School of Social Work:
Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research

E4 Center for Excellence Mental Health and Aging for Faith Leaders Training Initiative 2023

Evaluation Report from the Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research (CADER) Boston University School of Social Work

November 2023

BU School of Social Work:
Center for Aging & Disability Education & Research

Evaluation Report

I. Introduction

The Center for Aging and Disability Education and Research (CADER) at Boston University is dedicated to bringing evidence-based research into practice through workforce innovation in the aging and disability fields. CADER programs and courses apply a competency-focused approach to comprehensive training, committed to enhancing the skills of practitioners in the field at all levels of experience.

Through a partnership with the E4 Center for Excellence, CADER provided faith leaders in the Chicago area with access to an online training course on mental health and aging. This evaluation report presents learner completion rates, learner demographics, findings from competency-based self-assessments, and learner feedback. Information was collected for the enrollment period of June 13, 2023 to July 31, 2023.

> *"This course was instrumental in creating an active thought process to include programing in my congregation on assisting in the mental health of aging adults."*

II. Course Overview

Faith leaders were enrolled in CADER's online course, Mental Health and Aging for Faith Leaders. This course provided learners with information on the signs, symptoms, and risk factors of mental health conditions, guidance on how to talk to older adults facing mental health challenges, and an understanding of the role of culture in mental health. After completing the course, learners will meet the following course objectives:

1. Identify the major mental health conditions that affect older adults.
2. Explain why mental health concerns among older adults are often underdiagnosed and undertreated.
3. Describe the barriers to mental health intervention for older adults.
4. Identify the role of faith leaders and spirituality in coping with mental health concerns.
5. Identify resources and services available for treating mental health conditions in older adults.

CADER provided course management support (program registration and technical support including individual follow-ups with learners, course completion reminders, and troubleshooting). CADER also provided weekly progress reports to E4 leadership.

> *"I appreciated the inclusivity of the course topics and the inclusion of situations addressing intersectionality, as we tend to forget that many marginalized groups face multiple social issues simultaneously."*
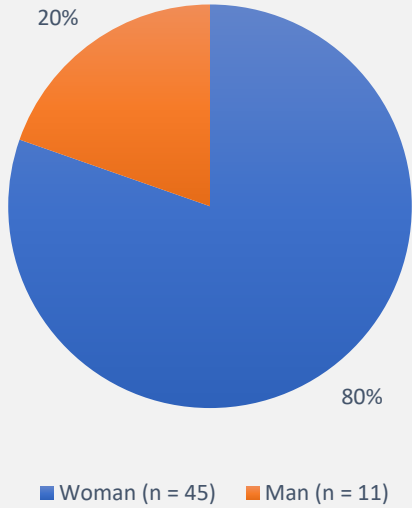
III. Completion Rate

A total of 56 learners enrolled in the course and provided demographic information. 37 learners completed the course, resulting in a 66% completion rate.
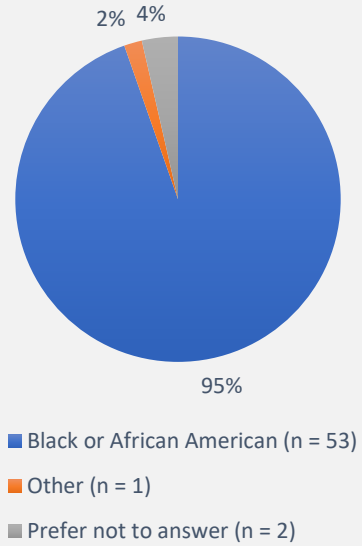
IV. Learner Demographics

When registering for the course, learners self-reported demographic information. The following charts show a breakdown of learners by gender, race, age, and educational attainment.
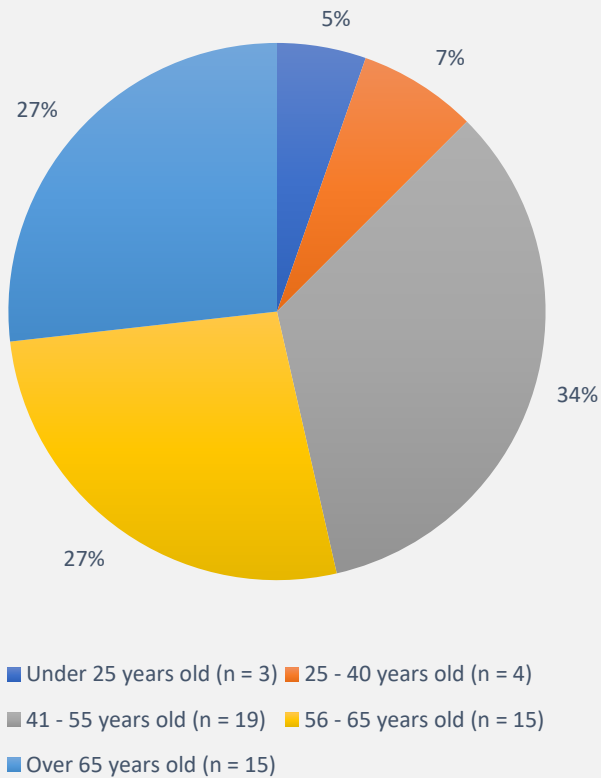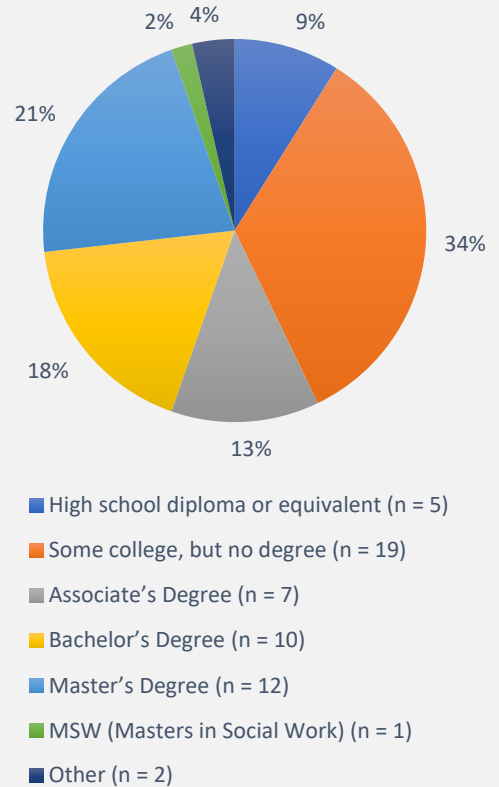
Learners by Gender

20%

80%

- Woman (n = 45) - Man (n = 11)

Learners by Race

2% 4%

95%

- Black or African American (n = 53)
- Other (n = 1)
- Prefer not to answer (n = 2)

Learners by Age

5%

7%

27%

34%

27%

- Under 25 years old (n = 3) - 25 - 40 years old (n = 4)
- 41 - 55 years old (n = 19) - 56 - 65 years old (n = 15)
- Over 65 years old (n = 15)

Learners by Education

2% 4% 9%

21%

34%

18%

13%

- High school diploma or equivalent (n = 5)
- Some college, but no degree (n = 19)
- Associate's Degree (n = 7)
- Bachelor's Degree (n = 10)
- Master's Degree (n = 12)
- MSW (Masters in Social Work) (n = 1)
- Other (n = 2)

V. Results
Learner Feedback

Many learners reported that the course was eye-opening and contained information on topics relevant to their work:

> *"It provided an awareness to topics that are very important and too often over-looked and not discussed enough."*

Learners also described how having a better understanding of the mental health challenges in aging has led them to have more compassion for older adults:

> *"Being more sympathetic and understanding to the needs of older adults as they age and the mental health issues they live and struggle with."*

> *"To have more compassion for older adults, and myself."*

Many learners also appreciated the information that the course provided on resources for older adults with mental health issues:

> *"The course allowed me to learn more information about how to identify and provide resources for the many different areas of Mental Health."*

Learners were asked to describe the changes that they anticipate making after taking the course. In response, learners stated that they will be more aware of mental health issues, more attentive to older adults, and will spend more time interacting with older adult members of their congregation:

> *"I plan to listen more and be more observant. I also want to be more interactive with the older generation."*

> *"I plan to keep a closer watch on the seniors in our congregation."*

> *"Being more attentive to signs and acting on them."*

Additionally, other learners indicated that they intended to provide more support services around mental health in aging and wanted to become better advocates for those facing mental health challenges:

> *"I truly want to implement a wider awareness to my church members and discuss how we can include more of our older community into awareness and let them know our church is there to offer more support and added programs."*

> *"The changes I see myself making is finding more ways to get involved by having more resources available if necessary and asking if support groups can be formed where I live and go to church services."*

"Be an advocate for encouraging people to seek and use mental health resources."

Finally, learners expressed that the course should be offered in additional faith communities as well as to other groups:

"Every faith base should be regulated to take this course, and in return receive funding from the government to help implement some of these programs I was learning about!"

"This course should be offer to all churches teens should be allow to be include with taking the course."

Additional learner feedback is included in the Appendix.

Competency Results

At the beginning and end of the course, learners were asked to rate their skill level in eleven competencies using the following scale: 0 - Not skilled at all; 1 - Beginning skill; 2 - Moderate skill; 3 - Advanced skill; 4 - Expert skill.

As shown in Figure 1, for all eleven competencies, mean ratings significantly increased ($p < .05$) from the pre-course competency self-assessment to the post-course competency self-assessment. Percent increases ranged from 76% to 234%. Additional competency data is displayed in the Appendix Table 1.

Figure 1

Mean Competency Ratings Pre-Course and Post-Course
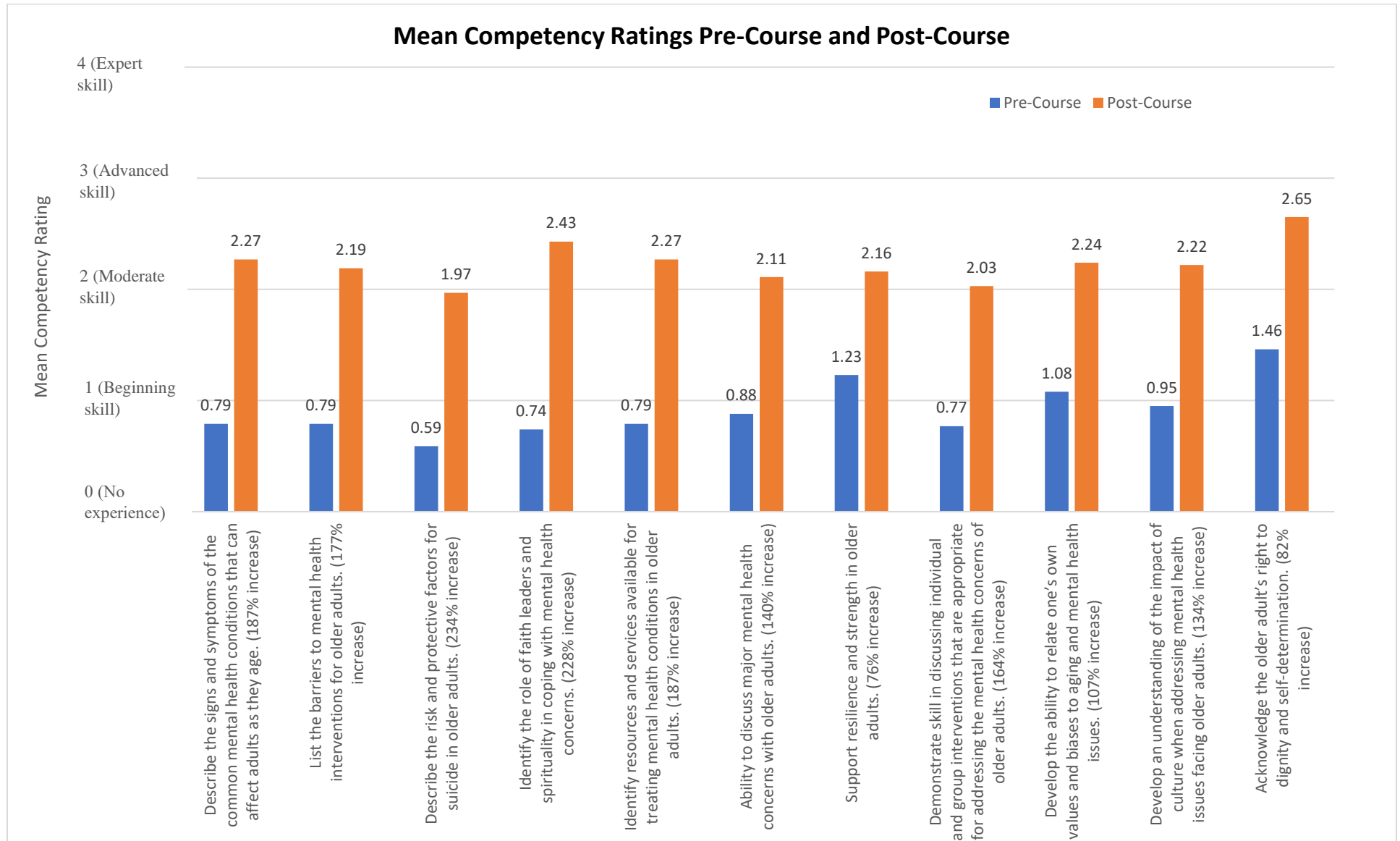
Course Objectives Results

At the end of the course, learners were asked whether they felt that the course met the learning objectives. Learners rated whether the course met objectives using the following scale: 1- Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Neutral; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree.

The percentage of learners who agreed or strongly agreed that the course met each learning objective is provided in the table below.

Learning Objective	Percent of Learners Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed
Identify the major mental health conditions that affect older adults.	97%
Explain why mental health concerns among older adults are often underdiagnosed and undertreated.	97%
Describe the barriers to mental health intervention for older adults.	97%
Identify the role of faith leaders and spirituality in coping with mental health concerns.	97%
Identify resources and services available for treating mental health conditions in older adults.	97%

Course Evaluation Results

At the end of the course, learners were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of course evaluation statements using the following scale: 1- Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Neutral; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree; 6 - Non-applicable.

The percentage of learners who agreed or strongly agreed with each course evaluation statement is provided in the table below.

Evaluation Statement	Percent of Learners Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed
This training expanded my knowledge and understanding of the topic area.	97%
The course materials were suitable and useful.	97%
I would recommend this course to my colleagues.	89%

VI. Summary and Conclusion

CADER's Mental Health and Aging for Faith Leaders course was very well-received by faith leaders who expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to take the course. After completing the course, they reported feeling more sympathetic and compassionate, being more aware of the resources available to assist older adults, and they described their plans to increase mental health

programming in their congregations. Learners gained skills in key competency areas and will use these skills in their work.

This training will benefit older adults facing mental health challenges who often look towards their faith communities for support. Faith leaders who completed this course are better trained and better equipped to serve and support older adults facing mental health challenges. We look forward to a continued partnership with the E4 Center for Excellence and hope that through this partnership we can reach more faith leaders and continue to positively impact the lives of older adults.

VII. Appendix

Table 1. Results from the Pre-Course and Post-Course Competency Self-Assessments
At the beginning and end of each course, learners were asked to rate their skill level in various competencies using the following scale: 0 - Not skilled at all; 1 - Beginning skill; 2 - Moderate skill; 3 - Advanced skill; 4 - Expert skill.

Mean competency ratings, percent increases, and p-values are shown in the table below.

Competency	Pre-Course Mean Competency Rating	Post-Course Mean Competency Rating	Percent Increase	P-value
Describe the signs and symptoms of the common mental health conditions that can affect adults as they age.	0.79	2.27	187%	<.001
List the barriers to mental health interventions for older adults.	0.79	2.19	177%	<.001
Describe the risk and protective factors for suicide in older adults.	0.59	1.97	234%	<.001
Identify the role of faith leaders and spirituality in coping with mental health concerns.	0.74	2.43	228%	<.001
Identify resources and services available for treating mental health conditions in older adults.	0.79	2.27	187%	<.001
Ability to discuss major mental health concerns with older adults.	0.88	2.11	140%	<.001
Support resilience and strength in older adults.	1.23	2.16	76%	<.001
Demonstrate skill in discussing individual and group interventions that are appropriate for addressing the mental health concerns of older adults.	0.77	2.03	164%	<.001
Develop the ability to relate one's own values and biases to aging and mental health issues.	1.08	2.24	107%	<.001
Develop an understanding of the impact of culture when addressing mental health issues facing older adults.	0.95	2.22	134%	<.001
Acknowledge the older adult's right to dignity and self-determination.	1.46	2.65	82%	<.001

Learner Feedback
After taking the course, learners were asked three open-ended questions. All learner responses to these questions are displayed below.

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<u>Your feedback is very important to us! Please share any comments about this course with us.</u>

Content
- This course should be offered to all churches -teens should be allow to be include with taking the course
- The course provided vast information and covered topics that I was not expecting
- Many thanks to whoever put the course together. it was very eye opening. Many times we fail to address mental issues because of the stigma and the ways most people think when we mention the words mental issue or mental help it helps to see that there is no shame in this just the help that is needed hopefully soon more people will gain the necessary knowledge needed to help older adults
- This course was eye opening. It did increase my knowledge and awareness. It is an awesome course.
- Being more open minded and understanding with elders that are facing mental health issues
- All of the material was very good and will add to further identifying those in need of help.
- I appreciated the inclusivity of the course topics and the inclusion of situations addressing intersectionality, as we tend to forget that many marginalized groups face multiple social issues simultaneously.
- This is was an eye opener for me. There was concern thing that I wasn't aware of regarding mental health.
- This course has made me more sensitive to the vulnerability of mental health of aging seniors
- Great information was given concerning senior citizens and mental health.
- Great info
- very informational
- Every faith base should be regulated to take this course, and in return receive funding from the government to help implement some of these programs I was learning about! Thanks to who ever open this door for Hope church!
- This course was very informative
- This course was instrumental in creating an active thought process to include programing in my congregation on assisting in the mental health of aging adults
- I appreciate the wealth of information that I've learned will taking this course
- very helpful
- This course was very informative and helpful as I age and in taking care of my aging loved ones
- It was very informative. The use of examples created a true sense of reality.
- Thank you for allowing me to take this course for free
- The course was very informative
- The resources were very helpful

Course Features
- I truly enjoyed the scenarios provided however there was a lot of breakage in the story telling. However it may have been due to the internet. Otherwise, it was an enlightening experience.
- The content in the course was relevant and helpful. The videos were short but helpful.
- I thought the course was very informative and would like to have the slides and videos because I would like to teach it at my church.

Personal
- This course opened my eyes to many mental health issues that older adults struggle with. My mom is 87 and showing signs of memory loss. Because of this course I will take her to get a memory test to determine the early onset of Alzheimer's.

What did you find most helpful about this course?

Content
- Learning about challenges of individuals with mental illness
- It provided an awareness to topics that are very important and too often over-looked and not discussed enough
- The course gave me some understanding of what some older adults may experience and allowed you to see the signs without having to wonder. it also helped me learn to listen more closely to what is being said when talking to older adults
- The awareness that was brought to light through course material
- Different therapy and resources that's available.
- The detailed section about the various mental health conditions.
- The knowledge of each mental health condition! It was broke down in a understanding level
- The resources were very helpful
- Relevant information was shared
- The course allowed me to learn more information about how to identify and provide resources for the many different areas of Mental Health.
- The content and information share
- I found that the resources and downloads were helpful. I can refer back to them when implementing the content
- The breakdown of the signs of depression in seniors
- The varies interventions and biases about aging in various demographics.
- The information provided
- The information was for young and old because we are all aging.
- it reiterated the value and importance of support
- Encouraged me to feel confident when helping seniors
- The handouts and resources
- The different types of stigmas and the barriers
- List of resources provided

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Course Features

- How easy it was to navigate through the course and the course length.
- I appreciated the summary sections because they allowed me to go over the questions several times and I didn't feel upset when I missed a question
- The examples given to explain.
- The ability to move through the course at my own pace, and review content often
- I found that videos and scenarios were helpful when visually explaining the different mental health examples. I really enjoyed learning and getting more in depth understanding of mental health in older adults.
- The quiz card questions and the resources.
- the "picture this" scenarios. It showed real life older adult experiences
- I found the video interaction to be the most helpful. It kept the course content interesting and allowed me to flow through each module with ease
- The inclusion of the videos, they were very helpful

What changes do you anticipate making after taking this course?

Individual

- My listening skills will better
- Seek to go further in educating myself about mental health
- Being more aware of signs of mental illness
- Putting myself first
- I plan to listen more and be more observant. I also want to be more interactive with the older generation.
- Listening more closely. Equip myself with resources to increase my knowledge of mental help resources
- Become more cognizant of my mother when making plans to ensure she's not feeling left out.
- To have more compassion for older adults, and myself
- Being more open minded and understanding with elders that are facing mental health issues
- Be more mindful of signs of mental challenges in older adults
- Being more sympathetic and understanding to the needs of older adults as they age and the mental health issues they live & struggle with
- After taking this course, I will be more intentional with my conversations with seniors and make sure that I am listening more and not dismissing what we "society" has labeled as norms, when it could be a sign of distress.
- The course providing more understand and encouraged me to be more patient with seniors.
- To apply and offer skills as needed
- Be an advocate for encouraging people to seek and use mental health resources.
- Advocate more and encourage for senior and the aging
- Be more concerned about my own well-being by looking into various aging resources
- Paying close attention to the signs

- Being more aware of mental issues among older individuals in our congregation

Congregation

- Will see what changes we can make to help our members
- I anticipate that I will be paying closer attention to my interaction with everyone
- The changes I see myself making is finding more ways to get involved by having more resources available if necessary and asking if support groups can be formed where i live and go to church services
- I plan on including post doctor visit checks in our wellness calls with the aging
- I truly want to implement a wider awareness to my church members and discuss how we can include more of our older community into awareness and let them know our church is there to offer more support and added programs
- More interaction with older adults in my church
- I plan to keep a closer watch on the seniors in our congregation
- Making sure that we have a list of resources to immediately help someone in need.
- I work with seniors in my congregation. I anticipate asking more questions in regards to mental health and looking for more resources to help them.
- The inclusion of the videos, they were very helpful
- Being able to recognize signs in the elderly
- I'll share what i've learned and try to enforce it throughout my remaining years.
- focusing more on aging adults
- Being more attentive to signs and acting on them
- Research for seniors who may need mental help
- I'm already working with Mental health and faith leaders. Adding the Aging to the program