CHRONIC JOY®

Ministering to those affected by:
Chronic Illness, Mental Illness,
Chronic Pain, & Disability

BUILD AN ILLNESS MINISTRY

STEPPING IN

WHY DO WE NEED A CHRONIC ILLNESS MINISTRY?

- 60% of people worldwide live with one or more chronic illnesses.
- Mental illness affects 1 in 5 adults.
- Many people with chronic illness are hurting, lonely, and exhausted.
- Life with anxiety, depression, pain, and significant limitations is a very real struggle for far more people than we might imagine.
- Most people with chronic illness and pain don't look sick making them an invisible statistic.
- Chronic illness, mental illness, and chronic pain impact 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, then really listen to what they say and for what they might not say.
- Brainstorm about what an illness ministry might look like in your church, neighborhood, workplace, 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 - e.g.: "To provide a safe, caring, loving environment in which people can grieve, accept, and learn to *thrive* in a life with chronic illness and pain."

DEVELOP A VISION STATEMENT - e.g.: "To facilitate participation between those living with chronic illness and [your organization], to provide service and ministry opportunities for those affected by chronic illness, and to provide creative involvement opportunities for those with chronic illness."

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?

- Think about bi-weekly meetings of 90 minutes or less.
- Seriously consider groups of up to (but not more than) six participants. This group size provides 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, a specific/particular time of day and day of the week to meet, food restrictions if refreshments are provided?
- Consider virtual groups using Zoom, Skype, or Google Meets.

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, support for email, website, database, or social media, refreshments, etc.

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? In God's economy, we're all leaders. Consider a model of shared leadership for chronic illness small groups.

- A wealth of resources to equip small group leaders are available at chronic-joy.org/leaders.

PRESSING ON

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES - How can chronic illness small group participants serve others in your church, organization, community, or around the world? (chronic-joy.org/get-involved)

Visit **chronic-joy.org** for more resources.

Chronic Joy