

Anxiety Overlooked, Under Recognized and Dismissed in Christian Community

By Tressa Ryan, Psychotherapist & Life Coach

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Christian Women Weigh In: Breaking the Barrier and Stigmatism of Anxiety and Depression

Exeter, NH 3/09 Anxiety and depression are a significant component of emotional health, especially in the Christian community.

Women are not prone to anxiety, fear or depression. Research conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health has shown that anxiety disorders are the number one mental health problem among American women and are second only to alcohol and drug abuse among men. One in every eight Americans age 18-54 suffers from an anxiety disorder. This totals over 40 million people in our country not to mention those who are not officially diagnosed but worry that is not reported. Anxiety jars like an emotional whiplash. It's a signal that something is wrong in a person's life or relationships and can have a significant disabling effect on performance and relationships.

In some churches, to be anything less than a "Super Woman" is a sign of weakness. Many Christian women are wrapped up in the false notion that in order to pass off as a good Christian woman, it is necessary to be busy all the time and be ultra-super-mega woman who never shows the slightest hint of being weak or having any anxiety.

Bethany Church in Greenland NH faced the issue of anxiety and depression head on when it held a Women's Weekend 2009 with speaker, Tami West, to speak about Life Without the Monsters, Overcoming Fear, Anxiety, and Depression. Tressa Ryan, LICSW was a local presenter for one of the several Breakout sessions on Saturday that took a deeper look into these topics.

Monsters are self-imposed barriers that hinder personal growth and success. The secret is to figure out what yours is. Maybe it's perfectionism. Maybe it's fear. Tami's mission in life is to help people discover their monsters and overcome them. If things in life are keeping you from feeling confident, learning and growing – then you still have monsters.

The essence of the weekend was to emphasize that women don't have to live with fear and anxiety, they DO have control over their thoughts and don't have to be perfect. Women were encouraged to look at their lives authentically and share with others in a safe environment. They were able to laugh, cry, grow and develop a plan of how to overcome their anxiety and let go of guilt.

In all honesty everyone gets stuck in some form of anxiety from time to time. It is typically not something that is usually said out loud or even admitted to, but is a reality. The women from the conference broke the barriers and found a new sense of strength in knowing they are not alone, and discovering that they can be a tremendous support for each other.

As a result of the conference and her breakout session on the healing power of groups with like-minded women, Tressa has decided provide an opportunity for women to continue the momentum of growth by forming an ongoing therapy group and coaching group to support women in the long term transformation. Therapy is done in her Exeter office and the Coaching is done by teleconference from anywhere in the world- all you need is a phone.

Tressa is a psychotherapist and Life coach with a private practice in Exeter, NH with an emphasis on empowering women to identify problems and develop new strategies. She is one of the few practitioners in

New Hampshire who identifies herself as a Christian therapist and coach. For more information on the upcoming women's groups visit her website at www.TressaRyanCounseling.com or call at 603-964-1700. Tressa@TressaRyanCounseling.com 603-964-1700

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“For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a HOPE and a FUTURE. Jeremiah 29:11-14a (New International Version)

I am a licensed clinical social worker who offers both psychotherapy and phone-based life coaching. I offer my clients the opportunity to integrate spiritual aspects into our work as appropriate.

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