



Central East (HHS Region 3)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Left Behind: How Faith Communities Can Break through Shame and Stigma to Support Those with Eating Disorders

The Rev. Erin Bair
Christie Dondero Bettwy

MHTTC Network

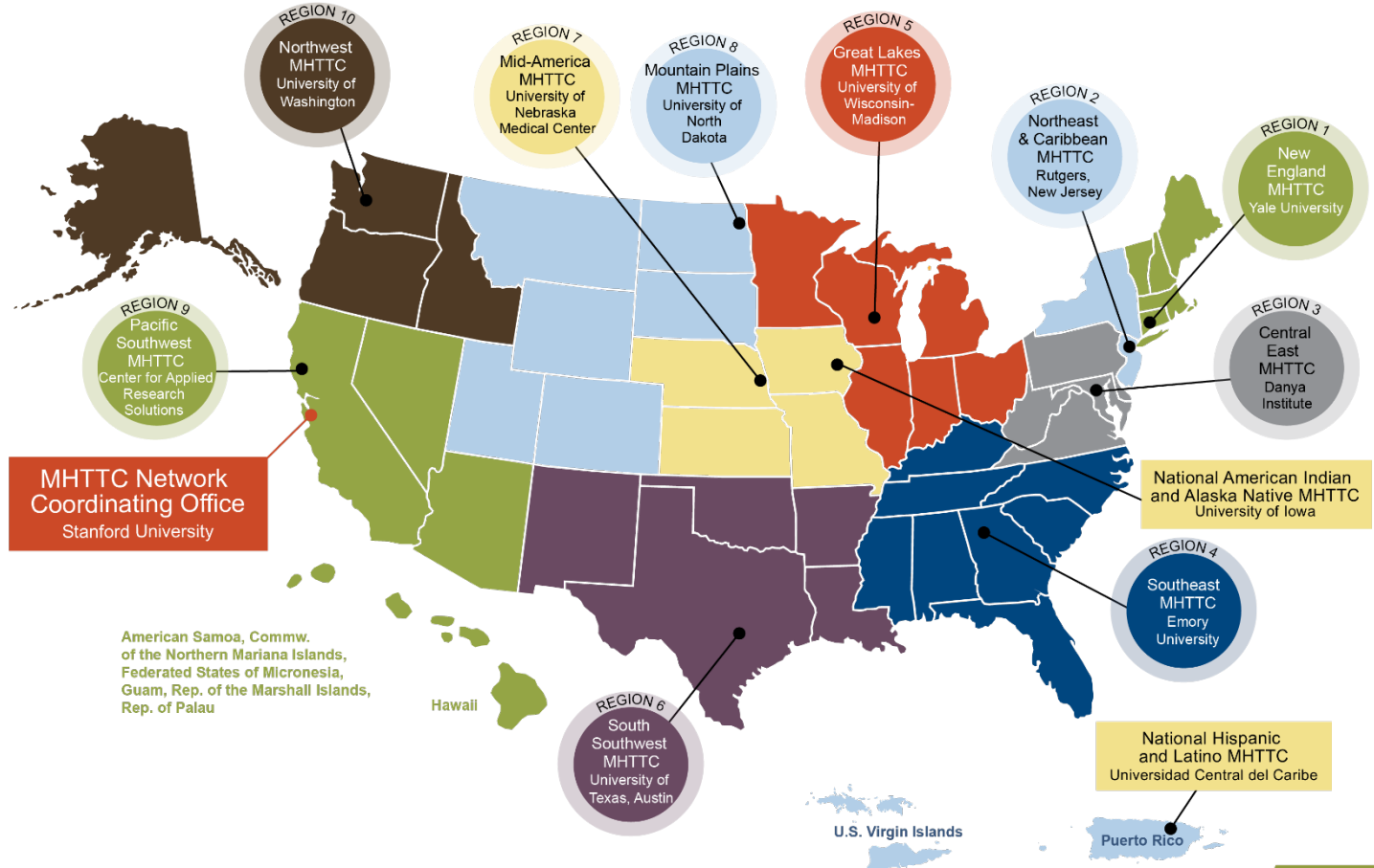


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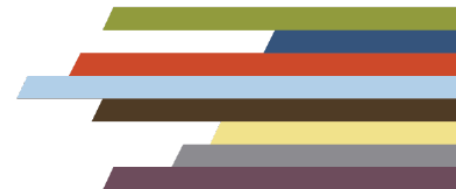


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MHTTC Purpose

The MHTTC Network vision is to unify science, education and service to transform lives through evidence-based and promising treatment and recovery practices in a recovery-oriented system of care.



Central East MHTTC Goals

Funded by SAMHSA to:

- **Accelerate** the adoption and implementation of mental health related evidence-based practices
- **Heighten** the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the behavioral health workforce
- **Foster** alliances among culturally diverse practitioners, researchers, policy makers, family members, and consumers
- **Ensure** the availability and delivery of publicly available, free of charge, training and technical assistance

Central East Region

HHS REGION 3

Delaware

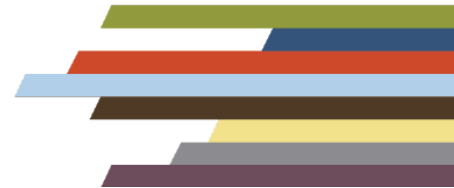
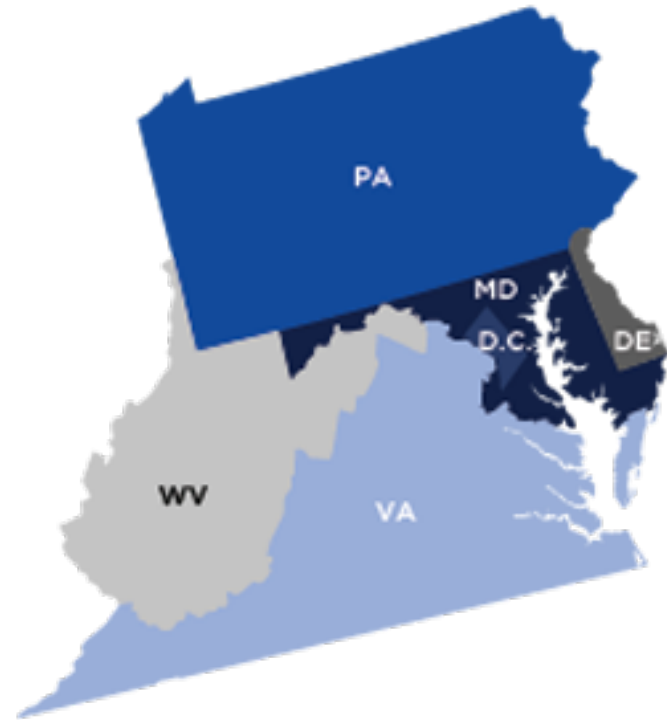
District of Columbia

Maryland

Pennsylvania

Virginia


West Virginia



Our Presenter: Rock Recovery



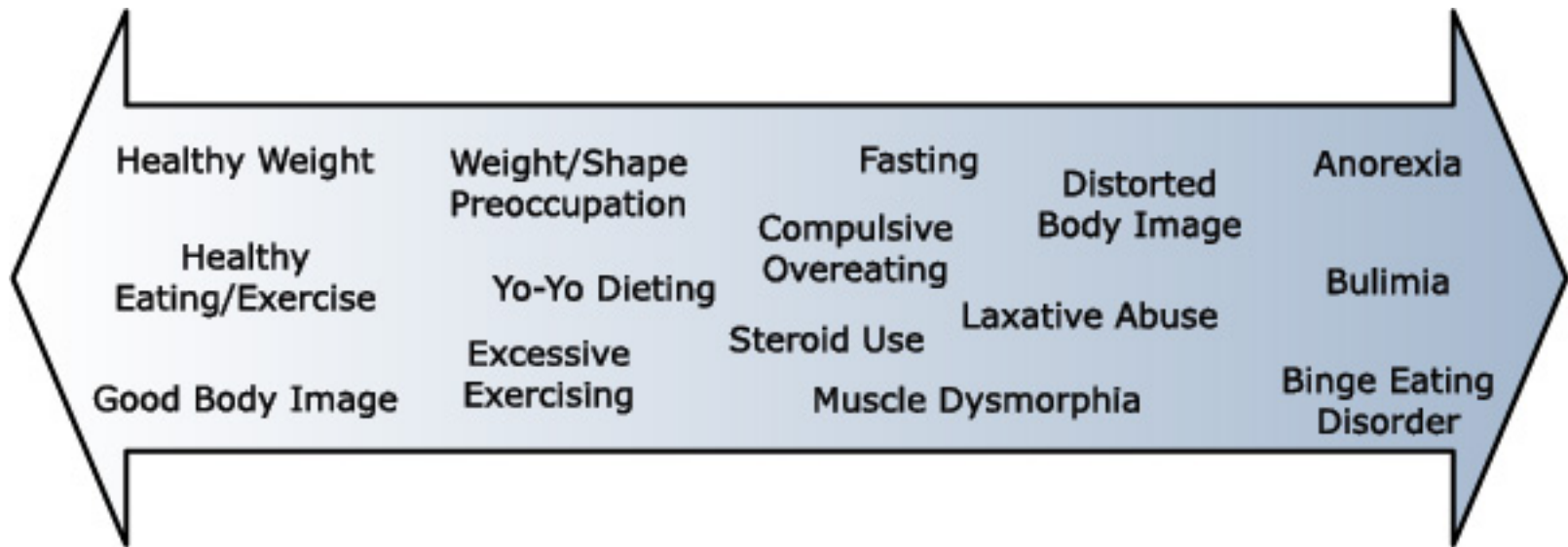
- Nonprofit organization founded in 2009 and based in Washington, DC metro
- Bridges gaps in eating disorder treatment and education to help individuals and communities fully recover
- Program offerings include outpatient clinical programs for residents of DC, MD, VA and CA and support programs nationwide
- Learn more: [Rock Recovery website](#)



“I have learned now that while those who speak about one's miseries usually hurt, those who keep silence hurt more.” - C.S. Lewis

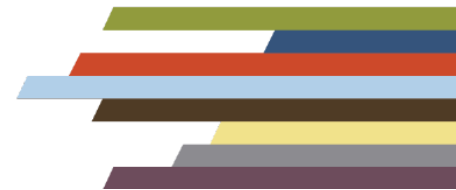
Let's dig into why faith communities need to talk about mental health and eating disorders...

Normal VS. Disordered Eating



[Source](#)

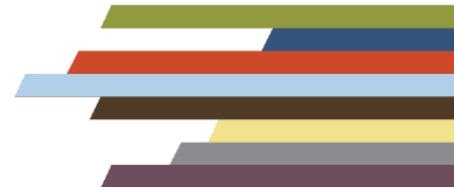
Accessed 1 February 2021.



Guilt, Shame & Eating Disorders

- Overview on prevalence and causes of eating disorders
- Difference between shame and guilt
- People with eating disorders feel like they are failing and unworthy
- Shame around how they are treating their bodies and feeling out of control
- Addictive patterns, dieting and maladaptive coping
- Diet culture vs. food as the “good girl drug”

[Hill, Natalie. “Four Ways Spirituality Can Help and Hinder Eating Disorder Recovery.” Walden Eating Disorders.](#)
Accessed 1 February 2021.





***“Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of,
but stigma and bias shame us all.”***

– Bill Clinton

Countering Guilt & Shame

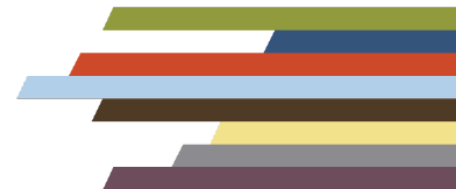
...with identity, worth, and value

- Questions of identity, worth, and value lie at the heart of disordered eating
- Faith communities are uniquely situated to address these questions—for good or ill



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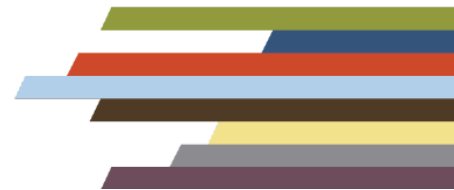
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Faith Communities & Recovery

How spirituality and faith communities can hinder recovery:

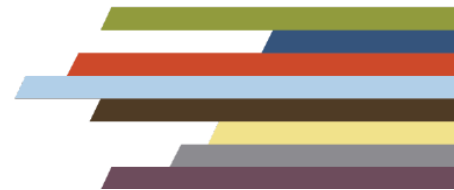
- Poor theology around bodies
- Abuse of religious practices
- Promoting diet culture
- Shame
- Stigma
- Spiritual abuse or control



Faith Communities & Recovery (cont.d)

- **49%** of pastors say they rarely or never speak to their congregation about mental illness.
- **59%** of churchgoers suffering from mental illness want their church to talk openly about mental illness.
- **65%** of churchgoing family members of those with mental illness want their church say the same.
- **53%** of churchgoers with mental illness say the church has been supportive.
- **76%** of churchgoers say suicide is a problem that needs to be addressed in their community.

["13 Stats on Mental Health and the Church." Lifeway Research, 1 May 2018](#)
Accessed 1 February 2021.





**What does true eating
disorder recovery look like?**

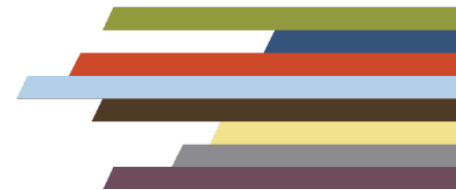
Foundations and Goals of Recovery

Foundations:

- Faith
- Experts
- Community

Goals:

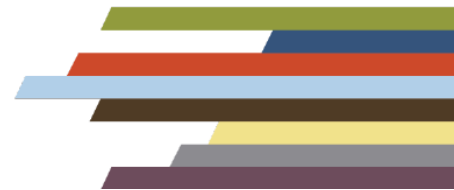
- Effective coping and intuitive eating
- Body acceptance
- Health identity



Faith Communities: Front Lines for the Hurting

Faith communities...

- are often the first point of contact for someone struggling
- serve as trusted source of referrals
- can encourage appropriate help and treatment
- can support family members
- can remove shame and stigma around mental health and struggles



How Faith Communities Can Help

What you offer:

- Community and connection
- Value and meaning
- Spiritual practices
- Lens of redemption
- Theology of the body

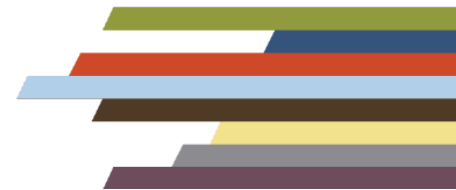
What you can do:

- Choose careful language in teaching/sermons
- Intentionally shape community gatherings around food
- Avoid weight loss challenges
- Choose language carefully



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Tools & Resources

National Eating Disorder Hotline: 1-800-931-2237

[Rock Recovery](#)

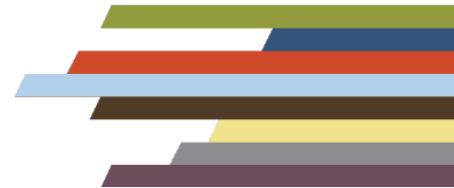
[The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness](#)

[Eating Disorder Hope](#)

[FINDINGbalance](#)

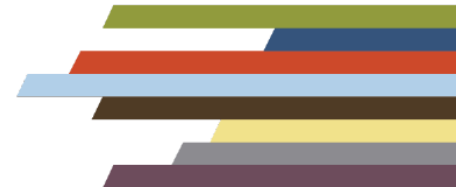
[hope4mentalhealth](#)

[National Eating Disorders Association](#)



References

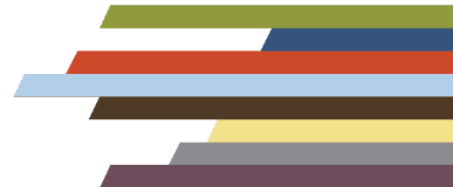
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Questions



Appreciation



Contact Us



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Funding for this presentation was made possible by SAMHSA grant no. 3H79SM081785. The views expressed by speakers and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of HHS; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

