

Hospitality Holds the Keys to Accessibility



UUA General Assembly 2011

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“Without exception, Trinity’s members treated Lucas with unstudied compassion. At no financial cost to the congregation — no special programs, no architectural alterations— they demonstrated that making people with disabilities, even severe disabilities, feel a part of them is within reach of every house of worship. Sometimes it's not about building a ramp. Sometimes it really is about opening up your heart.”

T.R.Pearson

I know I'm included when...

What does it mean for you to be
inclusive of others?

People with disabilities are very likely to say their faith is important to them, but are more likely to not attend services due to accessibility issues. With the aging of the American population, the situation is becoming an increasingly significant factor in worship community vitality.

National Organization on Disability

About 65 percent of all U.S. residents, both those with and without disabilities, say their religious faith is very important.

People with very severe disabilities are more likely (73 percent) to say their religious faith is very important to them than people with slight disabilities (55 percent).



People with disabilities are less likely than people without disabilities to attend religious services at least once a month.

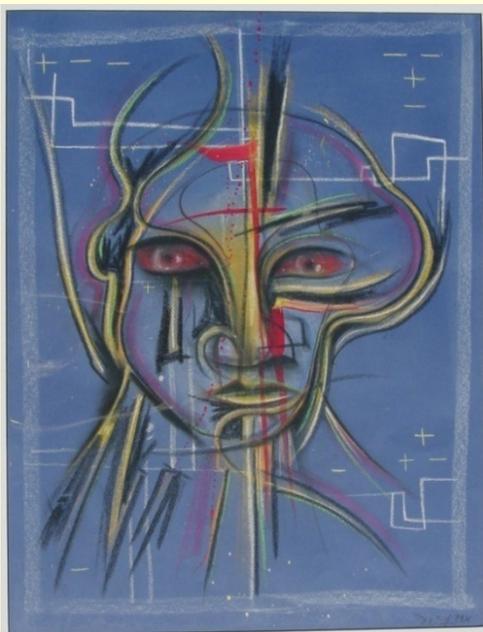
The gap between people with and without disabilities in terms of attendance at religious services has not closed.



Age at onset of disability

- Birth through adolescence 19%
- Young adulthood 21%
- Middle age 27%
- Later in life 27%

Mental Health in the Religious Congregation



Rev. Barbara F. Meyers
Mental Health Community Minister
Mission Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Mental Health and Mental Disorder

- Mental Health

- Productive activities
- Fulfilling relationships with other people
- Ability to cope with change and adversity

- Mental Disorder

- Alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior
- Causing distress and/or impaired functioning

Points on a Continuum

Mental Health

Mental Disorder



- People move back and forth
- Everyone experiences emotional distress at times

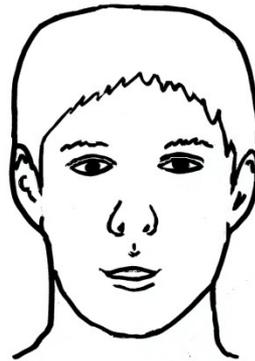
Dimensions to Recovery

MIND

BODY

PLAY

RELATIONSHIPS



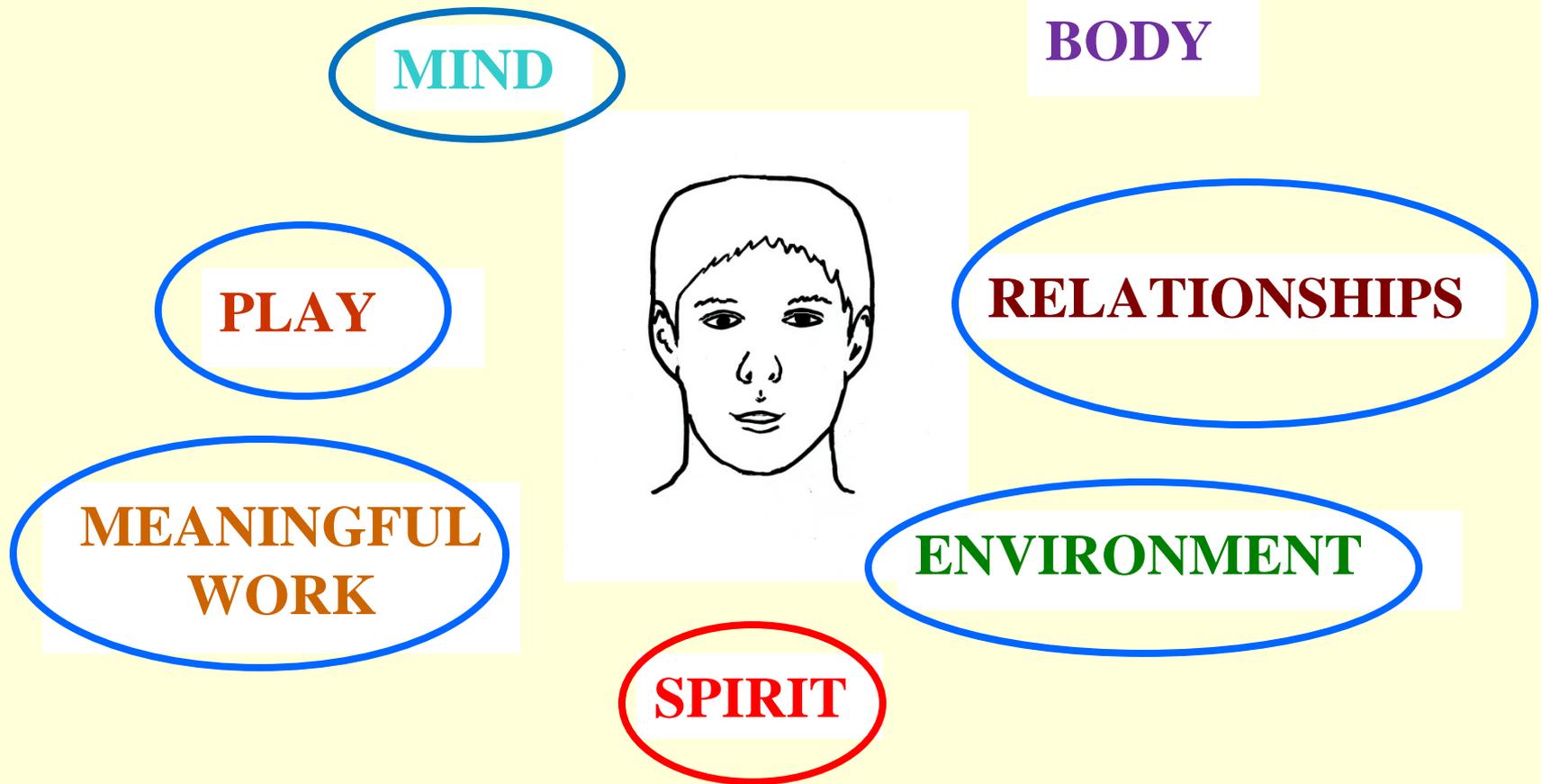
**MEANINGFUL
WORK**

ENVIRONMENT

SPIRIT

- Not necessarily elimination of all symptoms
- “What’s missing?”

Dimensions to Recovery



- Where the Religious Congregation has a primary role
- Where the Religious Congregation can play an important role

The Congregation's Role

- Meaning Makers
 - Sermons/classes on mental health
- Comfort and Hope Givers
 - Calm, Reassuring Place to Heal
 - Acceptance, Encouragement, Hope
- Advocates

Example Accommodations

- ***Mobility:***
 - All areas of the church are accessible
 - Computer info should not require mouse.
- ***Visibility:***
 - Large type and/or Braille orders of service, hymnals, etc.
 - Web site is accessible

Accommodations, cont.

Hearing:

- Needs can vary
- Provide assisted listening devices
- Consider real time CART translation, ASL interpreters.
- Covenant group accessible for hearing impaired.
- Captioning for computer videos

Mental Health:

- Visit congregants if hospitalized
- Provide caring support for spiritual needs

Accommodations, cont.

Chemical and Sensory Challenges:

- Encourage not wearing scented products
- Separate seating area
- Avoid scented candles, aerosols, etc
- Avoid bright fluorescent lights.
- Be sensitive to food allergies
- Computer communication should avoid flickering or blinking text

Accommodations, cont.

Learning and Developmental Disabilities:

- Provide extra classroom assistance
- Computer communication should not be overly complex
- Find roles for adults with developmental disabilities.

Addiction:

- Provide or give referrals to 12-step or other addiction support groups
- Unitarian Universalist Addictions Ministry

Contact

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TV Shows:

www.mpuuc.org/mentalhealth/mentalTVshow.html