

Childverse

Faith and Mental Health By Cassandra Boduch, MD, Medical Director, PsychPlus

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to mental healthcare
starts here

PsychPlus makes it easy to live a happy, healthy life with options for both in-person and virtual care from licensed psychiatrist and therapists.



Faith can have both positive and negative impacts on mental health, and its influences can vary broadly from one person to another.

If readers are struggling with their mental wellness, they should seek out support from mental health experts who can offer advice and care. They should also keep in mind that faith leaders can offer religious guidance and care but they might not have the experience and skills to deal with the medical aspects of mental health issues.

Some positive ways that faith can impact mental health include the following:

- Some find that their faith provides a sense of purpose and meaning in life. This can help them cope with mental health issues as they believe that there is a greater purpose to their existence and experiences.
- Religious organizations can provide a strong social support network which can lead to a sense of belonging, social interaction, and emotional support. These are all beneficial for mental wellness.
- Faith can serve as a coping mechanism during difficult times. Prayer, meditation, and rituals can offer comfort and a sense of control, helping individuals manage stress, anxiety, and grief.
- Many faith traditions emphasize hope and optimism, which can help individuals maintain a positive outlook on life, even in the face of challenges.

Like most things in the world, there is a flipside to all this. Some negative effects of religion include:

- Guilt and Shame: Some religious beliefs and practices may lead to feelings of guilt, shame, or unworthiness. These negative emotions can contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.
- Rigidity and Stress: If your faith starts to become overly rigid and dogmatic, it might lead to depression and related conditions when trying to adhere to strict beliefs or practices. Fear of not meeting religious expectations can also be distressing.
- Exclusion and Stigma: Under certain circumstances, spiritual communities can ostracize individuals who don't conform to strict norms or beliefs. This phenomenon can bring on feelings of isolation and negatively impact mental health.
- Conflict and Doubt: Struggles with religious doubt between personal beliefs and certain religious dogma can result in personal turmoil and stress.

Always keep in mind that the influence of belief on mental health is always very individualized. Something positive for one person can be negative for the next person.