



I CHOOSE HOPE

Curriculum for Support Groups From Fresh Hope for Mental Health

Participants Handouts

A 14-Week Journey Through the
7 Principles of Recovery from Fresh Hope for Mental Health



FRESH HOPE FOR MENTAL HEALTH
INTRODUCTION TO THE CURRICULUM HANDOUT

Welcome to the 7 Principles of Recovery

WHAT IS THIS CURRICULUM?

This is a 14-week journey through Fresh Hope's 7 Principles of Recovery. Each principle takes two weeks: the first to learn, the second to delve deeper and reflect.

It is not a class. It is a path to healing where we share experiences, support one another, and discover that recovery is possible.

HOW WILL IT HELP YOU?

This curriculum will help you:

- **Accept** your diagnosis and seek help without shame
- **Heal relationships** broken by the impact of the disorder
- **Live with purpose** despite your limitations
- **Choose hope** every day, no matter how you feel
- **Take active control** of your recovery
- **Find your identity** beyond the diagnosis
- **Redeem your pain** by serving others

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Each principle includes:

WEEK 1: You watch Samantha's video, summarize the key points, and we discuss them together **WEEK 2:** We review the principle, delve deeper into the conversation, and you complete a personal activity

All in a safe, confidential, and non-judgmental environment.

WHY IS REGULAR ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?

Recovery isn't an event. It's a process. When you attend regularly:

- ✓ **You build community** — You need others, and others need you
- ✓ **You develop consistency** — Healing happens through regular practice
- ✓ **You deepen the process** — Each week builds on the last
- ✓ **You take responsibility** — Your commitment to the group reinforces your commitment to yourself
- ✓ **You set an example** — Your presence encourages others to keep going

If you skip weeks, you lose the thread and the opportunity for deep healing. However, if for any reason beyond your control you miss a session, contact your Facilitator to see what options they can offer to help you catch up. *"I Choose Hope" sessions are not recorded for the sake of participant confidentiality.*

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU:

- A SAFE space where you can be honest
- Absolute CONFIDENTIALITY
- NO JUDGMENT of any kind
- A COMMUNITY that cares for one another
- HOPE based on faith in Jesus

YOUR COMMITMENT:

- **Attend regularly** — Make this a priority
- **Participate honestly** — Share what you need
- **Respect confidentiality** — What is said here stays here
- **Be punctual** — Others depend on you

- **Open your heart** — Allow the process to transform you

WHAT TO EXPECT?

This is where REAL HEALING happens:

In small groups where we see each other, listen to each other, and validate each other. In deep conversations about faith, hope, and recovery. In moments when someone understands EXACTLY what you're going through. In self-discoveries that change your perspective.

THIS IS A 14-WEEK JOURNEY.

We ask that **you commit fully** to these 14 weeks.

Recovery isn't quick, but it is POSSIBLE.

And you are not alone.

At the end of the 14 weeks, we'll celebrate with the "Bracelet Ceremony." You can order your "I Choose Hope" bracelet in the Fresh Hope Store. Order it ahead of time!

Welcome. We're glad you're here.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." — Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

THE 4 COMMUNITY GUIDELINES (READ ALWAYS)

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY** "What is said here stays here" → Protects everyone → Allows for vulnerability
2. **WE DON'T GIVE ADVICE** "We listen without judging. We share from our own experience" → Your role: listen, validate, ask questions → NO: "You should...", "What you need is..." → YES: "I experienced...", "Tell me more?"
3. **WE ARE MUTUAL SUPPORT, NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS** "If you need professional help, we'll seek it out too" → A complement, not a substitute → Clear referrals if necessary
4. **LANGUAGE OF HOPE** "We use language of hope. We don't just vent; we seek to move forward" → Validate the pain AND believe in the possibility → Avoid triggering details for others → "That's difficult. And it's possible."

I CHOOSE HOPE

Your Journey Begins Here

ORDER YOUR BRACELET TODAY

Welcome to the I Choose Hope 14-Week Journey!

Over the next 14 weeks, you will walk through Fresh Hope's 7 Principles of Recovery. You will learn, grow, support one another, and discover that with Jesus, recovery is possible.

At the end of Week 14, we will celebrate together in a special Bracelet Ceremony on Zoom. In this sacred moment, you will put on your "I Choose Hope" bracelet—a tangible symbol of your commitment to hope and healing.

To ensure your bracelet arrives in time for this celebration, we ask that you **ORDER IT NOW**.

HOW TO ORDER YOUR BRACELET

Step 1: Visit the Fresh Hope Store

Go to: https://freshhope.us/product-category/_promotionals/

Step 2: Select Your Bracelet

Look for the "I Choose Hope" bracelet. It is engraved with "I Choose Hope" on the surface.

Step 3: Complete Your Order

Add to cart and checkout. Standard shipping typically takes 2-3 weeks.

Step 4: Keep Your Receipt

Save your order confirmation. You will receive your bracelet before Week 14.

WHY ORDER NOW?

- ✓ Ensures your bracelet arrives by Week 14
- ✓ Shows your commitment to this 14-week journey
- ✓ Gives you a tangible reminder of your choice
- ✓ Allows you to participate fully in the Bracelet Ceremony
- ✓ Creates accountability and celebration with your group

WHAT THE BRACELET MEANS

When you wear your "I Choose Hope" bracelet, you are declaring:

"I choose to walk this path of recovery.

I choose to show up, week after week.

I choose to open my heart to healing.

I choose to support my community.

I choose hope as I will learn it in each of the 7 recovery principles.

I choose hope—every single day."

The bracelet is not just jewelry. It is a declaration. It is a prayer. It is a commitment you make to yourself and to God.

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about ordering, sizing, or anything else, please reach out to info@freshhope.us

We are so honored to walk this 14-week journey with you.

Let's choose hope together.

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT: "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 1

Principle I reads as follows:

For people with a mental health challenge: My life is affected by a mental health challenge and can become unmanageable and hopeless, especially if ignored or untreated. Therefore, I choose the help and support of others to overcome the struggles and find more joy in life.

For loved ones: My loved one's mental health challenge has also left me feeling helpless and hopeless. Therefore, I choose the help of others in learning about the disorder and choosing healthy boundaries for myself.

Together: Together, we have understanding. We remind each other of the Lord's love, and that He alone can do all things. He is the source of our hope, and in Him we can overcome all things.

'I can do everything through Him Who gives me strength.' — Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

KEY POINTS FROM THE VIDEO:

- THE KEY WORD IS: ACCEPTANCE
- Accepting the diagnosis is the first step toward seeking help
- Ways people DENY their diagnosis:
 - Over-spiritualizing: believing that faith will completely eliminate the problem
 - Self-stigma: "I'm not crazy," "I don't need help," "I'm not that bad"
 - Not prioritizing recovery: saying you have the diagnosis but not making changes
 - Ignoring symptoms: not recognizing or identifying what is happening
 - Blaming others: "It's my parents," "It's the medication," etc.
- The diagnostic process can be long and frustrating
- It is important to apply FILTERS to distinguish real causes:
 - Spiritual - Christian: Do I need forgiveness? Do I need to confess to God?
 - Physical: Hormones, thyroid, diet, exercise, neurotransmitters?
 - Emotional: My relationships?
 - Mental: My thoughts?
- There is usually a MIX of factors, not a single cause
- You must arm yourself with PATIENCE

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 2.

PRINCIPLE 1: ACCEPTANCE

My Personal Statement of Acceptance

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is an optional activity for you. If you wish, you can write a brief personal statement of acceptance. You are not required to share it with the group, but writing it can be an important step in your recovery process.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE?

It is a short statement in which you acknowledge your diagnosis and your decision to seek help. It doesn't need to be perfect—just sincere.

FORMAT:

You can use this structure:

"I accept that _____ [your diagnosis or situation]

Therefore, I choose _____ [the help or action you will seek]."

MY PERSONAL STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE

(Write in the space below)

I accept that _____

Therefore, I choose _____

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- This statement is PRIVATE. You don't have to share it if you don't want to.
- If you decide to share it with the group, do so in your own words.
- There is no "right" or "wrong" answer.
- You can keep this statement and review it whenever you need to remind yourself of your commitment to recovery.
- If this activity brings up strong emotions, that's okay. It's a sign that the process is working.

IF YOU WISH TO SHARE:

If you want to share your statement with the group during the closing activity, raise your hand. The facilitator will celebrate your courage and validate your statement.

REMEMBER:

Acceptance is the first step toward recovery. By accepting your diagnosis and choosing to seek help, you are already on the path to change.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." — Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 3.

PRINCIPLE II

For people with mental health challenges: My mental health challenge has also affected my relationships and the lives of those around me. Therefore, I choose to overcome for both my own good, and the good of those who love me.

For loved ones: I haven't always responded to my loved one's mental health issue in ways that were good for the relationship. Therefore, I choose to learn better ways to communicate with, support, and encourage my loved one.

Together: Together, we commit to speaking the truth in love, healing broken relationships and viewing each other as the Lord views us.

'So let's pursue those things which bring peace and which are good for each other.' — Romans 14:19"

KEY POINTS FROM THE VIDEO:

- THE KEY WORD IS: RELATIONSHIPS
- Mental health disorders significantly impact relationships
- Problematic behaviors include: ◦ Irritability and isolation ◦ Excessive sensitivity to rejection ◦ Last-minute cancellation of commitments ◦ Impulsive behaviors ◦ Compulsive spending, hypersexuality, infidelity
- PART 1: Personal Responsibility in Relationships ◦ Learning to offer sincere apologies (not excuses) ◦ The key phrase: "I'm sorry," not "I'm sorry BUT I have a diagnosis" ◦ Give an explanation, not an excuse
- PART 2: Motivation for Recovery ◦ Fight the thought: "My family would be better off without me" ◦ Reframe: "My family needs me; that motivates me to recover" ◦ Recovery is not an excuse to give up, but a reason to keep going

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 4.

PRINCIPLE 2: RELATIONSHIPS

My Commitment to Restoring Relationships

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is an optional activity for you. Reflect on how your disorder has affected your relationships and commit to specific actions for restoration.

WHAT IS A COMMITMENT TO RESTORATION?

It is a statement in which you acknowledge the impact on your relationships and commit to specific actions to heal them.

FORMAT:

"I acknowledge that my disorder has affected my relationship with _____ [person or relationship]

Therefore, I commit to _____ [specific restorative action]."

MY COMMITMENT TO RESTORATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

(Write in the space below)

I acknowledge that my disorder has affected my relationship with _____

Therefore, I commit to _____

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- This commitment is PERSONAL and may remain private.
- Focus on the things you can control, not on changing others.
- Sincerely asking for forgiveness is a powerful act (without excuses).
- Healthy boundaries are also part of healing.
- This commitment can grow and change over time.

CONCRETE STEPS TOWARD RESTORATION:

Here are some ideas you might consider:

- Ask for sincere forgiveness without excuses
- Listen actively without defensiveness
- Fulfill the commitments I make
- Clearly communicate my boundaries
- Be consistent in my actions
- Express gratitude to those who support me
- Seek professional help to heal

IF YOU WISH TO SHARE:

If you want to share your commitment with the group, raise your hand. The facilitator will celebrate your courage and validate your commitment.

REMEMBER:

The relationships we cherish deserve our effort in recovery. Your family and loved ones need to see you doing well.

"Therefore, let us pursue what contributes to peace and mutual edification." — Romans 14:19 (NIV)

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 5.

PRINCIPLE III

For people with mental health challenges: My disorder can become an excuse. Therefore, I choose to believe I can live a full and rich life in spite of my disorder. I choose the support of people who will urge me to 'push through'.

For loved ones: At times I don't understand my loved one and can allow them to either wallow in their excuses, or push them too hard. Therefore I choose to learn healthy, appropriate ways to contribute to my loved one's recovery.

Together: Together we do better than trying on our own. We will hold one another accountable for learning, growing, and choosing to push through in hope.

'Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up.' — 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)"

KEY POINTS FROM THE VIDEO:

- THE KEY WORD IS: PUSH THROUGH
- It means doing things that are good for your recovery even when you don't feel like it
- It means keep trying even when you don't feel like it
- It means accepting help from others who give you that "little push"
- THE PREVIOUS BELIEF: "I believe it is possible to live a full and abundant life despite the diagnosis"
 - If you don't believe this is possible, you won't have the strength to push through
- It is important for the person to DEFINE WHAT a full and abundant life MEANS to them
- A full and abundant life DOES NOT mean a perfect life ◦ It DOES NOT mean health, money, and love
 - It DOES mean a life with PURPOSE—fulfilling God's purpose
- Limitations are real—work within them
- Work with the person to redefine their purpose within those limits

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 6.

PRINCIPLE 3: PUSHING THROUGH

My Vision of a Full and Abundant Life

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is an optional activity for you. Imagine and write down your own vision of a full and abundant life despite your diagnosis.

WHAT IS A FULL AND ABUNDANT LIFE?

It is not a perfect life. It is not just health, money, and love. It is a life with PURPOSE where I fulfill God's plan for me, even within the limitations I have.

FORMAT:

"For me, a full and abundant life means _____ [describe what that means to you]

Therefore, I resolve to _____ [concrete actions to live that out]."

MY VISION OF A FULL AND ABUNDANT LIFE

(Write in the space below)

For me, a full and abundant life means _____

Therefore, I intend to move forward in the following ways

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Your vision is PERSONAL. It doesn't have to be like anyone else's.
- Include things that bring meaning and purpose to your life.
- Acknowledge your limitations as part of reality, not as failure.
- It may include: relationships, work, faith, hobbies, service, creativity, etc.
- This vision may evolve over time.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What is my deepest purpose in life?
- What activities bring me joy and meaning?
- Who are the important people in my life?
- How can I serve others with my gifts?
- What are my realistic limits that I respect?
- What would my best day look like despite my diagnosis?

IF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE:

If you'd like to share your vision with the group, please raise your hand. The facilitator will celebrate your hope and validate your vision.

REMEMBER:

Believing that a fulfilling life is possible gives you the strength to "push through" on difficult days.

"So encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing." — 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 7.

PRINCIPLE IV

For people with mental health challenges: My disorder can lead me to feel hopeless. Therefore, I choose to believe, regardless of my feelings, that there is help and hope for my physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being.

For loved ones: At times I also feel hopeless, letting my loved one's actions and recovery define my happiness. Therefore, I choose to live with healthy emotional boundaries, and I choose my own joy despite the ups and downs of my loved one.

Together: Together we remind each other that our hope and joy come from the Lord. He alone is able to fulfill our needs in every aspect of our lives.

'For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' — Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

KEY POINTS FROM THE VIDEO:

- THE KEY WORD IS: HOPE
- HOPE IS NOT a feeling; it is a CHOICE
- ILLUSTRATION: Soccer game (Pastor Brad's teaching) ◦ Watching live: You don't know the final score—if your team loses, you're sad, tense, stressed ◦ Watching the replay: YOU ALREADY KNOW who won—even if your team is losing, it DOESN'T stress you out
- HOPE IN CHRIST is like watching the game on replay: ◦ WE ALREADY KNOW WHO WON: Jesus won on the cross ◦ The score of that game was Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him"
- TOOL: The CHECK-IN to practice this distinction ◦ Repeated at the start of each group ◦ Separates MOOD from HOPE TANK ◦ Mood: reported on a scale (1-5, with 5 being stable) ◦ Hope Tank: reported like a gas tank (empty to full)
- EXAMPLE: Mood 2 (depressed), but Hope Tank FULL (because she knows God's work on the cross)

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 8.

PRINCIPLE 4: HOPE

My Declaration of Hope in Christ

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is an optional activity for you. Write a personal statement about how your hope in Christ sustains you, regardless of your current emotional state.

WHAT IS HOPE IN CHRIST?

It is not a feeling that depends on your circumstances. It is a CHOICE to believe that God has won, that Jesus triumphed on the cross, and that all your days have purpose in Him.

FORMAT:

"Even though my mood is _____ [how you feel right now]

My hope tank is _____ [empty/half-full/full]

Because _____ [reason why you have hope in Christ]."

MY DECLARATION OF HOPE IN CHRIST

(Write in the space below)

Although my mood is _____

My tank of hope is _____

Because _____

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Your mood and your hope may be DIFFERENT. That's okay.
- Hope doesn't depend on how you feel today.
- Hope in Christ is constant even as your emotions change.
- You can have a bad day (low spirits) and a full tank of hope.
- This is your personal truth with God.

FOUNDATIONS OF HOPE:

Some reasons why we can have hope:

- Jesus triumphed on the cross
- God has plans for my well-being (Jeremiah 29:11)
- All things work together for good for those who love God (Romans 8:28)
- My worth does not depend on my circumstances
- God is with me on difficult days
- My life has purpose in God's plan
- Jesus' resurrection guarantees eternal hope

TOOL: THE CHECK-IN

At each meeting, you will report:

MOOD (1-5): 1 = Very depressed 5 = Stable and well

HOPE TANK: Empty  Full

These two may be DIFFERENT. And that's perfectly fine.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE:

If you want to share your statement of hope with the group, raise your hand. The facilitator will celebrate your faith and validate your hope.

REMEMBER:

Hope allows us to live in peace, even when circumstances are difficult.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” — Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 9.

PRINCIPLE V

For people with mental health challenges: While medicine is a key component in my recovery, it is not the only answer. Therefore, I choose to explore new ways of thinking and acting in my relationships and daily living.

For loved ones: I, too, have been part of the cycle of dysfunctional living, either thinking I had all the answers or thinking the problem didn't belong to me. Therefore, I choose to submit myself to learning new behaviors and taking responsibility for my own healthy, balanced living.

Together: Together we choose freedom over suffering, and joy in living through self-knowledge in action.

'We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.' — 2 Corinthians 10:5"

KEY POINTS FROM THE VIDEO:

- THE KEY WORD IS: MEDICINE
- IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION: ◦ It does NOT say that recovery is impossible without medicine ◦ It does NOT force everyone to take medicine ◦ It DOES say that when a doctor determines it, medicine becomes necessary
- BUT IT IS NEVER ENOUGH—recovery requires hard work
- The person must be an ACTIVE PARTICIPANT in their recovery
- STORY: A Complicated Journey with Medication (Samantha's Story) ◦ Initial diagnosis: depression and panic attacks ◦ Improvement with antidepressants ◦ Unusual symptoms: hypomania ◦ Changed doctors: CORRECT diagnosis = bipolar disorder ◦ Solution: add a mood stabilizer
- LESSONS ABOUT MEDICATION: ◦ If a medication isn't working for you, keep working with your doctor ◦ If your doctor isn't listening to you, find ANOTHER doctor ◦ DO NOT make changes without medical supervision ◦ Psychiatric medications are not stopped abruptly
- FINAL TIP: ◦ We don't generalize by saying "yes" or "no" to medication for everyone ◦ If the doctor says yes, take it and observe the results ◦ If you don't feel better, go back to the doctor ◦ If they don't listen to you, find another doctor
- IMPORTANCE: Keep a LOG when starting a new medication

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 10.

PRINCIPLE 5: MEDICINE

My Personal Plan for Holistic Recovery

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is an optional activity for you. Write your personal recovery plan that includes medication (if applicable), therapy, lifestyle changes, and your own work.

WHAT IS A HOLISTIC RECOVERY PLAN?

It is recognizing that medicine (if necessary) is ONE PART, but not the only one. It includes your active work on thoughts, behaviors, relationships, and lifestyle.

FORMAT:

"My recovery plan includes:

Medication/Treatment: _____

Personal work: _____

Support: _____

My commitments: _____ "

MY PERSONAL COMPREHENSIVE RECOVERY PLAN

(Write in the space below)

MEDICATION/MEDICAL TREATMENT (if applicable):

MY PERSONAL WORK (thoughts, behaviors, habits):

SUPPORT I NEED (people, groups, professionals):

MY SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS:

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Medication (if you need it) is necessary BUT NEVER ENOUGH.
- YOU are the active protagonist of your recovery.
- Working on your thoughts is key to change.
- Lifestyle changes matter: sleep, exercise, nutrition.
- You need support from others to stay committed.
- If a medication isn't working, see another doctor (don't give up).
- Keep a JOURNAL when you start a new medication.

AREAS FOR PERSONAL WORK:

Consider working on these areas:

Thoughts:

- Identify toxic thoughts
- Change automatic thought patterns
- Practice self-compassion

Behaviors:

- Establish healthy routines
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain good sleep hygiene
- Eating well

Emotions:

- Recognize emotions without being controlled by them
- Develop emotional regulation strategies
- Practice mindfulness

Relationships:

- Honest communication
- Setting healthy boundaries
- Asking for and receiving support

IF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE:

If you want to share your plan with the group, raise your hand. The facilitator will acknowledge your contribution and validate your plan.

REMEMBER:

Recovery is hard work, but you can do it. You are not alone on this journey.

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." — 2 Corinthians 10:5

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 11.

PRINCIPLE VI

For people with mental health challenges: At times I have allowed myself to become a victim, 'defined' by my disorder. Therefore I choose to overcome and live in hope and joy, in spite of my disorder.

For loved ones: At times, I have viewed myself as a victim of my loved one's behavior and disorder, living in resentment, anger, unforgiveness, or self pity. Therefore, I choose to separate the disorder from the person I love, forgive and let go of the past, and live as a contributor to successful recovery.

Together: Together, we share in each other's victories and celebrate the whole person.

'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind.' — 2 Timothy 1:7"

KEY POINTS FROM THE VIDEO:

- THE ORIGINAL KEYWORD: VICTIM
- NEW KEYWORD: IDENTITY
- THE SHIFT: From a victim DEFINED by the disorder to a PERSON with a diagnosis
- The difference in how we speak is important: ◦ INCORRECT: "I am bipolar" (label, defines your entire identity) ◦ CORRECT: "I have bipolar disorder" OR "I am a child of God diagnosed with bipolar disorder"
- WHY DOES LANGUAGE MATTER? ◦ When you say "I AM," you are completely labeling yourself ◦ The diagnosis does not define who you are ◦ Your identity: "I am a child of God, I am a wife, a mother, a friend"
- THE DANGER OF SELF-STIGMA: ◦ When you yourself believe that the diagnosis defines you ◦ Others will also start to see you only through the lens of your condition
- STORY: How Samantha overcame self-stigma ◦ At first: she was the only person with her diagnosis in El Salvador ◦ In the Zoom group: she saw 12 people with diagnoses ◦ All of them were: graduating, working, serving ◦ Seeing others LIVING WELL removed her self-stigma
- PUBLIC TESTIMONY: The event with 500 women ◦ Introducing herself publicly with her diagnosis was liberating ◦ People saw a successful person, not just a diagnosis
- LEVELS OF DISCLOSURE: ◦ Closest people: I can be open ◦ Other people: use more neutral language ("mood disorder") ◦ The key: People have different biases based on their experiences

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 12.

PRINCIPLE 6: IDENTITY

My Statement of Who I Really Am

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is an optional activity for you. Write a clear statement about who you REALLY are, beyond your diagnosis.

WHO ARE YOU REALLY?

You are not your diagnosis. Your diagnosis is something you HAVE, not something you ARE. Your identity is much deeper and more valuable.

FORMAT:

"I am not _____ [what you are NOT]

I am _____ [who you really are]"

MY IDENTITY STATEMENT

(Write in the space below)

I am not _____

I am _____

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Your diagnosis is part of your story, NOT your whole story.
- Your identity includes: your gifts, your faith, your relationships, your purpose.
- The language you use about yourself is powerful.
- Saying "I have depression" is different from "I am depressed."
- You can have a disorder and still be completely valuable.
- Your worth does not depend on your mental health.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What are my strengths and gifts?
- How does God see me?
- What important roles do I have? (child, friend, parent, professional, etc.)
- What are my deepest values?
- What can I offer others?
- Who do I want to be despite my diagnosis?

REMEMBER THIS:

The next time someone (including yourself) defines you by your diagnosis:

WRONG: "I am bipolar" **RIGHT:** "I have a diagnosis of bipolar disorder"

WRONG: "I am depressed" **RIGHT:** "I have depression, but that doesn't define who I am"

HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR DIAGNOSIS:

Depending on the person:

- **Close friends and family:** You can be completely honest
- **Colleagues/Professionals:** You can use neutral language: "I have a mood disorder that I'm being treated for"
- **You don't have to tell everyone:** Your diagnosis is private information

IF YOU WISH TO SHARE:

If you want to share your identity statement with the group, raise your hand. The facilitator will celebrate your intrinsic worth and validate your identity.

REMEMBER:

You are loved. You are valuable. Your diagnosis does not define your worth.

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of self-control." — 2 Timothy 1:7

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 13.

PRINCIPLE VII

For people with mental health challenges: "At times, my mental health challenge has caused me to focus only on myself and my needs, leading me to believe the lie that I don't have much to offer to others. Therefore, because focusing on others will help me grow, I choose to give back, sharing my story with others, that my past pain might provide insights for someone else's journey to living well.

For loved ones: I, too, have become focused on my loved one's situation and how it has affected me. I can easily become so consumed by our issues that I fail to see those around me who would benefit from what I've learned. Therefore, I choose to give back by seeking opportunities to help others by sharing my insights and experiences.

Together: Together we recognize that sharing helps both us and others heal. Sharing helps us find our voice and becomes empowering as we see our pain redeemed by the Lord. As we share, it helps reaffirm our own hope while also giving hope away to others.

'(The Lord) helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.' — 2 Corinthians 1:4 (Good News Translation)"

KEY POINTS FROM THE VIDEO:

- THE KEY WORD IS: GIVE (Serving others)
- It is NOT about money, but about SERVING
- When someone puts the 6 principles above into practice and empowers their recovery, the next step is to SERVE
- When you SERVE OTHERS, God REDEEMS your pain
- STORY OF LOSSES: The things Samantha lost ◦ Time (a year without a diagnosis) ◦ Money (many unnecessary tests) ◦ Business (she couldn't run it) ◦ Reputation ◦ A baby (lost during all of this)
- THE PROMISE: God restores what has been lost ◦ NOT only returning it to its previous state ◦ BUT restoring it BETTER THAN BEFORE
- EXAMPLE: Restored relationships ◦ She lost friends due to isolation ◦ Through service at Fresh Hope, they were restored ◦ And she gained new friends all over the world
- THE POWER OF SERVICE: ◦ There are days when you're crying from sheer pain ◦ But someone needs you to listen ◦ You take the time to listen—AND THAT HAS POWER ◦ Service helps you process your own pain

- **STORY:** Fresh Hope Course ◦ She was invited but said no (she didn't feel capable) ◦ She prayed and said, "Yes, Lord, I will do it" ◦ Three years later: God has redeemed EVERYTHING He promised
- **THE RESULT:** ◦ Principle 7 is what has truly redeemed her ◦ Past pain is bearing fruit in the lives of others

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. "I Choose Hope" Curriculum, Session 14.

PRINCIPLE 7: GIVING

My Plan for Service and Redemption

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is an optional activity for you. Write down how you plan to serve others and how your past pain can become a blessing for someone else.

WHAT IS GIVING AND SERVING?

It is sharing your story, your experience, and your hope with others who are on the path to recovery. When you serve, God REDEEMS your pain. Your losses become gains for others.

FORMAT:

"My story includes _____ [what you have been through]

I want to serve _____ [who or in what way]

So that _____ [the impact you hope to have]."

MY PLAN FOR SERVICE AND REDEMPTION

(Write in the space below)

My story includes _____

I want to serve _____

So that _____

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- You don't need to be "fully recovered" to serve.
- Your story, just as it is, has power.
- Serving others heals you as you help them.
- You can serve in many ways: by listening, sharing, walking alongside, and encouraging.
- When you give, God restores what you've lost—BETTER than before.
- You don't have to do it alone: seek community in your service.

WAYS TO SERVE: Consider these ways to serve others:

Listen:

- Be a compassionate ear for someone who is struggling
- Validate others' experiences without judging

Share your story:

- Testimony in support groups
- One-on-one conversations
- Social media (if you feel comfortable)

Be there for others:

- Be there for others during difficult times
- Accompanying someone to medical appointments
- Staying in regular contact

Encourage:

- Remind others that recovery is possible
- Celebrate others' small achievements
- Offer hope during difficult times

Get involved:

- In Fresh Hope or other support groups
- In volunteer activities
- In your faith community

- As a Hope Agent
- As a Support Group Facilitator

YOUR LOSSES CAN BE REDEEMED IN:

Think about what you have lost and how it can become a blessing:

The loss of _____ can become sensitivity toward _____

The loss of _____ can become compassion for _____

The loss of _____ can become strength for _____

IF YOU WISH TO SHARE:

If you want to share your service plan with the group, raise your hand. The facilitator will celebrate your generosity and validate your vision of redemption.

THE PROMISE:

When you serve others, God:

- Restores what you have lost
- Heals you as you help others
- Reaffirms your own hope
- Turns your pain into purpose
- Connects you to community
- Shows that your life has meaning

REMEMBER:

Your pain was not in vain. Your story can transform lives. When you give, you receive many times over.

"He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are going through hard times, we can offer them the same comfort that God has given us." — 2 Corinthians 1:4 (NLT)

FRESH HOPE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

CLOSING CEREMONY

The Bracelets of Hope

WHAT DOES THIS BRACELET MEAN?

This silicone bracelet with the words "**I CHOOSE HOPE**" is your physical reminder of your commitment to recovery.

It's not a magic charm. It's a symbol of a decision you'll make every day.

EVERY TIME YOU SEE IT, REMEMBER:

I **am not** my diagnosis. I **am** a child of God in recovery.

My **mood** may change. My **hope in Christ** is constant.

I have **accepted** my diagnosis. I have **chosen** to seek help.

I have **limitations**. I have **a purpose**.

My **pain** can be redeemed. My **story** has value.

THE BRACELET MEANS:

- ◆ Every morning: I choose hope over fear
- ◆ On difficult days: My hope does not depend on my feelings
- ◆ When it hurts: I remember that I am not alone
- ◆ In recovery: I choose to move forward
- ◆ Always: I choose to believe in God, in myself, in healing
- ◆ The most important thing- every time I read "I choose Hope", it will remind me that in reality, Hope Chose Me.

CLOSING PRAYER

(Everyone stand, hand on heart)

Heavenly Father,

Today we conclude this stage of the 7 Principles of Recovery.

We have acknowledged our struggles. We have chosen hope. We have seen that we are not alone.

As we put on these bracelets, we remind ourselves that recovery is possible.

May our faith be strengthened every time we see them.

May they help us choose hope on difficult days.

May they unite us as a community that loves and cares for one another.

Thank you for loving us unconditionally. Thank you for your sacrifice on the cross. Thank you for the promise of restoration.

In Jesus, we have eternal hope.

AMEN.

(Everyone puts on the bracelet at the same time)

OUR REMINDER:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." — Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

TO CELEBRATE

Post a photo of your hand wearing the bracelet on your social media and use the hashtags #ichoosehope #freshhope and #hopechoseme or #esperanzafresca

