# Proposal from The First Presidency

## On Inclusion, Understanding, and Acceptance of Individuals with Mental Health Conditions

To priesthood leaders and auxiliary organizations worldwide:

Dear brothers and sisters,

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been called to love, serve, and minister to all of our Heavenly Father's children without exception. The Savior Himself taught us: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). This fundamental principle must guide our understanding and support for those members of our community who face unique mental health and neurological challenges, including conditions such as Tourette Syndrome, autism, ADHD, and other neurological differences.

### Principles of Inclusion and Understanding

#### Harmony with The Family: A Proclamation to the World

These principles are in perfect harmony with The Family: A Proclamation to the World, which recognizes that "disability, death, or other circumstances (such as those requiring uncommon psychological emotional regulation procedures) may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended family members should provide support when needed."

#### Full Access to Priesthood and Ordinances

We reaffirm that mental health and neurological conditions, including those requiring uncommon psychological emotional regulation procedures or conditions such as Tourette Syndrome, do not deprive any worthy member of access to the priesthood or sacred ordinances and service in the Church. This includes situations where a person's emotional or neurological well-being requires:

* Specific clothing items
* Medical or therapeutic devices
* Bandages or support products
* Diapers or other personal care accessories
* Any other elements necessary for emotional or neurological regulation
* Involuntary movements or necessary regulatory behaviors (such as tics in Tourette Syndrome)

These elements and behaviors, when part of an inherent neurological condition or a healing process supervised or not by mental health professionals (that may or may not last a lifetime), and even if they do not have a need or do not make use of their primary purpose, must be respected and permitted in all Church buildings (if they comply with Church standards) and home activities.

### Call to Empathy and Understanding

#### Neurological need and not a whim

It is important to understand that many behaviors or needs for uncommon emotional regulation are not voluntary choices or whims, but legitimate neurological responses. Strategies such as tics in Tourette Syndrome, or certain self-regulation rituals following traumatic experiences, or "stimming" in autism are necessary adaptive mechanisms. Suppressing them without understanding can cause real distress, not only interrupting emotional self-regulation, but can erode marital intimacy (in the case of marriages), generate chronic stress, reactivate trauma. Forced suppression of essential regulatory mechanisms, inhibiting bodily presence, emotional security and, with it, the capacity for connection in marriage. Therefore, they should be seen as valid needs that deserve respect and support. **Validating and respecting each spouse's regulatory needs strengthens mutual trust, restores emotional security, and creates the conditions for full, consensual, and sacred marital intimacy**.

#### Do Not Judge

We urge all members, leaders, and families to refrain from making judgments about mental health and neurological situations that may seem uncommon or difficult to understand, including conditions such as Tourette Syndrome, involuntary movements, or specific regulatory needs. Let us remember that "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

#### Do Not Exclude

No behavior related to mental health conditions or neurological differences should be grounds for exclusion from our congregations, activities, or worship services, even in family settings. Diversity in forms of healing, recovery, and neurological regulation should be seen as a manifestation of our Heavenly Father's infinite compassion.

#### Do Not Misinterpret

We recognize that we often do not know the background, trauma, neurological conditions, or circumstances that have led a person to need uncommon specific forms of emotional or neurological regulation. It should not be seen as "This makes no sense, teaching this is wrong and is trauma for children and the rising generation." Instead of making assumptions, **we should approach with humility and genuine desire to understand.** Let us remember that our calling is to love and serve, not to diagnose or 'correct' what we might not fully understand

#### Do Not Coerce

**No member, leader, family member, or friend should use emotional blackmail, spiritual pressure, or relational manipulation to demand that a person abandon legitimate emotional regulation procedures.** Phrases such as "if you really loved God, you would stop that," "you can't participate fully if you continue like this," "cannot use the priesthood," or "this is affecting the whole family" constitute forms of coercion that cause spiritual, emotional, and neurological harm This includes any type of direct or indirect harassment, in-person or virtual.

The doctrine of the Gospel teaches that the priesthood should be exercised "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (Doctrine and Covenants 121:41). **Coercion does not come from God, but from human misunderstandings.** Forcing the abandonment of consolidated regulatory needs—without clinical understanding or compassionate support—is not only ineffective, but can reactivate trauma, generate isolation, and erode testimony.

True love **never conditions belonging, service, or spiritual dignity** on compliance with unrevealed standards. Genuine inclusion respects the emotional and neurological agency of each soul, just as the Savior did with all those whom He healed without requiring prior change.

#### Do Not Confuse with Sexual Preferences

It is fundamental to understand that uncommon emotional regulation procedures **do not constitute sexual preferences.** Contemporary science has demonstrated that these mechanisms are adaptive neurological responses, not expressions of sexual orientation or attraction. Confusing legitimate regulatory needs with sexual preferences generates unnecessary stigmatization, spiritual exclusion based on misunderstandings, and distance from the Savior due to lack of understanding. **Emotional regulation is intrapersonal and self-regulatory; sexual orientation is interpersonal and relational.** We must apply objective clinical criteria and not make assumptions based on the external appearance of behaviors.

#### Do Not Ridicule and Denigrate

It is fundamental that we avoid any form of mockery, contempt, or language that degrades those who experience uncommon emotional or neurological regulation needs. Ridiculing behaviors such as tics, regulatory movements, use of support devices, clothing items, personal care elements, or authentic emotional expressions not only causes deep harm, but directly contradicts the commandment to love one another as Christ loved us. Denigrating someone for their mental health or neurological condition—whether through words, gestures, subtle exclusions, or attitudes of superiority—is to deny the inherent dignity that each soul possesses as a son or daughter of God. Instead, **we are called to cultivate an environment of reverent respect, where vulnerability is welcomed with tenderness** and where difference is not tolerated, but celebrated as part of divine diversity in the human family.

### Our Christian Commitment

#### Process of understanding and self-discovery

There are people who have sought to understand their entire lives why they have certain behaviors or perform uncommon psychological emotional regulation procedures that are difficult to explain. Many understand this from their youth, others at an older age. And there are those who never manage to know why this happens to them, but all go through a painful path of misunderstanding, intolerance, marginalization, being judged and sanctioned for something they don't even fully understand. Achieving understanding and "endure it well" is what they seek, and feeling God's love and the compassion and empathy that there is no intentionality in their conduct.

#### Extending Unconditional Love

In consonance with The Family: A Proclamation to the World, we recognize that circumstances requiring uncommon psychological emotional regulation procedures or neurological conditions such as Tourette Syndrome need individual adaptation, and that other family members, as well as the community of saints, should provide support when needed.

As a community of saints, we commit to:

* Offer love without conditions or reservations
* Practice active empathy and genuine understanding toward neurological differences
* Strengthen bonds of brotherhood and love
* Make necessary adaptations according to individual circumstances
* Create safe spaces where all can heal and grow
* Foster understanding, inclusion and teach these values to children and the rising generation
* Seek those who may have been affected by not knowing these things
* Accept that conditions like Tourette Syndrome require understanding, not correction

### Guidance for Leaders

Local priesthood and auxiliary organization leaders should:

* Receive with love and patience all members, regardless of their specific mental health and neurological needs
* Recognize that, according to The Family: A Proclamation to the World, circumstances requiring uncommon psychological emotional regulation procedures or neurological conditions such as Tourette Syndrome need individual adaptation
* Consider that neurological needs must be taken into account when identifying unusual or uncommon situations
* Consult with mental health and neurology professionals when appropriate and with the member's consent
* Make necessary physical and procedural adaptations in buildings and programs
* Educate congregations about the importance of inclusion and understanding of neurological differences
* Accompany families that require help in the individual adaptation process, in mutual understanding
* Facilitate extended family members and community members to provide support when needed
* Provide ongoing support resources and training on neurodi versity
* Understand that conditions like Tourette Syndrome and other emotional regulation rituals require acceptance, not correction
* Identify situations of intolerance, due to not understanding the context, requires guidance and compassion for those affected
* Recognize that if they have affected in any way those who have these neurological needs, they should apologize for what happened and for the lack of understanding and demonstrate greater love and compassion
* Not confuse uncommon emotional regulation procedures with sexual preferences, applying objective clinical criteria and avoiding assumptions based on the external appearance of behaviors.

## Message of Hope

We testify that the atonement of Jesus Christ encompasses all aspects of human suffering, including mental health struggles and neurological differences. Every person is precious in God's sight, and every path of healing and every form of neurological regulation is sacred when sought with faith and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We invite all families, wards, and stakes to become refuges of love, understanding, and support for those facing unique challenges in their mental health and neurological journey, including individuals with Tourette Syndrome and other neurodivergent conditions. In doing so, we not only bless the lives of others, but we also draw closer to the Christian ideal of true unity and love toward all human diversity.

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

Sincerely, The First Presidency

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

This statement should be read in all sacrament meetings and distributed to all local leaders for immediate implementation.