



BUILD AN ILLNESS MINISTRY

STEPPING IN:

WHY DO WE NEED A CHRONIC ILLNESS MINISTRY?

- 60% of people live with one or more chronic illnesses.
- Mental illness affects 1 in 5 adults.
- Many with chronic illness are hurting, lonely, and exhausted.
- Many struggle with anxiety, depression, pain, and significant limitations.
- Many with chronic illness don't look sick - making them an invisible statistic.
- Chronic illness impacts every aspect of life: faith, families, finances, friendships, education, hobbies, employment, and marriage.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Start with one person who has chronic illness. Ask what it's like. Listen for what they might not say.
- Brainstorm about what an illness ministry might look like in your church, neighborhood, work place, or organization. Could it include awareness? Resources? Education? Small groups? Counseling? Transportation? Meals? Financial assistance?
- Think about service projects. How could your ministry offer opportunities for participants to invest in others?
- Could you offer a Bible study? How often? How long?
- Think about caregivers. What could you do to help them?

GOING DEEPER:

CREATE A MISSION STATEMENT - Example: To provide a safe, caring, loving environment in which people can grieve, accept, and learn to *thrive* in a life with chronic illness.

DEVELOP A VISION STATEMENT - Example: To facilitate participation between those living with chronic illness and [your organization] – an opportunity to serve and minister to those with chronic illness, and creative opportunities for those with chronic illness to serve and be involved.

Visit chronic-joy.org for more resources.



SMALL GROUPS - Consider four core values: *Hope, Purpose, Worth, and Joy*. How do these values connect us with God and with one another, how do they help us grow, serve, and learn to thrive right where we are.

- Consider bi-weekly meetings of 90 minutes or less.
- We recommend small groups (up to six participants) providing each participant the opportunity to share and be heard.
- Will participants need: access to bathrooms, space for those who may need to move (e.g.: sit, stand, walk a bit) to be comfortable, perhaps a few high tables for those who need to stand, wheelchair accessibility, time of day and day of we food restrictions if refreshments are provided.
- Consider virtual groups using Facebook video, Skype, or Google Hangouts.

CAREGIVERS - Caregivers need care too. Consider a group just for them.

RESOURCES- What will you need to facilitate an illness ministry?

- A place to meet, curricula, financial support, pastoral support or a trained counselor, email, website, database, or social media support, refreshments.

CURRICULA- The Chronic Joy® Thrive Series: Discovering Hope, Finding Purpose, Embracing Worth, and Encountering Joy are specifically designed for chronic illness small groups.

LEADERS- Who will lead small groups and for how long? Will training be provided?

- ***Grace, Truth & Time: Facilitating Small Groups That Thrive*** is a leader guide chock-full of well-thought-out, valuable resources.
- A wealth of resources to equip small group leaders are available at chronic-joy.org/leaders.

PRESSING ON:

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES- How chronic illness small group participants serve others in your church, organization, community, or around the world? Learn more at: chronic-joy.org/serving.

Thrive in a life with chronic illness.

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