



## The Seven Inclusion Strategies for the Local Church

Stephen Grcevich, MD, suggests the following seven strategies using the acronym **TEACHER**.

1. **T:** Assemble your inclusion **TEAM**. This can vary according to the church but can include representatives from the church departments, community mental health professionals and advocates, occupational therapists, interior designers, social workers, and wise laymen.
2. **E:** Create welcoming ministry **ENVIRONMENTS**. Consideration should be given to making the interior design of the church inviting.
3. **A:** Focus on ministry **ACTIVITIES** most essential for spiritual growth. The church exists to make disciples. Focus resources on one or two of the most effective ministries. The most critical activities may not take place on Sabbath mornings.
4. **C:** **COMMUNICATE** effectively. Sermons are an effective means of communication. In all communication use “person-first language.” Do not define someone by their disability condition when talking about them.
5. **H:** **HELP** families with their most heartfelt needs. Make intercessory prayer a priority. Visitation is important including hospitals and nursing homes as is providing meals for families when a family member is in hospital.
6. **E:** Offer **EDUCATION** and support. Pastors and church leaders become better educated about the needs of persons with mental illness.
7. **R:** Empower your people to assume **RESPONSIBILITY** for ministry. The members of the church are the greatest assets in teaching and building relationships with persons in the community.

(Stephen Grcevich, MD in *Mental Health and the Church*, pp. 90-116)

## The Restoration of the Person’s Self-respect

The focus of Adventist Possibility Ministries on mental health calls for a new way of thinking and relating with those who face developmental, emotional, and mental health challenges. We are called to see the possibilities behind the disability that is far too often

enshrouded in unfortunate stigmas. Ellen White calls for the removal of such hindrances and to see the person from God's perspective.

“If we wish to do good to souls, our success with these souls will be in proportion to their belief in our belief in, and appreciation of, them. Respect shown to the struggling human soul is the sure means through Christ Jesus of the restoration of the self-respect the man has lost. Our advancing ideas of what he may become are a help we cannot ourselves fully appreciate.” — *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 280, 281