

**POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND**

1. The icebreaker is designed to get people practicing gratitude from the beginning of the discussion. This will hopefully set a balanced tone for the remainder of the discussion.
2. Everyone feels anxiety at some point, whether that is “everyday worry” or “clinical anxiety,” which is sometimes called “anxiety disorder.” Don’t try to play amateur psychologist or let anyone in the group dominate in this discussion. Encourage people to share their own experiences. Treat every person’s experience as unique.
3. In every way, we want to be stigma stompers when it comes to mental health. We wouldn’t look down on someone who goes to the doctor and gets antibiotics for an infection; the same is true for people who have a mental health diagnosis.
4. We have a resource page for anyone who would like further help. [communitychristian.org/mentalhealth](http://communitychristian.org/mentalhealth)
5. Three counterweight practices that can help us live with more peace and joy are celebration, asking God for help, and meditating on what is good and beautiful. Encourage the group to engage in those practices. The final challenge is to practice gratitude throughout the week and discuss it in the group. That might be a helpful way to support everyone in the group, no matter their level of anxiety.

**ADDITIONAL QUOTES AND QUESTIONS**

“In our lives in the world, the temptation is always to go where the world takes us, to drift with whatever current happens to be running strongest. When good things happen, we rise to heaven; when bad things happen, we descend to hell. ... We are in constant danger of being not actors in the drama of our own lives but reactors.” – Frederick Buechner, U.S. writer and preacher

Grateful individuals demonstrate less envy, materialism, and self-centeredness. Gratitude improves self-esteem and enhances relationships, quality of sleep, and longevity. If it came in pill form, gratitude would be deemed the miracle cure. – Max Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World*

1. Where do you see God at work in your life right now?
2. What next steps do you feel called to take in your faith journey? Visit [communitychristian.org/nextsteps](http://communitychristian.org/nextsteps)
3. Have you considered getting baptized? [communitychristian.org/baptism/](http://communitychristian.org/baptism/)
4. Who have you been able to BLESS?

**MORE ON THE HEART AS A COUNTERWEIGHT**

It seems that folks sometimes offer biblical encouragements—“fear not,” “do not be anxious,” and so on—as if the heart were a cup full of fear or anxiety that needs to be emptied of those emotions, so it can be filled with alternative emotions. (However), it fails to understand that sorrow, fear, and anxiety are not always sinful emotions. In fact, such emotions may constitute appropriate responses to the loss (actual or threatened) of real goods.

The heart is more like a scale. Specifically, a “balance scale,” the kind often used as a symbol for justice because its two sides weigh different arguments and positions in the process of reaching a true and righteous judgment.

A proper use of biblical encouragements and exhortations will take this picture of the heart into account. ... Instead, biblical encouragements should be offered as counterweights. Doing so might look like this:

I know your heart is (rightly) heavy with sorrow due to the loss of some good thing(s), that it is overwhelmed by present circumstances, that it is uncertain of what tomorrow may bring. However, let me offer you a counterweight, not to remove these emotions (the cup metaphor) but to place them in relation to a larger reality: the reality of God’s sovereign goodness, attention, and purpose, which offer solid reasons for encouragement and hope in the midst of trial.

These “counterweights” do not remove the other “weights” of our hearts. Rather, they provide consolations that enable our hearts to bear the weights of sorrow, anxiety, and fear in this vale of tears, until we arrive at our destination of unmixed, unshakeable beatitude in the presence of the triune God. ( Scott Swain, “The Heart is Not a Cup (There’s a Better Metaphor),” *The Gospel Coalition* (5-8-20)