

# BI-MONTHLY REPORT



## IT TAKES COURAGE

Several years ago Donnie was teaching his bi-monthly Bible Study with the A's. In one of the lessons on courage Donnie asked the guys to go home and ask their wives, "What is the most courageous thing I have done?"

When Donnie came home he asked me the question. I thought about it, but it didn't take me long to answer. I told him the most courageous thing he had ever done was to take responsibility for his mental health and go to marriage counseling with me when we needed it. I was always so grateful that he was willing to make the effort to make both his and our life better.

You see, back in 2008, and Donnie shared this story many times, he overdosed on over-the-counter steroids as he was preparing for a bench-press contest. The steroids caused him instability and he dealt with clinical depression for months. When his neurologist stabilized him he told him, "Donnie, if you will get Cognitive Behavioral Therapy it will help change your brain chemistry." He listened to the doctor and worked with a therapist to help with his brain chemistry. His hard work paid off because he was

able to live for ten more years free from debilitating depression.

Why am I sharing this story with you? I want to give hope to those of you who need it right now. Many of you are battling the private pain of mental health struggles. You struggle every day with anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, intrusive or racing thoughts. It takes grit and determination for you to make it through one, single day. The isolation, job loss and social distancing of Covid-19 has exasperated the problem. The stigma surrounding mental health can cause those struggling to feel shameful so that they don't reach out for help. Shame and guilt prevent us from letting others know what we are living. We think they will push us away, when the opposite is true. And many times we think God is disappointed in us, when, in fact, God desires for us to come to Him with our battles.

Everyone struggles. Some struggle with physical health problems, some with emotional problems, but we all struggle on some level. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world." It takes courage to admit we need help. It takes friends to help us. Jesus "was a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering." He said to his friends, "You are those who have stood by Me in my trials." (Luke 22:28). Jesus had trials. We have trials. The tremendous individualism in our society prevents us from asking for help. It is not a sign of weakness to admit we need help. It is brave and courageous.

We need people to stand with us in our trials because we were never meant to live this life alone. You are not alone. You are not the only one. Often, I have thought to myself during my grief journey, "Am I the only one suffering like this? Why me? This is unbearable." When I seek out support and invite others into my pain, I learn I'm not the only one who struggles this way and it gives me hope.

I am encouraging you to not try and fight your battles on your own. If you have no one you trust, seek the help of a mental health professional, a pastor, a priest, a rabbi, a support group or even call a hot-line.

*"If we share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive." Brené Brown*

### HOTLINE NUMBERS

**NAMI National Alliance of Mental Illness: 1-800-950-6264**  
**National Suicide Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text TALK to 741-741**

**CAMP UPDATE:** Many of you have been inquiring as to the status of camp. Due to closed vendors and the California state guidelines, we, unfortunately, are unable to have Summer Camp this year. We are hoping to have some of Donnie's Summer Camp videos available in July. We are disappointed to postpone camp, but look forward to seeing you next year!