**Questions for Karl**

## Introduction

Welcome Rob

“Consultant Psychiatrist, one of the Directors of Mind and Soul”

[SLIDE 3 – mind and soul]

## Mental Health

**KARL – What is mental health?**

ROB – the difference between mental health and mental illness, mental illness is dealt with by the NHS and mental health services, whereas good mental health is the role of all of society [including faith groups]

**KARL – How much of a problem is mental illness?**

ROB – give some stats [though these are mainly in the second video], explain the massive impact it can have on peoples lives and that it is just as real as physical illness

## The Bible and Mental Illness

**KARL – what does the bible say about mental illness?**

ROB – not that much as the diagnoses we use today and the society we live in don’t map that well onto the historical account. However, emotions are very prevalent in the bible [both OT and NT] and there are clear accounts of people having profound and long-lasting low moods, and also examples of more severe mental illness.

**KARL – people sometimes talk about evil forces causing mental illness – what do you think of that?**

ROB – whenever I give talks like this, someone in the audience wants to know if psychotic illnesses like schizophrenia are caused by demons. I must confess I find this a real red herring, and also an example of poor theology and poor psychology. None of the ‘demon encounters’ in the new testament bear any relationship to the people with schizophrenia I work with everyday. Most of these ‘demon encounters’ are about physical illnesses like epilepsy [and we don’t go round saying that is cause by demons] or are accusations at corrupt political and religious leaders. The one example that comes close is the Gerasene in Mark 5 / John 8 which seems more about self-harm – and we also need to learn that Jesus treated the man with great respect and gave him a very important job to do – he was the second best evangelist in the bible after St Paul!

**KARL – what can we learn from how Jesus approached emotions?**

ROB – he was ALWAYS compassionate. The bible says ‘a bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out’ [Isa 42v3]. He understood that change takes time – in the Lords Prayer it says ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors’ – it is sometimes said that this ‘as’ is the longest word in the Bible

## Faith and Mental Health

**KARL – Is having a personal faith good or bad for your mental health?**

Rob – there are different levels at which we can look at this. From a behavioural point of view, having a structure to our week and day [like church on Sunday, or the rooted exercises] gets us up and about and doing something. Existentially having a ‘something else’ to believe in helps us put our own problems and the worlds dilemmas in context. Also, knowing the great statements of the Christian faith – that God loves us like sons and daughters, that He is for us and not against us – is very important – perhaps the most important. But faith can become bad for us – not all church communities are as loving as they should be, we can become very guilty and legalistic at times – these things are bad for our mental health

**KARL – so can psychology help our faith?**

ROB – if the problem is a psychological one, it needs a psychological answer and not a spiritual one. Perhaps the most clear example of this is guilt – there are two types of guilt – that due to sins we have committed for which there is the wonderful gift of forgiveness from God, and that which arises in our own minds when we have not done anything especially bad – we just think we have. The key word here is ‘think’ – it is our thinking that needs help, not our faith.

*[opportunity to remind people of the salvation message]*

**KARL – how can you tell apart true guilt and false guilt [other than to recommend people read a book I believe you have written on the subject!]**

ROB – true guilt is temporary and moves into the joy or forgiveness, true guilt leads us closer to God, false guilt grumbles on and is never truly relieved, false guilt drives us away from God and makes us believe we are not worthy of his forgiveness or adoption. In neither situation is God punishing you.

## Severe Mental Illness

**KARL – what about illnesses like schizophrenia and dementia?**

ROB – These illnesses have a more of a biological underpinning and can happen to anyone regardless of life events and upbringing.

Schizophrenia is the result of over-activity in the levels of a chemical called dopamine in the front part of our brain. There are effective treatments that we should not refuse any more than you should refuse a person with diabetes their insulin.

Dementia is increasingly common as we grow older as a society, people are very isolated – this is a chance for mission and transformation. Peoples faith can still be very much alive despite the deficits, and how music and worship can help people reconnect

Depression also has biochemical and genetic underpinnings – it is not just due to life events and view we take of things. Taking antidepressants is no reflection on faith. Indeed, many well-regarded Christians have struggled with depression – John Bunyan, Martin Luther. And more recently Jeff Lucas and the Archbishop of Canterbury’s daughter [as we will see in a moment in a video].

## Mission and Mental Health

**KARL – What can the church do to help?**

Rob – This is a really key thing to address. First because it is part of being human and second because it is a question our society is asking.

[SLIDE 4] – this picture is of step 3 of the 12 steps of alcoholics anonymous – “I turned myself over to a higher power” – but he is not looking at the higher power, he is looking at the local church. People still turn to the church at times of crisis – but what will they find? Stigma, ridicule and emotional repression? Or welcome, understanding and an educated group of people?

[SLIDE 5] – making sense of our emotions is one of the main things people are wanting today. It will be a regular issue in Missional Communities that are doing things right. Running a ‘Living Life To The Full’ course or a ‘Mental Health First Aid’ course can be great ways to do outreach and will genuinely serve your local community.

**KARL – tell us about this Mental Health Access Pack you and others have been developing**

ROB – lots on the mind and soul website, even more on the web. What are the essentials that churches need to know. Simple and practical advice in plain english. The video says it better than I could.

Show the video – <https://vimeo.com/117418353>

[SLIDE 6 - showing sample PDFs and website URL]

## Christian Counselling

Susanne

**KARL– What is Christian counselling, and how can it help?**

ROB – A story of somebody using the service and really benefitting from it. An explanation of the wide variety of people that use the counselling service.

**KARL – what should I say / not say to someone who I think is struggling with their mental health?**

ROB - 'have you tried praying about it', 'come on snap out of it', 'you need more faith' YES- keep it simple and practical - you are not an amateur therapist - ask if they want to come to the cinema, say you are going to the shops and do they need anything? NO - Don’t keep on asking how they feel, but do ask from time to time to show you have not forgotten

## Interviews / Testimonies

[SLIDE 6]

Bronagh

1. I’d always been curious about your name I only found out recently what your name means, do you want to tell us about what means and its significance in your story?
2. What impact did your dad's mental illness have on the rest of the family?
3. How did that impact affect your own mental health as you got older?
4. Where did God (and church) fit into that?

Ellie

1. Ellie, you have wrestled with anxiety and depression from quite a young age. Can you tell us about your earliest memories of feeling that all was not well?
2. When did the anxiety escalate and what was that like?
3. How did your family respond to what you were going through?
4. Where did God (and church) fit into that?
5. And how are things for you now?

BOTH

1. What were the best things that people did to help you? What could they have done differently or better?
2. What advice would you give to anyone struggling with mental health issues, either as an individual, or within their family?

## Direct to Further Resources

Books slide – available to buy in the foyer [SLIDE 8]

PDFs slide – on the table in the foyer, and online [SLIDE 6]

Mention that there will be an opportunity for prayer after the service to the side of the church