

What Every Spirit-Filled Christian Needs to Know About Their Mental Health

Mental health isn't something many Christians enjoy talking about. Sometimes they feel uncomfortable because they think Christians are supposed to have it all together. Even most pastors don't really talk about mental illness from the pulpit, according to LifeWay Research. But Christian psychotherapist Dr. Scott Bush says Christians shouldn't shy away from the topic—it's more relevant now than ever.

After all, one in five Americans struggle with some kind of mental illness, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. LifeWay found that people who struggle with mental illness often turn to pastors for help, but not enough pastors are equipped to adequately minister to them.

I invited Dr. Bush onto my "Strang Report" podcast to discuss how Christians should approach mental health—and how they can truly seek help. (I invited him on before to discuss suicide and how to deal with deep depression. [Click here](#) to read his insights on that topic.)

Sometimes, Dr. Bush says, chronic pain is connected to severe emotional trauma and even PTSD.

"Say a war veteran comes back, and they hear a loud sound like fireworks or they smell gun powder. It can trigger them," he says. "So it could be what they see, what they feel or what they hear. We have found that chronic pain is many times connected to an event. I had a person I was working with ... and when she came in for individual therapy, she was moving around and said, 'My back hurts.'

"I said, 'What's wrong with your back?' She said, 'Since I

gave birth—it was a really hard birth, and my back has hurt ever since.'”

Dr. Bush performed what he calls “bilateral therapy” on her back, and when he was finished, the woman’s pain was gone.

“So that trauma of that very difficult birth, all that pain she was in, whenever she felt the slightest bit of pain, her body would take her back to that event where she had that great pain.”

But pain isn’t the only thing that can cause PTSD, Dr. Bush says. Sometimes when people are in traumatic situations, the narrative of that moment can also get stuck in their minds. For instance, if someone is in a car wreck and they can’t get out of the car, they may panic because they feel powerless. That narrative of feeling completely powerless can arise in future situations—creating a type of lens through which the person views life.

“That powerlessness gets stuck in a person’s brain because it’s in the right brain, connected to the nervous system,” Dr. Bush says. “And you can’t pray that away. So we have a type of therapy that allows it to be removed from the right brain, desensitize it, it’s put in long-term memory and disconnects from the nervous system. So that’s how we get rid of depression and anxiety.”

This type of therapy that Dr. Bush is referring to is EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). He says EMDR basically replicates REM sleep, which is where we often find emotional resolution.

Dr. Bush tried this therapy for himself to help heal from bullying he went through as a child.

“When I was a kid, I really denied that bullying was a problem,” he says. “In hindsight it was a really big problem. ... I was a little kid, and I had some medical problems. I was

very short, overweight. And so we processed that bullying. It was like 20 minutes through EMDR. And when we finished, I was going to a minister's conference up in Daytona, and my wife and I got a hotel on the beach in Daytona. I brought my bathing suit even though I don't swim. I haven't swum since I was a kid.

"I put my bathing suit on and walked across the beach with my wife, and I walked right into the ocean. And I started swimming. My wife is looking at me because I don't swim. She said, 'Hey, what are you doing?' And I said, 'I love to swim!' I stood up out of the water and said, 'What happened to me? I haven't said, "I love to swim" ever in my life.'"

And although not wanting to swim is not a mental disorder, it was a symptom of Dr. Bush's trauma from bullying. To deal with the frustrating symptoms people struggle with, Dr. Bush says, they have to deal with the root of the problem. Not wanting to swim was the fruit, but bullying was the root. Once Dr. Bush dealt with the root, the fruit shriveled up, and eventually—to take the metaphor even further—the entire tree died.

"I've had other changes in my life too," he says. "I used to throw things, break things, and I said, 'Hey, I'm Italian. This is how we are.' That's not how I am. That's not what God created. That's what junk did. So once we started to remove the junk, I don't throw things or break things anymore. It was life-changing for me. Once I figured out how to make that connection, I could use that knowledge to help so many other people."

Dr. Bush has had great success in treating patients for a wide variety of issues, including PTSD, depression, anxiety, sex addiction and sexual dysfunction. He has seen patient after patient walk into his office with a problem and walk out four hours later healed from that issue.

If you would like to heal from past traumatic experiences, you

can reach out to Dr. Bush at 407-230-4949 or info@. You can also find more information about him and his therapy at [.](#) {eoa}