

Emotional Fitness and Your Spiritual Life

■ by Traci Noble, MSW, Licensed Clinical Social Worker

The winter months are upon us, which means most of us are already busy and stressed with the hustle and bustle of the holidays. As the beginning of a new year approaches we might consider making our list of New Years Resolutions, or at least start thinking about what changes we'd like to make in our life. Exercise, losing weight, saving money, and reading through the Bible in a year have often hit the top of my personal list! How many of us stop to think about the improvements we need to make emotionally or mentally? The good news is that if we make goals related to spiritual growth, good mental and emotional health will likely follow.

The Barna Research Group shares the following statistics on their website regarding church attendance :

- Church attendance is the number one predictor of marital stability
- Attending church is helpful in the prevention of mental illness, cancer, and heart disease
- Teens who attend church are four-times less likely to commit suicide
- People attending church are physically healthy and less depressed
- Alcohol abuse is 300% less for those who attend church

In addition, research indicates that prayer, drawing comfort from faith, and having support from church members helps to combat depression. Another study reports that individuals who prayed frequently were less likely to be mentally ill and had higher self-esteem. These statistics are not implying that as Christians we will be spared from illness or problems. However, as Christians our hope is in the Lord who tells us in Matthew 11:28-30 to come to Him when we're weary, and reminds us in Matthew 6:25-27 not to worry because He will take care of us. Not only is church attendance important, as the above facts imply, but the physical, emotional and prayer support that we receive from fellow Christians is so crucial for our personal growth and overall mental health during difficult times when depression and anxiety are present.



*Traci Noble sees
clients in our
Schererville location.*

I encourage each of you to think about how you can grow spiritually in the upcoming year. Attending church regularly is crucial, but maybe you need to join a small group, spend consistent time in prayer and Bible Study, or memorize Scripture. All of these activities will strengthen your walk with the Lord and equip you to manage the struggles that life brings and cope with difficult and uncomfortable emotions. If you are having a difficult time managing your emotions or handling a personal or family crisis, don't hesitate to find help. Talk to a pastor, trusted friend or family member, or contact Chicago Christian Counseling Center. ■

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