



## BUILD AN ILLNESS MINISTRY

### STEPPING IN:

#### WHY DO WE NEED A CHRONIC ILLNESS MINISTRY?

- More than half of people (60%) 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/or significant limitations.
- Many with chronic illness don't look sick, so they become an invisible statistic.
- Chronic illness impacts every aspect of life: faith, families, finances, friendships, education, hobbies, employment and marriage.

#### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Start the conversation. Begin with one person you know who has chronic illness. Ask them what it's like. Listen. Try to hear what they might not be saying.
- Invite a small group to brainstorm about what a chronic illness ministry might look like in your church, neighborhood, work place or organization. Might it include awareness? Resources? Education? A small group? Counseling? Transportation? Meals? Financial assistance?
- Think about possible service projects. How could this 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:

#### ONCE YOU'VE DECIDED TO START A MINISTRY

**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 offering them creative opportunities to serve and be involved.

Visit [chronic-joy.org](http://chronic-joy.org) for more resources.



**Small Groups** - Consider these four core group values as you launch your first small group: Hope, Purpose, Worth, Joy and how these values connect us deeply to God and to one another, how they help us connect, grow and serve right where we are.

- We suggest bi-weekly meetings of 90 minutes or less.
- Small groups of up to six participants each are recommended to allow each person the opportunity to share and be heard.
- Consider the needs of your participants. Will they need: access to bathrooms, space for those who may need to occasionally move (e.g.: sit, stand, walk a bit) to be comfortable, perhaps a few high tables for those who may need to stand, wheelchair accessibility, time of day and day of week food restrictions if you offer refreshments, etc.
- Consider starting a virtual group using Facebook video, Skype or Google Hangouts.

**Caregivers** - Caregivers need care too. Consider hosting a group specifically for them.

**Resources** - What will you need to facilitate this ministry?

- A place to meet, printed materials (curricula), financial support, support of a pastor or trained counselor, email, website, database and/or social media support, and 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 you provide training for them?

- **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](http://chronic-joy.org/leaders).

### PRESSING ON:

**Service Opportunities** - How can those in your chronic illness small groups begin to serve others in your church, organization, community or around the world? Check out [chronic-joy.org/serving](http://chronic-joy.org/serving) for ideas.

*Thrive* in a life with chronic illness.

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