

THE HEALING POWER

of Community

When I finally opened up
to the people in my
community who loved
and supported me
through my struggle,
I grew spiritually,
mentally, and
emotionally.

BRITTANY VIOLA GONZALEZ

2023 - 2024

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Contributing Editor: Christina Garrison





A WORD FROM TOVA Healing in Community

Tova Kreps, LCSW
Co-Founder & President of Wellspring Counseling

As we chose the theme of community for this magazine, my team asked me to reflect on how community has impacted me as Wellspring's leader.

I couldn't help but think about my mutually caring relationships with Stacy Morales and Kent Keller. I met Stacy, Kent, and my husband Israel, many years ago in a singles group at Key Biscayne Presbyterian Church under Steve Brown's leadership.

Stacy moved to Homestead as a teacher and within a few years started a bible study for her students, which grew into a ministry called KIX, a Youth for Christ ministry that serves at-risk youth in Homestead. They just celebrated their ministry's 30th year! My husband and I have been personal supporters of Stacy as a missionary for all these years, praying for and encouraging her as her ministry has faithfully changed the lives of hundreds of kids over a generation.

Wellspring's partnership with KIX has also been an ongoing mutual relationship (see page 21). As leaders, Stacy and I cross at community nonprofit events like those hosted by the National Christian Foundation. We have co-written grants for Wellspring to supply mental health services to her youth. KIX refers youth to our Bounce Trauma Program. Wellspring also provides counseling and training to her staff. This fall, Stacy's husband Omar joined the Wellspring board of directors, contributing wisdom and valuable feedback from his community that we serve.

Community relationships like mine with Stacy and her team help me not feel alone in ministry. They remind me of the successes over the years that we have had together and the ongoing mutuality of communities. Citali, a former KIX youth, is a shining example of encouragement for all of us. She had many tragedies in her childhood but landed in the loving arms of KIX. Wellspring's warm embrace added trauma therapy to her healing through Bounce

and individual counseling. Citali has now graduated from college and is thriving in her work. She has given back to KIX by serving in their ministry and to Wellspring by telling her recovery story through our podcasts and magazine.

Kent Keller is another example of a mutually supportive community relationship. Kent serves as the pastor of Kendall Presbyterian Church. Kendall Christian School ministered to my daughter as a student, during which time I served the school by helping with chapels. Wellspring has provided parenting training to KCS parents over the years. The church now supports the recovery of those who have suffered from human trafficking by sponsoring therapy for them through Wellspring (see page 15).

A good community is a safety net, woven with cords of mutual support.

You may think of counseling as a private activity, but coming to therapy usually happens within an encouraging community. Check out examples of that community in this magazine. Then, add your cords of support to our safety net by joining our community — as a participant, client, volunteer, donor, sponsor, prayer warrior, cheerleader — or in all of these roles.



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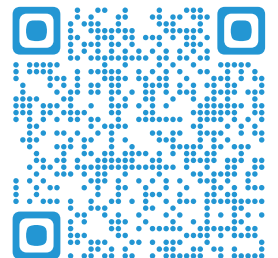


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DEVOTIONAL One Another

By **Christine L. Schlottman, LMHC**
Therapist & Co-founder at Wellspring Counseling

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love...” Philippians 2:1-2

When I became a follower of Jesus in college, I received a simultaneous calling to become a missionary. A year later, I studied in England. I often wondered: Would God send me back to Europe someday? Returning to the U.S., I met Eric, who was preparing to be a missionary in Ecuador. We got married and left together — for South America. I call it the “gran desvío” (Spanish for “great detour”) of my life! Since then, I’ve had many more “desvíos,” but, in retrospect, God was leading in all of them.

Initially, everything in Ecuador seemed new, intriguing, and exciting. However, before long I began to sink into depression. My world was turned upside down as I grappled with learning a new language, navigating a different culture, and trying to understand the simplest aspects of living. As a 26-year-old extrovert, I was speaking like a 3-year-old, and my world became very small. I experienced multiple losses, but perhaps the most significant was the loss of my identity. I no longer felt like the same person.

Negative life experiences can cause us to view ourselves, others, and even God differently. How does someone begin to establish or regain their identity after profound loss or trauma? The answers will be unique to each individual, but the importance of community for healing cannot be overestimated and is crucial in God’s design for His children.

Throughout my time in Ecuador, I was embraced by others despite my internal turmoil, shown grace when I made mistakes, and told not to worry, that even when my Spanish wasn’t perfect, I would speak the “language of the heart!” Sacrificial gifts were given to me when my babies were born, and my attempts at learning about the culture were

appreciated. This love carried me through. I began to regain confidence, and my faith was strengthened. It’s as if I was given a lifeline by my new friends. This opened doors for them to share their struggles; the relationships were mutually supportive. Our lives became interwoven and enriched; we overcame cultural barriers and differences.

One of the names of God is “Jehovah Rapha” (Exodus 15:26). Rapha means to heal, restore. God often chooses to use us to bring healing to others, as He did for me. Over 90 “one another” passages in Scripture emphasize how we are to show love, forgiveness, humility, respect, and more to one another. Our love for others is a reflection of His love for us. As we “one another” well, space is created for healing.



Christine L. Schlottman



BRITTANY'S STORY Seeing the Purpose

*A Journey of Resilience
and Renewal.*

*Interview with Brittany Viola Gonzalez
Olympian, Founder of Be Whole Project, LLC*

Born the year my father won the World Series; sport was what I was designed to do. I was 4 years old when I began gymnastics, and I got really good really fast. By age eight, I wanted to be an Olympian.

My childhood was spent in a high-paced Orlando gymnasium with a coach that pushed hard. I was International Elite — the highest level of gymnastics — by age 11, and my coach loved to exemplify me. I remember feeling overwhelming comfort and confusion at the same time when my coach stood me in front of my teammates and told them their bodies should look like mine. I was relieved that my body was used as the model, but how on earth could the other girls make their bodies look like mine? I felt uncomfortable.

I didn't know how to say what was happening at the gym, and I didn't know how to explain what was happening in my body. All I knew was that I felt stuck. So, I started pretending I was sick, wishing that red lights would never turn green, and wanting to get into a car accident rather than getting dropped off at the gym.

Eventually, I had to escape, so I quit. I gave up my dream at 13 years old. It wasn't until years after I left gymnastics that I realized the impact those years had on me.

A month or two after quitting, I was doing old gymnastics skills on a diving board when a coach invited me to join the diving team. I got connected to an Olympic coach in Orlando, and just like that, once again, I got really good really fast. I remember thinking, maybe I'll have a shot at my dream after all.

During this time of my life, our family moved to the other side of town. I switched sports, hit puberty, craved romance, and found myself eating to cope with all the changes. It started small, one bowl of cereal grew into two, and then

two grew into entire boxes. This was a problem because I needed to wear a bathing suit. So, I researched ways to counterbalance my binges. This is what started the binge-purge cycle.

When I was 15, I started seeing a nutritionist and a therapist. I was using food to fill something missing inside of me that I couldn't articulate; a sense of worth I couldn't feel. Soon after, USA Diving held trials for the 2004 Olympic team. Surprisingly, I came in second. But they only took first place. Thoughts like, I'm not good enough, no one wants me, I'm a failure, and I'll never amount to anything were relentlessly swirling around in my head as an alternate. Shame pushed me deeper into isolation and self-hatred. I lied to my nutritionist and therapist about my binges. I hid my struggles from my family. I even stole food from the restaurant I worked at. I felt defeated, confused, and stuck. I wanted to be chosen.



Brittany Viola Gonzalez

After graduating from high school, I took a year off from academics to see where I could take my diving. Midway through, two days before a major competition, I stayed up all night alone and ate until I couldn't move. To offset the binge, I didn't eat anything the next day. I had one of my worst performances. No one knew what I had done. I was embarrassed. I knew what I was capable of, but I had reached a breaking point. I needed more help. At age eighteen, I spent forty-five days in-patient at a clinic in Arizona where I received my first feelings chart, experienced a community of empathy and love in a way I never had before, and, best of all, accepted Jesus into my life. To say the least, it was completely life changing.

After the clinic, I started school at the University of Miami as a student-athlete. I continued seeing a nutritionist, therapist, and eventually psychiatrist, because the destructive behaviors did not just disappear. Later, a teammate invited me into a safe and loving church community. Over time, I noticed that my binges were smaller, I was being honest faster, and I was seeing improvements.

This same teammate introduced me to a mentor through Athletes in Action. I overheard my mentor talking to someone about EMDR; a therapy practice we can do when our brains aren't letting our bodies do something we need them to do. At the time, I was having trouble grabbing my hands on my ten-meter dives. It's a small action, but it made the difference between a semi-finalist and a medalist in an international competition. Something inside of me wondered if EMDR would be what I needed to make that difference.

Through therapy at Wellspring, I began doing EMDR once or twice a week for a year and a half, and I could feel God at work. One day, a memory surfaced of slipping off the gymnastics balance beam, breaking four metatarsals in my foot, and being told to go home without the injury being acknowledged. In that memory, as a little girl, I felt that I was worthless if I disappointed my coach. Through EMDR, I was able to say to my younger self, "You were a little girl who needed help and comfort because you were seriously hurt. You did not deserve to be treated the way you were. You matter not for what you do, but who you are. God is with you now, and He was with you then, even when you didn't know Him." In time, with God's presence and power, my thought patterns changed.

Counseling was regularly uncomfortable for me. It was hard work, but I knew it was worth it. Sports had taught me that getting better is a painful process, but it has purpose. Eventually, I was blessed to see the purpose! Each week, my perspectives were shifting. I was seeing results, on the inside and the outside. Shockingly, I started grabbing my hands at the pool. In my third go-around at the Olympic trials, I won first place. I qualified to represent the United

States in the 2012 London Olympics. With a lot of love and support, I fulfilled my dream.

After consistent therapy, quality time with loved ones, and immeasurable help from God, I've come to realize that community has been one of the most essential tools in my healing process. When we remain alone and isolated, it is easier to keep our struggles a secret. When we keep our struggles a secret, that is when we are stuck in a despairing cycle of internal suffering. When I finally opened up to the people in my community who loved and supported me through my struggle, I grew spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

Now, using the healing tools I've learned over the years, I get to spread the importance of community. Two years ago, God woke me up in the middle of the night to create Ferret Flush®: a laugh-a-lot card game and tool for your



The Gonzalez Family
Anthony, Brittany, Micah, Kyla and Daniel

emotional well-being. The game teaches you to normalize the interplay between thoughts, feelings, and actions, expand your emotional vocabulary, discover yourself and those around you, and laugh while deepening community. With this goal in our minds and on our hearts, my husband, Anthony, and I founded Be Whole Project, LLC: a company inspiring leaders with creative tools and experiences to grow healthy and whole. We're committed to seeing thriving relationships in every person, home, and community.

Healing is an ongoing process because relationships are an ongoing process. I have resolved to do this spiritual, mental, and emotional work for the rest of my life! Each day I am continually thankful for the people who help me grow and flourish. And I'm honored to help others do the same. I don't have to do it alone. And, neither do you.

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COUNSELING DECODED

Empowering Minds, to transform Communities

By Monica Snyder, LMFT

Clinical Director at Wellspring Counseling



When you hear the word counseling, what comes to mind? Perhaps health or wellness? Maybe trauma or sitting across the room from someone while sharing your life story? Do these ideas bring you feelings of relief or fear? I am excited to share with you today what you can expect when you come to Wellspring Counseling and how therapy can help you. I will share about the types of counseling services we offer at Wellspring, and we will also look at some of the major approaches that our therapists use.

What is Counseling?

The American Counseling Association defines professional counseling as, "a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals." At Wellspring Counseling, our focus is on improving the mental health of our clients, no matter their starting point. We strive to enhance their well-being and empower them to navigate life's twists and turns more confidently. Clients come to us for various reasons, from dealing with trauma to seeking support for managing symptoms tied to depression, anxiety, ADHD, Bipolar disorder, and more. Yet, counseling isn't just about addressing challenges – it's also a space to hone skills in areas like parenting and communication, or to proactively boost wellness through preventive strategies.

Counseling is not a paid-for best friend. When someone comes for therapy, our goal is to identify areas of their life in which they want to achieve growth. The goal here is to make progress and achieve specific milestones, adapting to new goals as they come up. Counseling isn't meant to be a forever thing —we're working toward our clients feeling empowered to move forward on their own.

Week by week, our therapists help clients navigate towards their healing goals as they share their stories. Counseling isn't just about processing past traumas; it's also a tool for

preventive work. People often seek to enhance existing skills or address skill gaps, aiming to expand their emotional toolkit. Whether facing relational challenges or pursuing personal growth, counseling offers a space for self-awareness and overall wellness.

What are Counseling Modalities?

Counseling modalities are different approaches a therapist may take to address the problems a client brings. Wellspring therapists are trained in different modalities that they can choose to use based on the client's individual needs. Here is a quick look at a few of the major modalities used by our team. Note that this list isn't exhaustive but provides a brief glimpse into some of our counseling modalities.

EMDR

Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) is an evidence-based psychotherapy that uses eye movements or bilateral tapping to process and heal trauma or distressing life experiences. When a clinician comes from an EMDR perspective, they see current experiences/symptoms as part of a chain of events that have not been dealt with effectively. Because these experiences haven't been processed and stored in the brain correctly, the client might be struggling with symptoms that bring discomfort or pain into their everyday life and relationships.

When a client undergoes EMDR, their counselor collects a history of pertinent experiences and assists them in enhancing internal and external resources. This helps the client feel secure and stay present when revisiting --not reliving-- the experience. The bilateral processing of choice is then used to reprocess the memory. Once the memory is reprocessed and correctly stored in the brain, the client can grasp the truth about their current experience and start engaging in healthier interactions with those around them.

DBT

Dialectic Behavior Therapy (DBT) is an evidence-based psychotherapy that focuses on helping people live in the moment, regulate emotions, develop skills for coping with stress, and improve interpersonal relationships. DBT therapists focus on identifying emotional skills that may be lacking in their clients' day-to-day life within each of these four areas. Therapists then work with them to help build these essential skills. DBT can also process negative life events or traumas as needed.



CBT

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is an evidenced-based psychotherapy that explores the connection between thinking patterns, emotions, and resulting behaviors. It aims to pinpoint negative thinking patterns and replace them with healthier alternatives. Like DBT, CBT can address negative life events or traumas as necessary.

What can a client expect?

If you're considering counseling, your experience at Wellspring is important to us. Clients over 18, can reach our front office by calling or filling out an online interest form. For clients under 18, a parent or legal guardian can set up their first appointment. Our front office is equipped to match people with the most suitable clinician based on specialties and types of therapy requested.

Once we find the right therapist for our client, our front office will schedule an initial appointment. The new client can expect a welcoming email with instructions on completing the intake paperwork and the location details for their session. It's recommended to ensure the paperwork is filled out beforehand to save time on the day of the appointment!

For their first session, clients are encouraged to arrive a few minutes early if in person, and enjoy some water, tea, or coffee. If it's an online session, they should log in from a private location. The therapist will promptly meet the client in the waiting room or online once they finish their previous session. During the appointment, the therapist will introduce themselves, discuss essential policies, and dedicate the time to understanding the client and assisting them in setting goals. Ideally, therapy sessions occur weekly, but frequency can be adjusted to meet the client's needs.

Counseling and Programs

Engaging with Wellspring can be done in layers. The basic service offered is counseling, which can take the form of individual, family, or couples counseling. Wellspring has several programs that can complement a client's counseling journey on a deeper level and potentially cut down the time spent in traditional therapy. Each of these programs can be engaged in as a stand-alone experience or alongside weekly counseling.

Bounce and Restore

Our intensive programs for both adults and youth — Bounce and Restore — are tailored for those who have faced challenging or traumatic life events. Bounce runs as an extended after-school program in the spring and occasionally during fall, as well as a weeklong format in the summer. Similarly, Restore, a weeklong intensive, is offered several times a year. With the addition of group feedback, teaching, and experiential therapies, these programs are designed to help participants achieve deeper results more quickly. They are especially beneficial when the thought of unpacking negative emotions on a weekly basis feels overwhelming.

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)

EAP sessions help clients get a deeper insight into their understanding of relationships, boundaries, and trust. Working with horses provides an opportunity for profound work and insight, and new behaviors can be developed quickly. Used alongside individual therapy, clients can take insights learned in session and practice them with the horses, adding yet more skills to apply to their daily lives.

Groups

Groups offer a powerful sense of connection, showing clients they're not alone in their experiences. In these settings, participants learn from each other. It's a cost-effective way for people to delve deeper into their personal journeys. Clients don't have to join a group for the same reason they're seeking individual counseling. For example, one might address depression one-on-one while participating in a parenting group to enhance positive engagement skills with their kids.

Intensives

Sometimes group work in Bounce or Restore is not the right fit or maybe the timing doesn't work. Wellspring offers an individual intensive format of therapy, typically 2-5 days in a row for several hours a day. This format can be convenient for youth or adults who need to feel better more quickly, are coming in from out of town, or who need to accommodate a complicated schedule. Intensives save time spent in the starting and stopping process of weekly therapy sessions and can jump-start a client into engaging in therapy and seeing change quickly. Intensives are great when a person finds it hard to think about "peeling off the bandage each week."

Annual Check-Up

Just as it is wise to go to the doctor to check on your health each year, so it is wise to periodically assess your mental health. The Annual Check-Up includes several mental health assessments, self-reflective assignments, and a two-hour consultation with a professional therapist. This feedback time provides an overview of one's mental and emotional welfare with suggestions for next steps with Wellspring or elsewhere if applicable. If done annually, it can become an opportunity for clients to celebrate their past growth and successes and to set new goals for the future.

Why Would Someone Seek Counseling?

One reason for seeking therapy is to relieve ourselves from the baggage of our past. Whether we carry a small backpack, a roll-on suitcase, several duffel bags, or a whole set of luggage, our baggage can hinder us from engaging in healthy ways with others. Unresolved negative life events can make us react without thinking, triggered by things as seemingly innocuous as the tone of someone's voice, a smell, or the time of day.

The renowned psychiatrist Bruce Perry describes the brain as having four main parts: the brainstem, diencephalon, limbic, and cortex. The brainstem keeps us alive, managing vital functions like heartbeat and breath. It also triggers survival responses like fight, flight, freeze, and fawn. The diencephalon oversees sleep, appetite, and arousal. The limbic is all about relationships, and the cortex handles our cognitive thinking skills.

When negative life events happen, they are stored in our minds along with the original thoughts, emotions, and sensations from that moment. Discussing the event with trusted listeners and getting a good night's sleep can help our brains sort and store the information properly. However, if the event is overwhelming, if we couldn't share it with someone we trust, and had restless sleep, the information

may be stored in a maladaptive way.

Even with loved ones, simple things like a smell or a sound can trigger our past responses—flight, fight, freeze, or fawn — often without us realizing it. This disproportionate reaction can harm relationships in various areas of life like friendships, marriage, parenting, church, and general community. The good news? We don't have to settle for broken connections. Seeking counseling helps process past experiences, enabling healthier choices in present and future stressful situations.

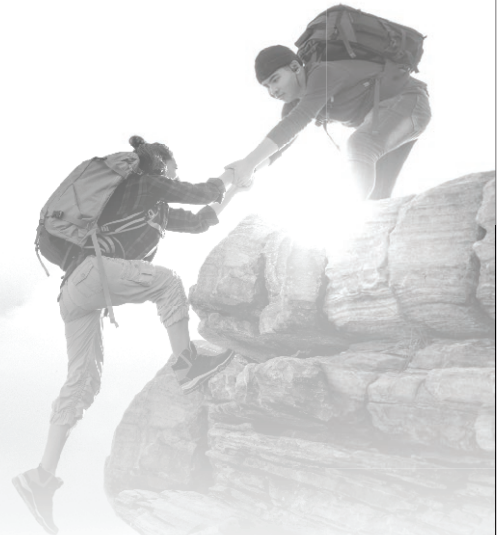
Another reason to seek counseling is to improve our relationships. Some of us lack the skills for healthy relationships—either because we have not been taught them, or what we learned is no longer working. Counseling provides a space to learn emotional regulation, improve communication, set boundaries, and engage with others more productively.

In other instances, a person may seek counseling because they struggle with sadness/depression, worry/anxiety, ADHD, grief and loss, mood disorders, and so on. There is no shame in seeking counseling, and we see those who choose counseling as the brave ones! They step out of their uncomfortable, yet familiar negative symptoms or unhealthy relationships and risk changing for the better. Often, long-standing behaviors are hard patterns to break without expert help. For example, unresolved grief or depression might make a person hesitant to seek community, feeling shame or not wanting to burden others, or ongoing struggles with ADHD may seem hopeless to change, but professional help is available to encourage its seekers that change is possible.

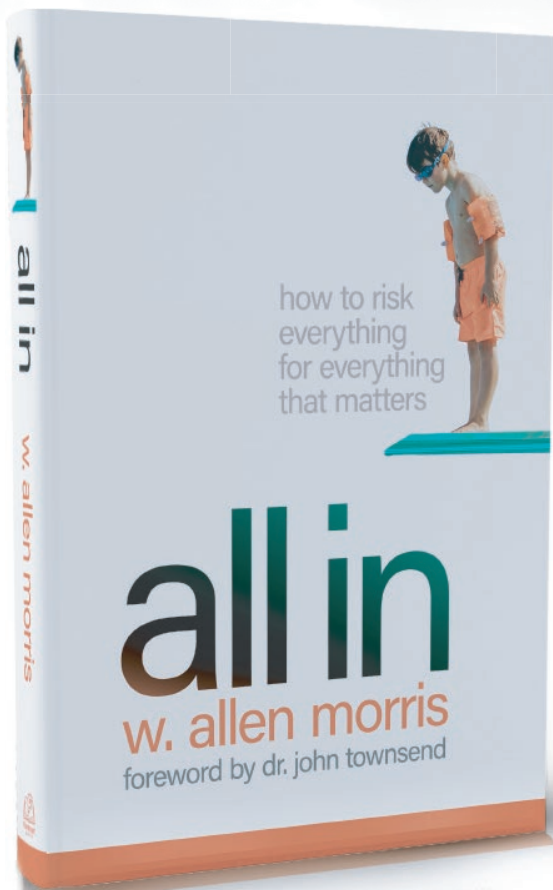
We hope this article has cleared up some myths and illuminated how counseling can enhance our ability to engage in healthy ways in the communities to which we are called!



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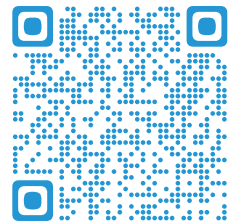
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MRG takes pride in being part of the Wellspring Counseling community, where our company's core mission aligns seamlessly with theirs.

Our commitment is driven by a profound passion to support their programs funding mental health for youth, especially those navigating major trauma and facing financial barriers. Looking ahead, we eagerly anticipate contributing ongoing value to Wellspring's members for years to come.



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ONE HEART AT A TIME

Finding Hope After Trafficking

*Interview with Betty Lara, Executive Director of Glory House
and Kent Keller, Senior Pastor of Kendall Presbyterian Church*

Florida stands out as the sole U.S. state **with two of the nation's top five cities for reported human trafficking incidents — Orlando and Miami.** In recognition of this sad reality, Glory House of Miami was established in 2011, emerging from the vision that God had a purpose to “Reach, Rescue, and Restore” survivors of human trafficking in South Florida. What started with referrals from the State Attorney’s office, police department, NGOs, and government agencies to provide support for survivors, eventually turned into a full-time safehouse for adult women to find a new kind of hope and a new kind of life.

Glory House is committed to helping survivors find true freedom through the hope of Christ. Offering a holistic and multi-faceted approach to recovery, Glory House understands healing is a complex journey that takes a community to foster. Together, with the help of numerous volunteers and donors, Glory House offers survivors healthcare, legal support, job training, and various other vital services they may need. The organization’s programs are designed to reach, rescue, and restore survivors by helping them heal their minds, bodies, and spirits — giving them a chance to embrace and create a new identity. The hope is to empower survivors to reclaim their lives from the shadows of their past, providing them with a chance to discover light in the midst of darkness.

The leadership at Glory House understands that mental health is essential to the healing journey. To promote emotional well-being within the Glory House community, every individual who becomes a part of the organization is given the opportunity to access mental health services. Survivors and staff members can work with health care professionals to be trained in trauma care and/or receive trauma therapy. Throughout the years, Glory House and Wellspring have partnered in this capacity, delivering mental health resources and assistance to empower both caregivers and survivors of trafficking.

After speaking with Betty Lara, Executive Director of Glory House, we were able to receive some helpful insight into the essential role of community within the specific scope of human trafficking:

“People in general tend to wonder, ‘What can I do?’ when it comes to this issue. However, there are a lot of nonprofits devoted to the cause with tons of opportunities for volunteering. Whether you’re going through trauma training to become part of the rescue outreach, offering your time for administrative work, or just making a monthly donation, your impact helps change the life of a survivor. Even if you have a special skill or service that you can offer pro-bono, you can make a huge difference in a survivor’s life. There are so many different services that human trafficking survivors need once they exit the lifestyle. Medical, dental, educational — the needs are endless, and your gifts can be tools for healing!”

We also asked Betty to speak about what she believes the Church’s role should look like in partnering with the community to end human trafficking:

“Well, first, I’d like to say that church support has helped Glory House become what it is today. I believe Jesus is the hope for these women, and that the Church is the place where Jesus shines the brightest. However, I would love to see a lot more churches joining the cause to end human trafficking. If every church sponsored a survivor by donating \$25 - \$100 each month, it would have an enormous ripple effect. I believe the Church needs to be a place that not only provides spiritual assistance, but also offers mental health support to those in need. The responsibility of the Church is to guide families and individuals through adversity to break the cycle of evil-doing in their lives.”

To talk a bit more about the Church’s role in ending human trafficking, we spoke to Kendall Presbyterian Church’s senior

pastor, Kent Keller, who is passionate about supporting human trafficking survivors in our community:

“At Kendall Presbyterian Church, we believe that all human life is sacred — that every human being on the planet deserves to be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. We think our efforts to support human trafficking survivors are perfectly consistent with this belief. Scripture says that God’s chosen instrument in the world is the Church, and part of our role, along with proclaiming the good news of God’s love for lost and broken people made manifest in Jesus Christ, is to bring peace and healing to our community. That is part of what KPC hopes to do.

The message of the Gospel itself is one of liberation and freedom. The terrible fact is that many of God’s image-bearers are not free: 40-50 million people are in slavery today — more than at any other time in human history. But even in the face of such enormous suffering, evil and injustice, I can be involved as an agent of God’s divine justice. Once people are out of the lifestyle, the recovery is a lengthy process — one that I believe the Church needs to be involved in.

At first, my vision was to help get one person out of human trafficking. We’ve been able to do that through supporting the International Justice Mission and collaborating with Wellspring and Glory House. Last year, we initiated a fundraising campaign to provide trauma therapy for one survivor. This year, we continue our mission to support another individual on her path to healing. We are committed to extending our assistance to more people and increasing awareness about the pressing issue of trafficking. Within our church and school, we’ve held multiple gatherings designed to educate both children and parents about the realities of human trafficking. As we continue our fundraising and awareness efforts as a church, my heartfelt prayer is that others will follow our passion to care for our community.”

In 2020, right before COVID hit, Glory House had to close Miami’s first residential safe home for human trafficking survivors. Today, they continue to do God’s good work with the hope of providing a safe home again in the very near future. Glory House has launched a capital campaign to provide a safe space for survivors. Many of them don’t know what it’s like to experience a loving family or community, and Glory House wants to give them exactly that. When provided with a home in a safe community, survivors can be gifted the ability to experience love and care in a brand-new way. As Wellspring partners with Glory House and Kendall Presbyterian Church today, we hope that we can help survivors know they are loved, they are not alone, and there is hope for them on the other side of trauma — in our community.

I believe The Church needs to be a place that not only provides spiritual assistance but also offers mental health support to those in need.



Betty Lara
Executive Director
Glory House

Scripture says that God’s chosen instrument in the world is the Church, and part of our role, [...] is to bring peace and healing to our community. That is part of what KPC hopes to do.



Kent Keller
Senior Pastor
KPC



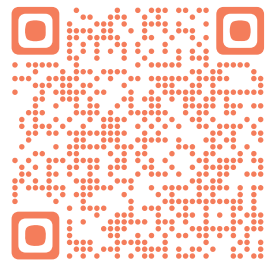
RESTORE

Resilience Retreat

Restore Retreat is a 4-day intensive retreat to help you recover from a negative event which continues to affect your life.



Embrace Resilience



The retreat includes resilience training, small-group and individual therapy with our counselors, and experiential therapies, all in a safe welcoming setting.



A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark red button-down shirt, is sitting on a light-colored couch. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. To his left is a large green plant. To his right is a black couch with a patterned pillow. The background is a wall with horizontal wooden planks.

TRANSFORMING THE PIECES

Building Resilience amidst Homelessness

**Interview with Juan Martinez, LMFT
Therapist at Wellspring Counseling**

Meet Juan Martinez, a remarkable therapist at Wellspring, whose passion lies in using his gifts to uplift and serve his community. After graduating from the University of Nova, Juan's counseling has provided healing to many in our community. While his focus is on individual, family, and couples therapy within Wellspring's walls, Juan also possesses a compassionate heart for extending his services to communities beyond our immediate reach.

To get to know a little bit more about Juan's heart for mental health in his community, we asked him to tell us more about how he got started as a therapist:

"I've grown into loving what I do. To be honest, counseling was not my initial choice of career, but it became something greater than I expected – a path that God led me to. Over the past few years, I've learned to understand the importance of mental health, and I've seen the real work that can be done in God's hands. Therapy brings so much wellness to individuals, couples, and families, and I'm blessed to be a part of it!"

In addition to serving families and couples, Juan is also very involved with providing counseling services to the homeless population at the First Baptist Church of Islamorada. We asked him to tell us more about his work there:

"The First Baptist Church of Islamorada has created a meaningful strategy to connect with the homeless community in the area, meeting them right where they are in life. Their approach involves a combination of services, including clothing and food distribution, faith-based support groups, and mental health services. In my role, I work with a diverse population, primarily adults and the elderly, providing mental health care for those struggling with issues such as grief, loss, depression, anxiety, trauma, and relationship conflicts.

As a clinician, one of the main hurdles I encounter in my work with adults is dealing with firmly rooted thought patterns that often come with age, and may be challenging to change. My role is all about helping adults reshape their internal dialogues, steering away from behaviors that don't serve them well. It's truly amazing when my clients and I can team up to bring about positive, impactful life changes together."

We asked Juan to tell us more about his work with Chapman Partnership, an organization that provides comprehensive programs and services to empower individuals and families struggling with homelessness:

"This year, Wellspring mobilized a team of dedicated therapists to support the unhoused community at Chapman Partnership. Just like my work at the First Baptist Church of Islamorada, my focus there is mainly on adults and the elderly. In this community, housed in a shared shelter, everyone is dealing with similar life circumstances. Yet, beyond the shared experiences, the range of mental health needs varies widely. From minor stressors to more complex psychiatric disorders, each person requires personalized care. I encounter individuals dealing with intense psychosis symptoms, needing focused medical attention, while others are experiencing grief and loss and benefit from less intensive support. It's crucial to treat mental health like any other aspect of the body—recognizing that each person has a unique approach to healing.

I often tell those I work with that the grief and loss isn't limited to losing a loved one. Loss can take various forms — a job, a relationship, or a home — and it's perfectly natural to experience grief in these situations. Depression and anxiety also often come from the trauma experienced in these circumstances. I'm thankful that the Chapman Partnership provides a safe community free from environments that lead to substance abuse, dysfunctional relationships, and poor decision making.

Through our collaboration with the Chapman Partnership, we at Wellspring can help those struggling with trauma (from lack of stability or homelessness) experience true healing. I'm genuinely grateful to be working side by side with our amazing team of therapists who are doing an exceptional job. Together, we're making a positive difference, and it's truly rewarding."

For some final thoughts on Wellspring's partnerships, we asked Juan to tell us about why community is essential to what we do:

"It's so important to build partnerships like the ones we have with the First Baptist Church of Islamorada and Chapman Partnership because these relationships allow us to connect with communities we would otherwise not be able to reach. Community is essential because people need others to believe in them and hold onto the hope that positive change is possible."

To wrap things up, we asked Juan for any last words of encouragement to those who work in the mental health healing community:

"I want to encourage clinicians: we're not in this alone — God is working through us and in us! What really helps me bring my best to my work is when I set aside time to pray for my clients and ask God for guidance in my sessions. Life is not just about what meets the eye; there's a whole spiritual dimension we can't overlook. As mental care providers, acknowledging that we are tending to individuals with souls allows us to welcome the Holy Spirit into our work. My appreciation for Wellspring runs deep because it stands at the intersection of spiritual, medical, and emotional care. As therapists, we help transform the pieces to bring holistic healing. I believe it's the most effective approach to take!"



FIRST BAPTIST ISLAMORADA

By Steve Olsen

Director of the Community Ministry

The Community Ministry at First Baptist Islamorada recognized this need in the community we serve and began offering counseling in 2022.

The counseling services offered through our partnership with Wellspring have had a significant impact on those who

have undergone treatment helping them to appropriately process and "heal" from their trauma. As a result, we have seen multiple individuals recover from depression caused by their trauma, adopt healthy coping skills and even a few that have overcome their dependence on the substances that they used to numb the pain they were feeling.

The Community Ministry at First Baptist Islamorada is grateful for the support provided by the Ocean Reef Community Foundation as without their help, we would be unable to help so many that are in need.



CHAPMAN PARTNERSHIP

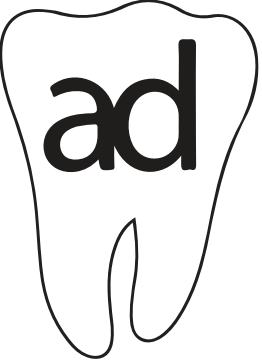
By Emilio Vento

Vice President of Professional Services

Chapman Partnership manages two Homeless Assistance Centers located in Miami and Homestead. Our residents work together with case managers to create a comprehensive personalized plan, guiding them throughout their journey with us. With fully equipped medical and dental clinics, family dorms, cafeterias, classrooms, Wi-Fi, day-care, basketball courts, and even a dog kennel – we help provide all the resources needed for motivated residents to become self-sufficient.

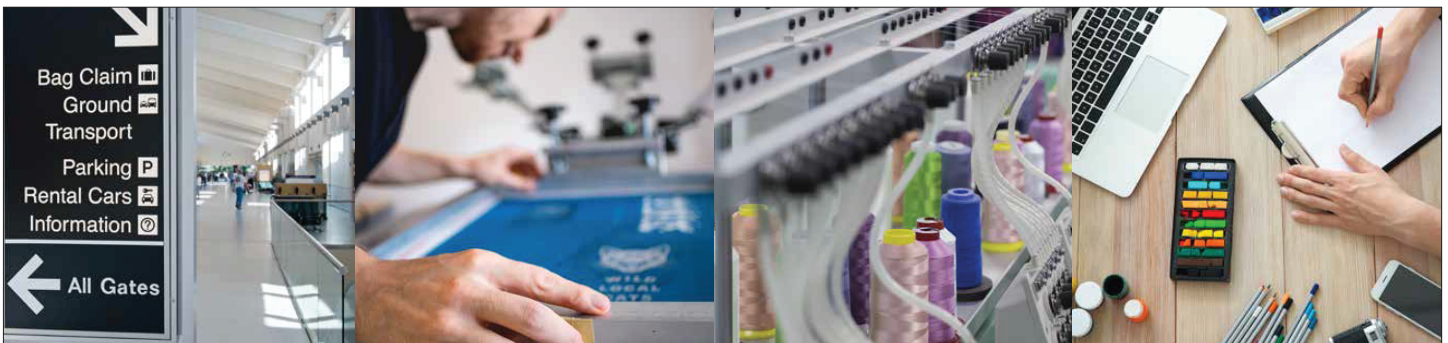
We partnered with Wellspring Counseling this past year to provide individual, family, and group therapy to Chapman clients. To date, there have been more than 250 therapeutic sessions conducted. The feedback that I have received from both clients and staff members has been extremely positive. Wellspring therapists have been able to build rapport with our clients and provide them with a safe space to talk about their most difficult thoughts and feelings.

The Wellspring Team has also been very receptive to our needs as an organization and the population that we serve. I strongly recommend the therapeutic services that Wellspring Counseling provides without any hesitation. They have a strong team of Therapists with specialized training and skills in many areas of need in our community.

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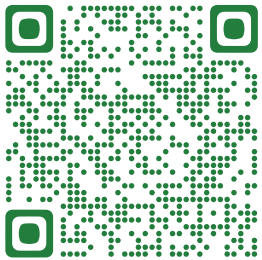
Bounce!

Every Child
deserves **to**
bounce back!

Bounce Intensive
1-week (Group)

Bounce Extended
7-week After-School (Group)

Bounce Individual
All year long (1 person)



Bounce!

is a Wellspring Program
to help relieve and prevent
emotional suffering in youth,
and to promote post-traumatic
growth in the lives of traumatized
children and their families.



Bounce is funded by a Miami-Dade County Grant
and is free for youth living in Miami-Dade.





HOLY SPACES FOR HEALING

*Empowering Youth
through the Love of Jesus*

*Interview with Johanna Ralsten-Cox
Former Ministries Director of Youth for Christ*

For 75 years, Youth for Christ has upheld the mission to assist children in our community in discovering their potential and purpose through a relationship with Jesus. As a Ministries Director, I embrace this mission wholeheartedly!

Although most kids we work with at Miami YFC are not Christians, our hope is that they will experience the heart of Jesus through the solid community we have created and that they will grow and flourish in this same love. Whether in schools, detention centers, low-income neighborhoods, after-school clubs, lunch clubs, or homework centers, Miami YFC uses any vehicle to teach kids about Jesus' love while removing any barriers that may stand in their way.

To live out our mission, we empower children to become valuable members of their communities, equipping them in five essential dimensions: social, physical, intellectual, emotional, and, most significantly, spiritual—much like the five fingers on a hand. Socially, we guide them in developing positive social skills through interactions with their peers. Physically, we foster their growth by educating them about cultivating healthy habits such as getting enough sleep, maintaining a nourishing diet, staying active, and steering clear of harmful substances like drugs and alcohol. When it comes to intellectual development, we emphasize the importance of exercising and expanding their minds through real-world perspectives and practical applications. In the realm of emotional growth, we help them recognize and manage their emotions effectively. Lastly, we nurture spiritual growth by imparting the understanding that faith is like the thumb—the most critical part of the hand. It serves as an anchor, offering purpose and stability, even when things seem to fall apart.

As our children mature into responsible members of society, our goal is to establish connections with a range of local communities. For instance, we encourage children to engage with their local church, offering them the chance

to experience a diverse and supportive community beyond their usual school, neighborhood, or peer group. When children have the opportunity to explore a community that differs from their everyday environment, they can appreciate the value of having a wide array of individuals who support and pray for them. While it can sometimes be challenging to motivate children to engage with the church, we've found that when they have a connection, they are more inclined to participate, and we are honored to be that bridge for them!

Another vital community connection we take pride in fostering for our children is the one we share with Wellspring. When I initially joined Miami YFC, I encountered many children carrying significant life traumas that hindered their personal growth and their ability to become valuable community members. Fortunately, Wellspring was there to provide the support they needed to face their traumas and build resilience. During that time, Wellspring's Bounce camp, a program dedicated to trauma healing for children, had just been launched, and I witnessed firsthand its transformative potential in the realm of community healing. Initially, many of our girls participated in the program and found it immensely beneficial, but persuading the boys to join proved more challenging, as emotions weren't always deemed "cool" for them.

I vividly recall a young boy who had lost his mother at the age of seven. Initially reluctant to engage with the program, his mentor eventually convinced him to give it a try. Subsequently, he became one of the most enthusiastic advocates for the Bounce camp, encouraging other boys to participate. It's in those moments when I really see how community relationships will always trump rules, biases and stigmas. This underscores the pivotal role of community ambassadors who, through their small gestures, can break down big barriers.



Johanna Ralsten-Cox

As a culture, my hope is that we can continue to serve our youth by giving them the gift of our undivided attention. When kids are in the middle and high school stages of life, developmentally, they are pushing away from their family community to establish their own identity. During that

process, they need various other communities to come alongside them and help them discover who they truly are. For parents, it can be challenging to listen to their children, especially when it feels like nothing they say seems to help. Nonetheless, when parents offer their kids undivided attention, they not only emphasize the significance of being attentive but also provide a platform for their children to experience being heard. This is a characteristic of a strong and supportive community!

When we feel listened to, we are more comfortable to speak. When we are more comfortable to share, we are better able to take the next step towards healing — whatever and from whomever that may be. Until kids know how to give and receive love from themselves and the people right in front of them, it will be harder for them to give and receive love from a higher power. When we create spaces for kids to feel like they belong, we are creating holy spaces for healing.

I pray as we serve the kids in our community today, we remember that God gave us each other as a gift, and that every pair of hands helping us along the way belong to Him.

Quotes from Miami YFC Bounce Camp Alumni

“BOUNCE CAMP WAS HARD AND AMAZING AT THE SAME TIME. BECAUSE I NEVER REALLY TALKED THROUGH WHAT HAPPENED TO ME DURING THE EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI, IT GAVE ME A CHANCE TO TAP INTO THAT TRAUMA WHICH I NEVER KNEW AFFECTED ME THAT MUCH. IN HAITIAN CULTURE WE DON'T PRIORITIZE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, SO BOUNCE CAMP HELPED ME PRIORITIZE THOSE THINGS. I AM PROUD OF MYSELF FOR BEING ABLE TO BOUNCE BACK FROM THAT TERRIBLE MOMENT IN MY LIFE AND USE THE SAME THINGS BOUNCE CAMP TAUGHT ME IN OTHER AREAS OF MY LIFE. NOW, I USE ART AS A WAY TO RELEASE STRESS OR JUST PUT MY MIND AT EASE.”

“I REALLY ENJOYED THE HORSES AND GROUP TIME AT BOUNCE CAMP. I ALSO ENJOYED GETTING TO KNOW OTHER PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES TO LET ME KNOW I'M NOT ALONE. I WOULD SAY IT ALLOWED ME TO HAVE AN OPEN MIND ABOUT THERAPY, AND I AM HOPING TO START THERAPY AGAIN SOON.”

“MY EXPERIENCE AT BOUNCE CAMP WAS GREAT! I THINK THEY REALLY HELPED ME WITH THE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES AND THE SUPPORT THEY PROVIDED FOR EACH ONE OF US. I AM DOING MUCH BETTER THAN I WAS BEFORE, AND I AM WAY HAPPIER TOO.”



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A portrait of Rachel Lezcano, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a brown blazer and gold hoop earrings. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. Her sunglasses are perched on her head. The background is a blurred office or church setting.

*Interview with Rachel Lezcano
First Impressions Coordinator,
Miami Vineyard*

BEING REAL

Creating Safe Spaces for Mental Health Conversations in the Church

As a leader in the church, I believe that the approach to mental health within our community should align with our mission: to love all people into a growing relationship with Jesus. At Miami Vineyard Church, we prioritize the importance of mental health by offering educational panels, discussing mental health in small groups, and connecting our congregants to mental health services. We believe that bringing the conversation of mental health inside church walls is just as important as helping those receive care outside of them.

Being at a church where it feels okay to not be okay is important to me. As the First Impressions Coordinator, it's my job to ensure the people at Miami Vineyard feel welcomed and valued as they are. When I first started coming to this church, I was dealing with some mental health struggles and got referred to someone in our care ministry. After going through a difficult event, one of my church mentors told me I could benefit from professional therapy, and this is when I first got connected to Wellspring. Once I gave therapy a shot, my perspective on it changed, and it turned out to be the best decision I've ever made! I've been proudly in therapy for three years now.

When it comes to being a leader in general, I think there is a natural reluctance to being vulnerable. Especially in a church staff role, there's often this mistaken belief that we must have it all together, but let's be real, that's almost never the case. Recently, while I was leading a small group, I debated whether I should open up about my battle with depression. In the end, I decided to share my struggles because my silence perpetuates the perception that we can't be honest.

The fact that I was doubting whether to be vulnerable about my mental health shows the stigma surrounding mental health. In my mind, I could hear my depression whispering doubts about my skills, but I recognized that sharing these

thoughts is fundamental to effective leadership. Embracing humility doesn't just empower me to grow and support others — it also offers a sense of security. Even when I'm navigating my own mental health challenges, I can still lead effectively, with the steadfast support of my church family at my side.

I believe it's important for church leaders to receive mental health education and support because everyone has experienced trauma in some kind of way. Whether big or small, all of us know what it is like to experience the pain of being alive, and the cool thing is that this truth gives us common ground. When we address the untended wounds from our past, we give God room to restore the areas in our life that have been broken. If we can encourage and support each other within the church to revisit and unweave our past traumas, we all can experience a fresh perspective when hope feels lost. This is what the Gospel points to.

As we create space for conversations about mental health at Miami Vineyard, we hope to live out our mission of loving God's people holistically. We're taking significant steps in prioritizing mental health within our community. We have dedicated entire church gatherings to mental health care panels and are actively cultivating an environment where our people can freely share their mental health needs.

No one is designed to do life alone, and when we welcome emotional vulnerability in our church community, we can create important shifts in perspective. Knowing that there are people praying for me provides a profound sense of encouragement, reminding me that I am not alone in the challenges I face, both in my thoughts and in life. I am grateful to know that the communities at Miami Vineyard and Wellspring share the same passion for healing hearts and minds through the power and love of Jesus. It's amazing to have such love and support from both communities.

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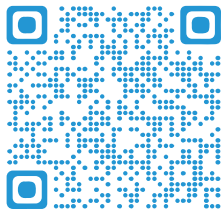
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Ministry to Ministers

Wellspring equips churches and ministries with mental health management skills and sustains their leaders so they can continue to be effective in their work.



How Wellspring brings Mental Health in the Church



Discounted services to church staff



Professional mental health trainings to ministry leaders and staff



Mental health outreach through churches and ministries



ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

Restoration across Nations

*Interview with Audra Handal,
PAVE Centre Executive Director, Co-Founder*

At Wellspring, part of our ministry is to empower and nurture leaders through the provision of trauma care and education. We are dedicated to supporting leaders, particularly pastors, ministry leaders, and missionaries, who serve on the front lines of mental health challenges across the globe. Our vision is to equip them with the essential skills and resources to cultivate healing within their ministries, illuminating the path to hope, resilience, and positive change within their communities, both near and far.

Wellspring has offered mental health care and resources to far regions including Haiti, Rwanda, Tanzania, and various South American countries. This year, Wellspring taught trauma-informed care to the leaders of the Portland Arts and Vocational Education Center (PAVE) in Port Antonio, Jamaica, an organization committed to vocational training and occupational preparation for at-risk youth.

The following are PAVE Executive Director Audra Handal's thoughts on the impact of the organization and the shared need for international community partnership:

"At PAVE, our mission is to empower at-risk youth through vocational training, self-worth development, and life skill education, all aimed at facilitating their journey to meaningful employment. Since our inception in 2018, PAVE has proudly graduated 209 students, with a remarkable 70% of these graduates successfully securing employment after completion. It's important to note that our training programs do not require a high school diploma, and many of our students come to us with little or no formal education. At PAVE, we are dedicated to supporting every individual in our community who is determined to discover their life's purpose. Recognizing the challenges they may already face when they reach our doors, our primary goal is to equip them with the essential tools for job attainment, job retention, and, perhaps most importantly, to instill a profound sense of self-worth throughout this transformative journey.

We are eager to collaborate with Wellspring to introduce trauma education in Jamaica, as the pressing need for healing here cannot be overstated. Regardless of one's location in the world, the prevalence of trauma and mental illness is a constant global concern. In Port Antonio, the specific region where our school is located, there is a significant yet largely unaddressed issue surrounding trauma and mental health. PAVE is enthusiastic about partnering with Wellspring to initiate a conversation on mental health care and education. Leveraging Wellspring's innovative trauma education module, we aim to employ PAVE's program to address mental health challenges within our community, among both our staff and students.

The idea of having Wellspring professionals join us in Jamaica to offer mental health support and training to our community fills me with anticipation for the healing journey that lies ahead on this side of the island. If you could witness the number of people affected by mental illness in Port Antonio, you'd understand the gravity of our need for mental healing. At PAVE, we are committed to doing what it takes to meet the needs of our community in this parish. With the help of our community partners at Wellspring, we are excited to start a new movement of mental wellness in Port Antonio. When communities of God come together to bring transformational healing, anything is possible."

At Wellspring, our mission goes beyond healing those who are suffering from trauma; it's about cultivating trauma-informed communities wherever we can. We recognize that providing mental health education can make a profound difference in communities often lacking access to professional counseling. As we continue to empower our global leaders with mental health education and training, we are equipping them to become trained trauma-informed specialists capable of addressing the mental health needs within their own nations. Our aspiration is to live out our mission and bring transformative healing, with the goal of changing the world one community at a time.

A Community OF CONTRIBUTORS

How Wellspring is funded as a non-profit ministry

Wellspring's nonprofit ministry strives to enhance mental health accessibility through discounted therapy services and affordable mental health education. To facilitate our programs, develop educational resources, and sustain our dedicated staff, financial contributions are essential. Thanks to the generosity of numerous organizations, ministries, and sponsors in our community, we are blessed to pursue our mission of restoring hearts and minds.

1. Grants

Every year, Wellspring applies for community grants to support our services and programs. Among the foundations and agencies that support us are the Ocean Reef Community Foundation, the County of Miami-Dade (for our Bounce program), the Coral Gables Community Foundation, the Glasson Foundation for foster care youth, and the Key Biscayne Foundation.

2. Fundraising Events

To provide financial aid for the clients who apply for our services, we organize several fundraising events throughout the year. Wellspring also participates in Give Miami Day, a day where we promote our mission to raise money for the communities we serve.

3. Individual Donations

Wellspring counts on the donations of many champions in the community who support our mission to make mental health services accessible. Through the gifts of various individuals, we can provide affordable therapy and bless others with a better life.

4. Sponsorships

We highly encourage churches, organizations, corporations and friends to invest in the well-being of others by sponsoring counseling sessions or participation in our programs. Some organizations also sponsor mental health workshops to help their community come together to become stronger emotionally and mentally. Counseling sponsorships help those who are ready and able to take the next step on their wellness journey.

5. Fees

Wellspring charges lower than average fees for professional counseling. When clients lack the financial resources to receive the services they need, we help them seek personal sponsorships, or sponsor them ourselves using grants, and financial aid funds. Wellspring typically provides discounted therapy for at least 50% of our clients.



The Ministries of Wellspring

We make mental health healing available to specific at-risk populations who are suffering. Here is a closer look at how we do this.



Traumatized Adults

1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experiences mental illness each year.

NAMI

We are on a mission to break the cycle of trauma. We offer specialized trauma therapy to individuals and families. Our Restore Resilience Retreat for adults also offers a range of therapies and tools to help people grow beyond the bad things that have happened to them.

Homeless Population

20.8% of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. have a serious mental health condition. - *NAMI*

We believe all of God's people deserve to be treated with dignity. We team up with organizations like The First Baptist Church of Islamorada and the Chapman Partnership to bring mental health resources and hope for change to the unhoused community in South Florida.



Human Trafficking Survivors

Florida ranks 3rd among other states affected by Human Trafficking.

HTCourts

Within the scope of our mission, we collaborate closely with churches and organizations like Glory House to deliver intensive counseling and trauma-informed therapy to survivors of Human Trafficking who are in residential recovery.

Traumatized Groups

Early treatment after a traumatic event can prevent the onset of PTSD symptoms.- *ISTSS*

When groups of people experience a life-altering traumatic event, their shared experience can serve as an agent for healing. Our Disaster Emotional Relief services (DER) offers a safe and empathetic environment where groups of survivors can effectively process trauma and begin healing.





Foster Care Youth

90% of foster children will experience severe trauma. - For Others

Because foster care children are likely to experience multiple traumas early in their lives, Wellspring brings healing to these children through unique therapies such as equine-assisted psychotherapy.

Traumatized Youth

17% of U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. - NAMI

Trauma can have lasting effects in a child's development, but early treatment can help develop resilience and healthy coping skills for the future. Wellspring's various Bounce programs and individual therapy create safe spaces and guidance for young people to heal. Bounce is offered free of charge for youth living in Miami-Dade County.



Immigrant Families

Immigrant Families may experience pre-immigration trauma and post-immigration stress - NCBI

Wellspring offers affordable mental health counseling and financial aid for trauma-recovery programs to those prone to develop anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder due to their experiences as immigrants.



Ministry Leaders

3 out of 5 pastors struggle with mental health stress. Lifeway Research

Wellspring sustains and equips church and parachurch leaders with tools to face mental health challenges. Our Ministry to Ministers program serves leaders and their staff, facilitating improved access to mental health services and promoting awareness within the faith community.

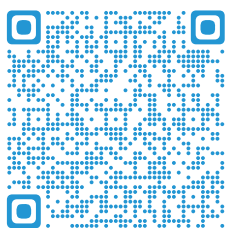


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Thank you!



J.P.Morgan



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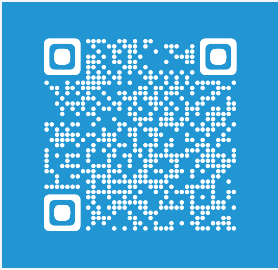
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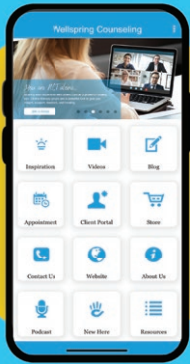
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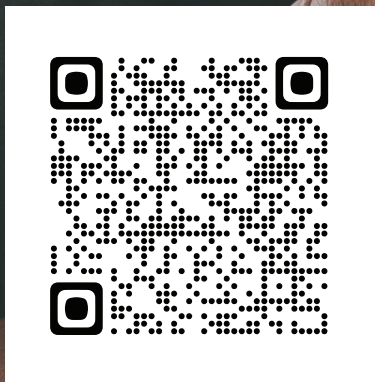
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