



Workshop Handout

Presented by **Ryan Edlind**

January 22, 2026

Cuyahoga Valley Church

Cleveland, OH

Workshop Agenda

1. **Know** — Discuss specific elements of anxiety and strategies people- including kids can use to cope.
 2. **Help** — Develop some basic approaches to care for someone struggling with clinical or severe mood-related problems.
 3. **Seek Help** — Address specific questions and concerns during our Q&A time. (Please write down questions on a notecard and ask them in Part 3.)
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Purpose & Goals

Our workshop will be broken into three general sections:

1. Discuss specific elements of emotional problems (i.e., depression/anxiety) and strategies people can use to cope
 2. Develop some very basic and practical approaches to care for someone who is suffering with normal painful emotions & “clinical mood disorders”
 3. Address specific questions and concerns through our Q&A time with workshop participants
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Questions Considered

- What’s the difference between grief, PTSD, adjustment disorder, bipolar disorder, major depression, generalized anxiety, and panic attacks?
- What are some of the common causes of depression and anxiety?
- What are some of the current mainstream approaches (i.e., modern mental health) and some alternative approaches (i.e., non-research-based) to addressing depression & anxiety?
- What are some healthy spiritual and biblically focused approaches to addressing depression & anxiety?
- What are some things that *don’t* help with depression & anxiety (yet people often do anyway)?
- What are the realistic opportunities and potential outcomes when caring for someone who is struggling with depression or anxiety?

Our sincere desire is that this will be an informative and encouraging time together.

Warmly,

Ryan Edlind

Personal & Theological Positions (www.ryanedlind.com for more info.)

- Anxiety is both real and complex. It usually does not have one cause but several. Therefore, depression and anxiety often require a variety of means to successfully address and make progress.
- There is no better place to learn about the grace of God than during dark times. God's "good news" message (the gospel) is for everyone—especially those who are broken and suffering. Church can be a place to find God and grow with other imperfect people. Many people in this church (including me) have ongoing struggles with depression/anxiety. I love the people an leadership at CVC and agree with the beliefs and direction of this church.
- I am a mental health clinician with a pastor's heart. This workshop has a clinical focus for people struggling with depression. However, my personal values will affect my view of depression and are summarized as:

Deep Trust: The holy person and loving work of the Trinity.

Truthful Reflection: A biblical view of the individual and the world.

Movement Outward & Upward: The power of love in community and the need for spiritual transformation.

Disclaimers

- This workshop is educational in nature. It is not designed to assist with self-diagnosis or to equip you to provide any form of clinical treatment to others. Please see a mental health professional for personalized advice.
- The presenter is both a licensed mental health professional and a pastor by training with 27 years of experience. The presenter is **not** a healthcare professional and cannot provide medical advice. Please consult with your healthcare professionals for medical concerns.
- The views presented may or may not represent the official positions of Cuyahoga Valley Church. Please speak with Pastor Joe Valenti or an elder for clarification.

Anxiety and Depression— Epidemiology Overview

What Is Depression?

Depression is commonly used to describe problems related to mood or emotion, usually sadness. However, it can also refer to disturbances in spirituality, psychological health, biology, behavior, family life, social relationships, and economic circumstances.

How Common Is Depression?

- About **1 in 8 people (13.1%)** ages 12+ experience depression at any given time—this rate has risen **60% over the last decade**.
 - **Women are more affected** than men (**16% vs. 10.1%**). [southdenvertherapy.com]
 - In adults, **21 million** experience a major depressive episode each year (**8.3% of U.S. adults**). [cdc.gov]
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Depression in Children & Teens

- **Nearly 1 in 5 teens (19.2%)** reports recent symptoms of depression. [nimh.nih.gov]
- **Teen girls (26.5%)** experience depression at **more than double** the rate of boys (12.2%). [southdenvertherapy.com]
- Untreated depression in youth is linked to **school avoidance, concentration problems, social withdrawal**, and increased risk of later anxiety or substance use.

Why This Matters for Moms

Children may not always *say* they are sad or overwhelmed. Instead, you may see:

- Changes in **sleep, eating, or motivation**
- More irritability (a common sign of depression in kids)
- Avoiding school, friends, or activities
- Drop in grades or trouble concentrating

Risk Factors Moms Should Know

- **Financial stress** matters: Individuals living below the poverty level show much higher depression rates (**22.1%**). [southdenvertherapy.com]
 - Teens and young adults (18–25) have the **highest depression rates** of any age group (18.6%). [cdc.gov]
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What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is typically associated with fear, worry, and stress. Like depression, it is often viewed as negative, but it is often reduced to “it’s a sin” or “mental illness.” Like depression, anxiety is typically believed to be a negative emotion. However, anxiety can be either healthy and very problematic. Anxiety is a natural human response to stress—our mind and body’s way of preparing us to handle challenges or protect ourselves from potential danger. It often shows up as worry, tension, or physical sensations like a racing heart. Fear is usually a reaction to something specific and immediate,

while clinical anxiety is different: it becomes a mental health condition when those feelings are stronger, last longer, or show up so often that they interfere with daily life, parenting, work, or overall well-being. Clinical anxiety isn't about being "too worried"—it's when the body's alarm system gets stuck on, even when there's no real threat.

Anxiety is especially widespread and impactful.

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health condition in the United States, affecting 19.1% of adults each year and 31.1% across a lifetime. Globally, an estimated 301 million people live with an anxiety disorder, reflecting a 55% increase since 1990. Anxiety rates have surged in recent years, with 43% of U.S. adults reporting feeling more anxious in 2024 than the previous year. Economically, anxiety carries a heavy burden: earlier estimates indicated a national cost of over \$42 billion annually, representing more than 30% of all U.S. psychiatric spending.

Anxiety and School-Age Children

Social science research consistently shows that anxiety has a significant impact on children's development, learning, and daily functioning. Current data highlight:

- 11% of U.S. children ages 3–17 have a *current, diagnosed anxiety disorder*, making it the most common mental health condition in this age group. [\[cdc.gov\]](https://www.cdc.gov)
- Among adolescents, 31.9% experience an anxiety disorder, with rates higher among girls (38%) than boys (26.1%). [\[theglobalstatistics.com\]](https://www.theglobalstatistics.com)

These patterns matter because anxiety in school-age children is associated with difficulty concentrating, avoidance of school or social settings, and declines in academic performance, and research shows that untreated childhood anxiety increases risk for depression, substance use, and chronic anxiety in adulthood.

Encouraging Takeaways for Moms

- Depression & anxiety is **common, treatable, and nothing to be ashamed of**.
- Kids and teens often respond well to:
 - **Predictable routines**
 - **Supportive relationships** (parents, teachers, mentors)
 - **Healthy sleep and screen habits**
 - **Modeling anxiety awareness and self-regulation tools**
 - Professional support when needed (therapy, school counselors, pediatricians)
- Getting help early significantly improves

Mental Health View of Depression & Anxiety

The clinical community researches and evaluates:

- Personal History (esp. trauma and stress)
 - Family History
 - Medical History & Current Health (esp. medications)
 - Substance Abuse
 - Current Mental State
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Diagnostic Tools

Professionals assess symptoms based on frequency, duration, and intensity. Common tools include:

- DSM-5-TR
 - General Health Questionnaire
 - Beck Depression & Anxiety Inventories
 - Check out the "ABCs of CBT (Affect, Behavior, Cognition)."
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Mainstream Approaches to Treatment

Includes psychotropic medication (SSRI, SNRI, MAOI, tricyclics, atypical medications, benzodiazepines) and cognitive-behavioral or interpersonal therapy.

- 40% respond after 3 months
- 90% respond after 12 months with consistent treatment

Lowering risk factors:

- Chronic stress
- Substance abuse
- Sleep deprivation
- Family distress
- Medication inconsistency

Increasing protective factors:

- Self-monitoring mood
 - Maintaining routines
 - Relying on social support
 - Exercise and healthy eating
 - Regular medical and psychosocial care
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CBT — Affect, Behavior, Cognition

Affect — How are you feeling?

Common symptoms include:

- Dysphoria (sadness, worry, heaviness, numbness, irritability, mood swings)
- Loss of interest/pleasure
- Worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, worry, panic attacks

Helpful strategies:

- Creative feeling-word lists
- Guided imagery
- Role-play
- Journaling
- Deep breathing & relaxation

Behavior — What are you doing?

Symptoms may include:

- Sleep changes
- Appetite changes
- Tearfulness
- Slowed movement

- Agitation
- Changes in speech
- Past suicide attempts

Action steps:

- Behavior charting
 - Rating mastery/pleasure
 - Scheduling behavior
 - Assertiveness training
 - Relying on support networks
 - Relaxation practices
 - Nutrition & exercise
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Cognition — How are you thinking?

Symptoms include:

- Impaired concentration
- Delusions
- Negative thoughts or obsessions
- Suicidal/homicidal ideation

Helpful strategies:

- Challenging distorted thoughts
- Thought stopping
- Grief and loss work
- Thinking flow charts

Alternative Approaches

- Dietary supplements (St. John's Wort, Omega-3)
- 12-step & recovery programs
- Light therapy
- ECT
- Spiritual/biblical counseling

- Mentoring and peer counseling
- Retreats

Differences Between Diagnoses

Grief: Sorrow caused by death or loss.

Major Depressive Disorder: 5+ DSM symptoms for 2+ weeks; includes depressed mood or loss of interest.

Adjustment Disorder: Depression developing within 3 months of a stressor; cannot last longer than 6 months.

Dysthymic Disorder: Persistent low-grade depression for 2+ years (1 year for children).

Bipolar Disorder: Manic episodes + possible depressive episodes.

Anxiety Disorders

- **GAD** — excessive worry lasting months
 - **Panic Disorder** — recurrent panic attacks
 - **Social Anxiety Disorder** — fear of evaluation
 - **Phobias** — fear of specific objects or situations
 - **PTSD** — trauma-related symptoms after 1+ month
 - **OCD** — obsessions and/or compulsions
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Common Causes of Mood Problems (From Tan & Ortberg)

Physical factors, temperament, sin (not false guilt), trials, spiritual attacks, loneliness, triggering situations, unbiblical self-talk, anger inward, biological factors, existential vacuum, dark night of the soul, interpersonal factors, cultural factors.

Healthy Biblical Approach, Not Formulaic

- Contemplative prayer
- Embracing brokenness (repentance)
- Humor
- Spiritual reading
- Conferences & sermons
- Scripture memorization
- Bible studies and discipleship/mentoring
- Life & community groups

What *Doesn't* Help

- Generalizations
 - All-or-nothing thinking
 - Disqualifying positives
 - Jumping to conclusions
 - Catastrophizing or minimizing
 - "Should" statements
 - Personalizing
 - Labeling
 - Emotional reasoning
 - Abusive self-talk
 - Seeking drama
 - Numbing (substances, addictions)
 - Idolatry
 - False spirituality or playing God
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Realistic Outcomes in Helping

Before engaging:

- Plan self-care; pray
- Cultivate vision
- Clarify your role

While engaging:

- Share power appropriately
- Set boundaries
- Communicate responsibility
- Set goals
- Strengthen desires

When progressing (or not):

- Adjust goals
- Collaborate with community
- Consider health, trauma, grief, unspoken or unidentified stressors, & family history

Upon completing care:

- Celebrate wins
- Acknowledge struggles
- Transition care to God and others

Dr. Tim Keller and Dr. Dan Allender's books on anxiety summarized & tailored for adults with kids

1. Tim Keller – Fear and Faith: Finding the Peace Your Heart Craves

In Fear and Faith, Tim Keller addresses fear and anxiety through biblical theology, pastoral wisdom, and practical spiritual insight. The book is rooted in Keller's conviction that fear is not merely an emotional problem but a spiritual signal, revealing what the human heart most deeply trusts. Rather

than treating fear as something to simply eliminate, Keller helps readers understand fear as something to interpret, confront, and ultimately redirect toward God.

Keller begins by noting that fear is a universal human experience. Everyone fears loss—loss of control, security, love, approval, health, or meaning. According to Keller, fear becomes destructive when it is tied to something that has taken the place of God as our ultimate source of safety and identity. When these “ultimate things” are threatened, anxiety intensifies. Thus, fear exposes what the Bible calls idols of the heart—good things that have become ultimate things.

Central to Keller’s teaching is the idea that faith is not the absence of fear, but the choice to trust God in the presence of fear. Scripture does not command believers to suppress fear through willpower; instead, it invites them to re-anchor their trust in God’s character and promises. Keller emphasizes that biblical faith involves both the mind and the heart—knowing what is true about God and allowing those truths to reshape emotional responses over time.

Keller grounds his discussion firmly in Scripture, especially the Psalms and the teachings of Jesus. He shows how biblical figures openly acknowledged fear, doubt, and distress while continuing to place their hope in God. This honesty, Keller argues, is essential to genuine faith. The Bible’s repeated command “Do not fear” is not a denial of reality but a call to remember that God is present, sovereign, and faithful even in threatening circumstances.

A key theological theme in the book is the gospel-centered reordering of love and trust. Keller explains that only when God is loved and trusted above all else can fear lose its controlling power. The gospel provides assurance that God’s love is secure, not based on performance, and that even suffering cannot separate believers from God’s purposes. This assurance creates a deeper, steadier peace than circumstances ever could.

Practically, Keller encourages readers to respond to fear by:

- Identifying what they are afraid of losing
- Examining what that fear reveals about misplaced trust
- Actively preaching gospel truth to their hearts
- Practicing prayer that is honest, dependent, and Scripture-shaped

Ultimately, *Fear and Faith* presents anxiety not as a failure of belief, but as an invitation to deeper faith, repentance, and trust. Keller’s message is both realistic and hopeful: fear may persist, but it no longer has to rule, because God himself is trustworthy.

2. Dan B. Allender – *When Fear Fights Back: Rising Above Anxiety, Panic, and Shame*

In *When Fear Fights Back*, Dan B. Allender approaches fear and anxiety from a deeply psychological, relational, and theological perspective. Rather than focusing on surface-level worry, Allender addresses fear as a powerful internal force that is often connected to trauma, shame, and unresolved

pain. His central claim is that fear does not merely visit us—it actively resists healing, fights transformation, and seeks to isolate us from God and others.

Allender challenges simplistic Christian approaches to anxiety that rely solely on positive thinking or Bible verses without addressing deeper wounds. He argues that fear is often rooted in experiences of betrayal, abuse, loss, or chronic insecurity. In these cases, anxiety is not irrational; it is a learned survival response. Healing, therefore, requires more than reassurance—it requires truthful engagement with pain in the presence of God and safe community.

A defining feature of Allender's teaching is his emphasis on shame as a companion to fear. Fear tells us we are unsafe; shame tells us we are the problem. Together, they create patterns of hiding, control, self-protection, and emotional numbing. Allender insists that confronting anxiety must involve naming shame honestly and allowing it to be met with compassion rather than judgment.

Spiritually, Allender frames fear as a battleground. Fear "fights back" when individuals begin to move toward healing, intimacy, or freedom. As people attempt to trust God or open up to others, fear intensifies, warning that vulnerability will lead to harm. Allender teaches that this resistance is expected—and that courage is not the absence of fear, but the decision to move forward while afraid.

Allender's theology is strongly incarnational. He emphasizes that God meets people inside their pain, not after they fix themselves. Jesus is presented not as a distant solution to anxiety but as a companion who understands suffering, betrayal, and terror. Healing comes through relational presence—with God and with others—not through isolation or self-mastery.

Practically, Allender calls readers to:

- Acknowledge fear without minimizing it
- Identify the stories and memories that fuel anxiety
- Resist the urge to control or numb pain
- Seek trustworthy relationships for honest conversation
- Allow God's grace to meet them in weakness

When *Fear Fights Back* is not a quick or easy read, nor does it offer fast relief. Instead, it offers a path of deep healing, rooted in truth, courage, and grace. Allender's message is that fear loses its power not when it is silenced, but when it is exposed, understood, and met by love.

Below is a practical small-group guide for Christian mothers that applies the ideas from Tim Keller (*Fear and Faith*) and Dan B. Allender (*When Fear Fights Back*) in a pastoral, accessible way. It is designed for 4–8 week use, adaptable for church small groups, mom groups, or informal gatherings.

Group Values (Establish First)

- Safety: No fixing, minimizing, or spiritualizing others' pain
 - Confidentiality: Stories stay in the group
 - Grace: Fear is not failure
 - Patience: Growth is slow and non-linear
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SESSION 1: Understanding Fear (Naming It Without Shame)

Teaching Focus

- Fear is a normal human response
- Fear often reveals what we deeply love or feel responsible for (Keller)
- Fear often protects wounds or past pain (Allender)

Discussion Questions

1. What are the fears that most often show up in your life as a mother?
2. How do those fears affect your parenting, relationships, or self-talk?
3. Where have you felt pressure to hide or downplay your anxiety as a Christian?

Practice for the Week

- Write down moments when fear shows up (no fixing—just noticing)
 - Pray honestly using a Psalm (e.g., Psalm 56, 62, or 139)
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SESSION 2: Fear and Control

Teaching Focus

- Fear often leads to control (over children, schedules, outcomes)
- Control can feel responsible but may be driven by anxiety
- God invites trust, not perfection

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you notice yourself trying to control outcomes most?
2. What feels at risk if you loosen that control?
3. How does fear distort your picture of God—as demanding, distant, or unsafe?

Practice for the Week

- Choose one area to intentionally release control to God
 - Pray: "God, help me trust You more than my efforts."
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SESSION 3: Fear, Identity, and the Heart (Keller Focus)

Teaching Focus

- Fear grows when something becomes "ultimate" (approval, safety, success)
- The gospel re-centers identity in God's love, not performance
- Faith redirects fear toward trust

Discussion Questions

1. What does your fear say about what feels most important to you?
2. How does the gospel speak to that fear?
3. Where do you need to remind your heart—not just your mind—of God's faithfulness?

Practice for the Week

- Memorize a short Scripture (Romans 8:1, Isaiah 41:10)
 - Practice "preaching the gospel" to yourself when fear rises
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SESSION 4: Fear, Shame, and Vulnerability (Allender Focus)

Teaching Focus

- Fear often partners with shame ("I'm failing," "I'm not enough")
- Healing begins when fear is spoken, not hidden
- God meets us inside our weakness

Discussion Questions

1. How does shame show up alongside your fear?
2. What feels hardest to say out loud about your anxiety?
3. What would it look like to let others carry this with you?

Practice for the Week

- Share one fear with a trusted person
 - Practice self-compassion: speak to yourself as God would
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SESSION 5: Fear and Courage

Teaching Focus

- Courage is not fearlessness—it is movement with fear
- Fear often intensifies when growth begins
- God honors small steps of trust

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you sense fear “fighting back” right now?
2. What small act of courage might God be inviting you into?
3. How can this group support you in that step?

Practice for the Week

- Take one small, intentional step you’ve been avoiding
 - Journal how God meets you in it
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SESSION 6: Parenting from Trust, Not Fear

Teaching Focus

- Children do not need perfect parents—just present ones
- Anxiety is not inherited by honesty; it is softened by safety
- Modeling faith includes modeling repentance and trust

Discussion Questions

1. How does fear shape how you respond to your children?
2. What would it look like to parent from trust instead of fear?
3. How can you model a healthy relationship with fear for your children?

Practice for the Week

- Name fear gently when it appears (without self-criticism)
 - Pray blessing over your children rather than control over outcomes
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Closing Encouragement

- Fear does not disqualify you from faith
- God is patient, present, and near
- Healing happens in truthful relationship—with God and others

"When I am afraid, I put my trust in You." — Psalm 56:3