

HELPING YOUR FRIEND WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

WHAT TO KNOW

- There are several **different types of chronic illness** which vary greatly in severity, symptoms, and effects on daily life.
- While **no two people are alike** in what they suffer, there are some **common struggles** that people with chronic illness face.
- The loss of health and function can cause many people with chronic illness **to struggle with pain, grief, anxiety, depression, hopelessness, anger, and fear of the future.**
- Individuals with chronic illness often **experience a crisis of faith.** They often wrestle with the question, "if God is loving, and God is sovereign, then why doesn't He heal me?"
- Due to a variety of factors, people with chronic illness tend to **withdraw** socially and become isolated.
- Most people with chronic illness have tried a myriad of things to get better and do not want any more suggestions on miracle cures or to hear stories about other people with their condition who got better or worse. **Comparison is not helpful.**

WHAT TO DO

- **Be present!** Chronic illness can present limitations that make people feel isolated and alone. Keep showing up so they know that they are not forgotten and that you still love them even if they are not able to do the things they used to do.
- Find ways to **include your friend** in daily life. Their ability to participate will vary, so this may require some flexibility, creativity, collaborative communications and partnership.
- **Don't wait** for them to ask for help, anticipate their needs and come alongside them as naturally as possible.
- **Don't try to fix** their illness or offer remedies. They have a doctor for that. They just need you to be their friend.
- Empathize but **don't feel sorry for them.**
- **Don't refrain from sharing your own problems** with them because their problems seem so much worse than yours. They still want to be a friend to you as well.
- **Understand their limitations**, so you know best how to help when you go places together. It's okay to ask them what things are helpful and what things are not helpful.
- Remember that **laughter is great medicine.** Try to find ways to laugh and enjoy life with your friend.
- Engage in **caring conversations!** Avoid group settings and rushed timing. Say things like **"I've been praying for you...How are you today?"** Listen. Ask clarifying questions like **"What is the hardest thing for you right now?"** and **"How can I help?"**
- Pray with them, **encourage, teach, and model lamentation and petition.** (Dark Clouds, CH 2) 1. Bring your complaints (Ps.10), 2. Bring your questions, (ps.22:1, ps. 44:23-24, Ps. 80:12, Ps. 88:18, Ps. 13:1-2, Ps.35:17, Ps. 74:10, Ps. 137:4) 3. Bring your frustrations (Ps. 10:2-4), 4. Come with reference/ humility (Heb. 4:15, 5:7-9)

- Remember to care about your **friend's caregivers**. Ask how they are doing. Do they need help or encouragement? This usually weighs heavily on the person receiving care.
- Be aware that there exists a strong correlation between chronic illness and **suicide ideation**. Aspects of chronic illness, such as chronic pain, social disconnection, and perceiving oneself as a burden to others, are risks for suicidality. Watch for destructive turns in thoughts or actions. **Be with them, affirm your love and care for them and inform your pastor for support** immediately if you hear them saying things like: "I'm just a burden to you," "I have no reason to live" or "I'm trapped"
- **What about the unbeliever?** 1. Empathize with them with this suffering. 2. Agree with them in their anger and grief 3. Share them that this is not the way it is suppose to be (creation, fall) 4. Share with them the Triune God's redemptive mercy in the Gospel (Redemption, Restoration).

ENCOURAGE A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING:

- If Jesus was made perfect through suffering, then we should assume that God will also use suffering in our lives to sanctify us. (Hebrews 2:10)
- Jesus warned us that we will have trouble in this world, but we can take heart because He has overcome the world. (John 16:33)
- Scriptures to meditate on:
 - Romans 8:18-30
 - 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
 - 2 Corinthians 4:7-18
 - Philippians 3:8-11
 - James 1:2-4, 12
 - 1Peter 1:3-9

SUPPORT FROM THE
SOUL CARETEAM

Contact: soulcare@doxa.church

RECOMMENDED
COUNSELING CENTERS

Doxa Biblical Counseling: [INTAKE](#)

Fieldstone Counseling: Christ-centered, clinically informed biblical counseling center. [INTAKE](#)

RESOURCES

[God's Grace in your Suffering](#) by, [David Powlison](#)

[Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament](#) by, [Mark Vroegop](#)

[Suffering](#) by, [Paul David Tripp](#)

[Saint Suffers & Sinners](#) by, [Michael R. Emlet](#)

[Just Thinking Podcast: A Biblical Theology of Suffering](#)

