




CROSS

Use the CROSS method for interacting with persons who show up unannounced to a worship meeting evidencing a mental illness:

 C alm	Stay calm and speak in a relaxed manner, be patient, and avoid overreacting
R espect	Most people want to be respected and heard, even during a mental health crisis
O thers	Are there others who can be helpful? E.g. leaders, team members, outside resources
S pace	Create space for their mental illness and don't try to correct them
S afety	Don't put yourself or the person in an unsafe situation

CALM—Stay calm and speak in a relaxed manner. Set the tone by reflecting a calming presence.

RESPECT— Everyone wants to be respected and heard. Too often, persons struggling with their mental health can be treated like children and don't feel heard. Use the tools of active listening, empathy, and rapport building. Demonstrate genuine care. Empathy may enable the person to be more compliant of requests made of them. Attempt to gain understanding into their struggle.

OTHERS—Expand the circle of persons who are aware of the situation. Ask the question: “who else can be helpful in this moment?” A pastor or other leader, another member who is familiar with mental illness, a team created specifically for these scenarios, outside mental health resource organizations, et al. One important note: Don't play hero-ball with someone who is in crisis. If you suspect a mental health crisis, contact outside help.

SPACE— Give them space to be mentally ill. Don't try to correct them if their thoughts are detached from reality, e.g. “I'm being watched.” We can listen and accept a person without agreeing with them. Instead, allow them to talk and be heard. Generally, trying to talk someone out of their delusions will tend to reinforce them. I.e., they will become more fixated on them and cling to their delusions even more. Likewise, validating someone's delusions will accomplish the same thing. Simply practice active listening to help access what's going on. Furthermore, give them space to act or speak a little differently than others in the meeting.

SAFETY—Most people with mental illness are not any more dangerous than someone without, but don't allow yourself or the person to be unsafe. Think about yourself and others at church. Don't put yourself in vulnerable places like going alone to meet them outside or alone in the lobby. Also, think about the person. If you believe they are in danger of self-harm, then stay with them until you can connect them with someone to help. Contact 911.

