

Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to Apple A Day. This is Katie Johnson, and my guest this morning is Dave Churchill. We are here to talk about the Living Well series, part of regular programming at Lake Region Healthcare, the third Monday of every month. In October, Dave is going to be our guest speaker. Thanks for joining me to talk about this month's Living Well series, Dave.

Dave Churchill: Yeah. Thanks for having me.

Katie Johnson: The title for this education series presentation is "Maintaining Family Health and Hope While Dealing with Chemical Dependency and Mental Health Issues" to set the stage for what we're going to be talking about. Before we dive into that topic, I'd like to introduce our listeners to who you are and what your background is.

Dave Churchill: Sure. I'm a marriage and family therapist, and I work with individuals and families who are dealing with all kinds of mental health issues. I have a particular interest in families who are struggling because their loved one has an addiction or mental health issue that maybe isn't being treated. That really puts families in a tough situation sometimes, so I really have a particular heart for working with them, I would say.

Katie Johnson: As we mentioned, that is specifically what you plan to talk about at this session. We always encourage anyone to attend these sessions. There's always something that we can learn, whether it directly impacts us or someone in our circle of family, friends, co-workers, a faith community, whatever it might be. I don't want to give the impression that it's not for everyone, but who in particular do you really want to be in attendance and hear this message?

Dave Churchill: Well, you made a good point when you said it's for everybody, because I think there are probably not many people in Fergus Falls who don't know somebody or aren't in themselves in part of a family that is dealing with some of these issues, because chemical dependency is very common, more common than most people know, and mental health issues are quite common also. They aren't always obvious, but many, many people struggle with that. Oftentimes, then their families are struggling, too.

Katie Johnson: Knowing that it is so common, the pairing of the two, can you talk a little bit about how mental health and addiction, how common those two paired together are?

Dave Churchill: Very common. I'm not going to try to quote precise statistics, because it's like every statistic there's a million different ways that they are figured and calculated, but a rough rule of thumb would be that about half of people who are dealing with a substance abuse issue probably also have a mental health issue. The flip side is approximately true, too, that about half the time people who have serious mental health issues are also going to be probably dealing with chemical use issues.

Katie Johnson: With that kind of prevalence, there are certainly a lot of people who need to hear

this message, and the part of the message that struck a chord with me was the hope, the finding hope. I don't want you to give away your whole program, but can you give us a glimpse of what that message might be amidst what are most likely dark times when we talk about mental illness and about chemical dependency?

Dave Churchill: Sure. People, again especially if we think about families, they are often ... Maybe you have a loved one who's struggled with a mental health issue or an addiction for years and years in some cases. Family members, particularly moms and dads, sometimes it's siblings or spouses, after a while start to think there's nothing they can do, because if their loved one is an adult there is very little they can do in many cases legally or morally or anything else. Adults can do what they want to do in our country, so hope diminishes.

The reality is two-fold. One that things always change, and they can change for the better and, in fact, often do. Even if things have been tough for a long time, there's reason for hope. The second piece of that is that we can control the direction that things change. We can do things that will help our loved ones do better. We can do things that will help ourselves do better. They're not even hard things to do.

Katie Johnson: Those are great messages. Anyone who is interested in hearing them is invited to our Living Well series. It will be the October session, again, led by you, Dave Churchill, "Maintaining Family Health and Hope While Dealing with Chemical Dependency and Mental Health Issues." The October session is Monday, October 17th. We have it the main clinic. 5:30 gathering, you'll start speaking around 6. I would imagine you leave some time for Q&A along with your presentation?

Dave Churchill: Most of the time when I do these presentations, it turns into mostly Q&A, because people usually have a lot of questions when they get there.

Katie Johnson: I can imagine so. A great opportunity to hear your message and to pick your brain as part of the Living Well education series. For someone who maybe can't attend on the 17th, do you have any advice for those folks who have an interest in this topic?

Dave Churchill: Sure. The best advice I can give is breathe, because things do get better. The second advice is that if you're somebody who's concerned about a family member, remember that the first thing you have to do is take care of yourself. Just like if you've ever been on an airplane and they tell you, "If the oxygen masks deploy, put your own mask on before you help your kids," it's true in these situations, too. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't help anybody. If you do take care of yourself first, then you can go on to the next step.

Katie Johnson: Excellent advice. Dave Churchill, he will be the keynote speaker at the Living Well education series at Lake Region Healthcare's main clinic on Monday, October 17th. If you would like to RSVP, shoot us an email to livingwell@lrhc.org, or just show up. We'll have refreshments there. We'll most likely have enough for everyone, but we ask you to give us an email or a call if you might plan on attending to help us plan

for numbers. More than anything, we just want you to come, attend, and hear this message, "Maintaining Family Health and Hope While Dealing with Chemical Dependency and Mental Health Issues." Dave Churchill, my guest today on Apple A Day, thanks for joining me.

Dave Churchill: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: Dave Churchill and Katie Johnson, reminding you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.