effect of hope that extends beyond your church walls. By setting an example of compassion and support, you inspire other churches and communities to join the movement, creating a world where families facing mental health and recovery challenges are met with open arms and unwavering faith.

Joining our program is more than just offering a space for support. It's a statement of faith, a commitment to building a more inclusive and compassionate community where everyone feels loved, valued, and empowered to navigate their journey with hope and strength.

We invite you to join us in this mission. Let your church become a beacon of light, a haven of support, and a catalyst for positive change. Together, we can create a world where families facing mental health and recovery challenges find the support they need to heal, thrive, and live their best lives.

### **Growth Benefits:**

Here are some facts about how small groups and community groups help grow a church:

1. **Deeper Discipleship:** Small groups provide a setting for more in-depth study and discussion of the Bible and faith than is typically possible in a large church setting. This can lead to a stronger understanding of Christian beliefs and practices, as well as a deeper personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. **Stronger Relationships:** Small groups provide opportunities for people to get to know each other better and build relationships. This can lead to a greater sense of belonging and community within the church.
3. **Increased Evangelism:** Small groups can be a great place to share the gospel with unbelievers. People are often more open to hearing about their faith in a small group setting than they would be in a large church setting.
4. **Enhanced Leadership Development:** Small groups can provide opportunities for people to develop their leadership skills. This can benefit the church by providing a pool of potential leaders for future ministries.
5. **Greater Retention:** People who are involved in small groups are more likely to stay active in the church. This is because they feel a greater sense of belonging and connection to the church.

Here are some additional statistics that support the claim that small groups and community groups help grow churches:

- According to the Willow Creek Association, churches with strong small group programs are twice as likely to grow as churches without such programs.

- A study by the National Healthy Church Network found that churches with active small groups have higher rates of member satisfaction, engagement, and spiritual growth.
- A study by LifeWay Research found that people who are involved in small groups are more likely to say that they feel like they belong at their church.

Overall, there is a strong body of evidence to suggest that small groups and community groups can be a valuable tool for church growth. If you are looking for ways to grow your church, consider starting or joining a small group or community group.

# Partnering for Impact: Unlocking the Benefits of Collaboration

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Being a partner with us isn't just about joining a program; it's about unlocking a treasure trove of benefits that empower your church to become a beacon of hope and support for families navigating mental health and recovery challenges. Let's delve into the riches that await:

## 1. Cultivating Expertise:

- **Training and Mentorship:** Our dedicated team provides comprehensive training and ongoing mentorship, equipping your leaders with the skills and knowledge to effectively guide and support families.
- **Resource Discounts:** As a partner, you enjoy exclusive discounts on our extensive library of resources, from practical guides to video testimonials, maximizing your budget and impact.

## 2. Deepening Faith and Connection:

- **Prayer and Guidance:** We believe in the power of prayer, and we offer dedicated prayer support for your church and the families you serve.
- **Sharing Wisdom and Experience:** Our collaborative approach allows you to tap into our expertise and network, fostering a vibrant exchange of ideas and best practices.

## 3. Shaping the Future:

- **Dictating Content and Development:** Your voice matters! We actively seek your feedback and insights to ensure our resources are relevant and address the specific needs of your community.

- **Turnkey Solutions:** We provide ready-to-use materials and programs, freeing up your valuable time and resources to focus on what matters most – supporting families.

#### **4. Empowering Your Church:**

- **Become a Resource Hub:** As a partner, your church can become a central hub for accessing our resources and programs, extending our reach and impact within your community.
- **Showcase Your Strengths:** We encourage you to share your unique gifts and talents, whether it's hosting support groups or offering specialized workshops, further enriching the program and inspiring others.

In essence, partnering with us is not just about what you receive; it's about what you contribute. You become an active participant in shaping a brighter future for families struggling with mental health and recovery challenges. You become a voice of hope, a source of strength, and a catalyst for positive change.

## **Building Together, Brick by Brick: An Equitable Partnership Approach**

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At Story Ministry, we firmly believe that support for families and caregivers navigating mental health and recovery shouldn't come with a price tag. That's why our partnership model embraces a concept of shared responsibility and faith-based giving.

Together, we build a brighter future, brick by brick.

- We offer our comprehensive program, including training, resources, and ongoing support, at no upfront cost.
- This allows any church, regardless of size or budget, to join hands with us and make a meaningful difference in their community.

However, sustaining this mission thrives on the generosity of faith-based communities.

- We respectfully request your congregation to consider taking a quarterly tithe, a voluntary contribution based on their commitment and resources.
- This tithe becomes the building block that fuels our efforts and allows us to reach further, empowering more families.

Giving a tithe is an act of faith and community.

- It's a way for your church to actively participate in our shared mission, making a tangible impact on the lives of families in need.
- Every contribution, big or small, plays a vital role in strengthening our support network and spreading the message of hope.

Remember, there's no set amount, no pressure, just an open invitation to partner with us in faith.

- We trust that your congregation will discern what they can offer, guided by their hearts and their commitment to serving others.
- Every act of generosity, every brick laid in this foundation of support, makes a world of difference for families facing difficult journeys.

## **Ready to Build Hope for Families? Take the Next Step with Story Ministry:**

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At Story Ministry, we believe partnering is a journey guided by faith and a shared desire to support families facing mental health and recovery challenges. We invite you to take the next steps toward building a brighter future alongside us:

### **1. Open Your Heart to Hope:**

Begin by entering into a conversation with God. Pray about whether joining Story Ministry aligns with your church's mission and the hearts of your congregation. This is a journey of faith, and listening to God's guidance is paramount.

### **2. Explore Our World:**

Head over to [storyministry.org](http://storyministry.org). Immerse yourself in our story, discover the resources we offer, and learn more about how partnering brings light to families in need.

### **3. Connect and Partner:**

Ready to take the next step? Go to [storyministry.org](http://storyministry.org) and fill out the partnership form. Our team will reach out to schedule an appointment and discuss how your church can join the movement of hope and support.

Remember, it's as easy as 1, 2, 3:

- Pray
- Explore
- Connect

Let's walk together, building a stronger community where families facing mental health and recovery challenges find the strength, solace, and hope they need.

**Here's how you can show support for Story Ministry even if partnering isn't the right fit for your church:**

**Spread the Word of Hope:**

- Refer other churches: Know a church that might benefit from our program? Share Story Ministry's website ([storyministry.org](http://storyministry.org)) or connect them directly with our team. You could even initiate a conversation about starting a support group together.
- Connect individuals in need: If your church isn't equipped to handle specific situations, consider referring individual members struggling with mental health or recovery challenges to Story Ministry's resources or connecting them with our support groups.

**Be a Pillar of Prayer:**

- Lift us up in your prayers: Your prayers are powerful fuel for our mission. Please pray for the families we serve, for our team's guidance and strength, and for the continued growth and impact of Story Ministry.
- Encourage your congregation to pray: Share Story Ministry with your congregation and invite them to join you in praying for our work. This collective prayer creates a powerful wave of support.

**Remember, every act of support, big or small, makes a difference.**

- By referring a church, connecting an individual, or simply lifting us up in your prayers, you contribute to the tapestry of hope we weave for families in need.

- Your generosity of spirit and commitment to community are invaluable, even if partnering isn't the current path.

Thank you for choosing to be a part of the movement of hope, even from afar. We are grateful for your support and belief in the power of faith and community to overcome challenges.