

THE SANCTUARY COURSE FOR CATHOLICS

PARTICIPANT'S

GUIDE

Thank you for choosing to participate in *The Sanctuary Course for Catholics*. This course is for...

- People with questions about mental health...
- Mental health professionals with a wealth of knowledge to share...
- Clergy and laity who want to engage their communities in mental health conversations...
- People supporting loved ones with mental health problems...
- People living with mental health problems...

Your questions, your experiences, and your knowledge are valuable and will enrich the group discussions. Everyone has something meaningful to contribute to the conversation because mental health affects everyone. Now here is what you can expect from this course.



There are eight topics covered. You will explore the opportunity for Christian engagement in the mental health conversation, expand your understanding of mental health, examine the realities of mental illness, consider the effects of stigma, define the principles and processes of recovery, reflect on the importance of companionship, learn about self-care, and discuss ways that your faith community can support mental health.



There are discussion questions. Each session includes several discussion questions. However, there is no obligation to participate in discussions. Please only share when you are ready, and do not share more than you are comfortable. You may find it helpful to follow this guideline: talk about scars, not wounds. If an experience is fresh and painful, it may not be helpful to explore it in a group setting. If you have some distance and perspective, though, you may be ready to share.



There are films. Each session includes a film where Catholics share personal stories about mental health and mental illness. A description of the film content will be included in each session. Please read this description before viewing the film, and let your leader know if you would prefer to step out of the room or minimize your screen to avoid triggering content.





There are suggested group guidelines. These guidelines are designed to help create an atmosphere of safety and respect in your group. Please follow them, along with any additional guidelines your group may agree upon.

Thank you again for investing your time in this course.

SUGGESTED GROUP GUIDELINES

These guidelines are designed to help create an atmosphere of safety and respect. Read through them as a group during your first meeting, and then discuss whether specific guidelines need to be amended, deleted, or added.

DON'T INTERRUPT

Allow each person time to finish speaking before responding.

SHARE THE AIR

Ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate by respecting the time available. The leader has permission to redirect the discussion if it gets off track.

CHOOSE WONDER

If you disagree with something shared, don't immediately give voice to criticism or rejection. Instead, ask yourself the following question: I wonder what led this person to these thoughts/beliefs? Make room for others to offer opposing views and diverse experiences.

RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

What is shared in the room stays in the room.*

DO NOT GIVE ADVICE

What works for you may not work for someone else. Respect the journeys, experiences, and processes of each group member, and do not attempt to fix, correct, or save anyone.

EXHIBIT SENSITIVITY

This course sometimes deals with difficult and painful subjects which can affect participants emotionally. Decide in advance how you will respond to one another in these sensitive moments. Some options include giving participants permission to take a break and step outside, asking participants what they need in the moment, and offering participants comfort items like tissues, a blanket, or a warm beverage.

You are encouraged to view the experiences, the pain, and the mental health journeys of your fellow participants as Holy Ground—a place to walk with gentleness, reverence, and respect. Please keep this perspective in mind when someone in your group shares about their own mental health.

*Note: Participants' stories should not be shared outside the group. However, if a participant is a danger to themselves or others, emergency services should be contacted.

