

Letter from the President

Friends,

I've been co-teaching the Family to Family course with Dwayne this fall. This is my first time co-teaching the class and as when I took the course, I continue to get great benefit from the class and others taking it.

Dwayne is a great teacher and so well suited to help us through this illogical maze of mental illness. His insights and experiences are invaluable.

There is a section in the dialog at the beginning of class 9 that has particular importance to me especially this time of year. That dialog goes like this.

It is virtually impossible for any of us to carry on, assist our relatives and maintain the quality of our own lives if our genuine and legitimate feelings remain "bottled-up" inside us. We must find a family confidant, a support group, a best friend, or trusted counselor with whom we can "let down" and share the burdens of our responsibilities. ... By sharing our difficulties and our pain with those who understand us, we ease our burden. With a lighter heart, we can reclaim the joys in life that will ultimately sustain us.

Other than my wonderfully kind, patient and tolerant wife Gail, it is this NAMI Frederick Family upon whom I as well as many of us truly depend. They are such a wonderful group of people with whom it is an absolute joy to work. We need to thank the many volunteers that make this little NAMI affiliate such a wonderful place.

Besides having the opportunity to lead this class with Dwayne, I am very thankful for Jil, Shonda and Jen who have lead the other classes this past year. This is quite a dedicated crew that takes time from their schedules to care for us as well as those in their own family. Besides the teachers, Tracy has done a wonderful job orchestrating all of the things that happen in the background to organize and support these classes; we all are very grateful for her willingness and cheerful support.

Our Family Support groups are a continuous source of support throughout the entire year. The leaders of those groups Mike & Sheri, Gerry & Mary Lou, Jen, Curt, Lynn, Taysie and Lisa are always there for anyone who

Inside This Issue

Letter From the President	1
NAMI article: Tips for coping with the holidays	2
Reflections on Recovery	3
NAMI article: I Stop Stigma By...	4
NAMI Support Groups/Membership	5

shows up at a meeting. You never know exactly what issues, situations or burdens will be delivered, but they are always there and willingly help be those who attend. Our Website and emailing list is also one of this things that needs constant care. Much of our information and schedules would not be seen if it were not for the continuous care of the website without Rick, Susan and Daryl.

This year we have gotten an increase in our membership much due to Paula's efforts who oversees our new membership database. This has taken a great deal of time and ability in converting our information from an older spreadsheet system to a new database system that makes it much easier to keep information up to date along with sending postcards reminding us when it's time to renew our membership.

This year we also had a special request to support in the Crisis Intervention Training for the Frederick County Sheriff's department. This effort would not have been a success without Curt's willingness, knowledge and great ability in connecting with law enforcement officers.

We have also had a great deal of turnout at our Educational Lecture Series because of Linda's persistent efforts. Linda always provides us with such interesting and knowledgeable speakers on a myriad of topics that are always so useful.

Lastly I thank Kevin for taking on the task of creating and publishing our newsletters. It is quite a task in gathering, editing and publishing articles. I am very grateful to Kevin for his willingness to take that on.

So, along with our own families, it is this wonderful NAMI Frederick Family that helps make it possible for us to carry on by sharing our difficulties and our pains. For me they are a part of my life for which I am truly grateful.

In this Holiday Season, I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving, will have a Merry Christmas and that the New Year will bring you comfort and joy.

Mark

TIPS FOR COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

TIPS FOR COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

(Excerpt. Access full article at www.nami.org)

Persons with mental illnesses have more difficulty with the unexpected and change in routine than do others, and they can experience holidays as negative events. Family members may struggle to balance the needs of their relative with a mental illness with the desires of other relatives and friends.

Hectic schedules, numerous activities, large and frequent gatherings, high volume of noise and increased visual stimulation associated with joyous occasions can lead to feelings of confusion, anxiety, depression, reappearance of psychotic symptoms or unwelcome physical changes in eating, sleeping, energy level and daily functioning. Here are some tips for to help cope with this stressful and chaotic time.

Stay close to family and friends who understand your illness.

- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Be sure to get the sleep you need.
- Celebrate the holidays in ways that are comfortable for you. The holiday season does not stop feelings of sadness and loneliness. Give yourself permission to work through these feelings.
- Don't compare this season with previous ones.
- Enjoy all the little things you have now.
- Talk about the stress you feel with family and friends.
- Keep expectations manageable. Plan your work and work your plan.
- Set a budget and stick with it. Many items that you can give do not cost money - a phone call to a friend may mean more.
- Do something nice for someone else. Do something nice for yourself.
- Stay out of department stores.
- Play your favorite non-holiday music.
- Celebrate the New Year in a way that is comfortable for you.
- Surround yourself with close friends who understand your feelings about the New Year.
- Reflect on positive memories from the past year and try to build on them.

Two Poems, Two Reflections

By Kevin Coyle

Just Look at Me

Just look at me

What do you see?

What do you see in this mirror called me?

A man who is too sick to be free?

Free to lead,

Free to go

Free to be?

Just look at me?

What do you see?

A reflection of yourself?

You, the human?

You who struggle through

You who climb mountains and brave the seas?

Searching for hope like me?

Soul Searching

Sometimes I see

A person I don't want to be,

A reflection not me

Sometimes I hear

Voices

Speaking through

An echo not me

Away, away I say.

Depart from me

But mental illness is not that way

A warrior I must fight

At night and sometimes by dawn's light

But it is not my master

Through many battles

I have gotten better

Lasting longer than days past

Coping in this way and that

Onward I go

Fighting, Writing,

Seeking the reflection of my soul

I Stop Stigma By...

I Stop Stigma by By Laura Greenstein | Nov. 16, 2016 (Excerpt. Read whole article on NAMI.org)

Stigma is defined as a set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something. It's a concept entirely based on societal perception—and a difficult thing to change. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try.

Those who live with mental illness are stigmatized. They are labeled and seen as their condition—and nothing more. Stigma surrounding mental illness is not only a problem, it's a *deprioritized* problem. There's barely been any new studies or research published on the topic in the past 15 years, and all the older research points to the same conclusions: that people living with mental health conditions are:

- Given the same social distance as criminals.
- Perceived as individuals that should be feared.
- Seen as irresponsible, childlike and unable to make their own decisions.
- Less likely to be hired.
- Less likely to get safe housing.
- More likely to be criminalized than offered health care services.
- Afraid of rejection to the point that they don't always pursue opportunities.

And yet, very little is done to improve this issue. Not to mention the complete lack of current research gives people today the excuse of: *Those conclusions probably aren't true anymore, I'm sure circumstances have improved over the past 15 years.* But if you ask any person who lives with mental illness, they will probably tell you circumstances haven't.

What Can You Do?

We need to band together to push stigma to the forefront of societal concern. Only when this issue receives the spotlight it deserves will we start to see change. Here are two things you can do *right now* to help NAMI raise awareness:

1. Pledge to be *stigmafree*. This pledge is a promise to yourself and your community that you will:
 1. Learn more about mental health.
 2. See the person, not the condition.
 3. Act to change people's perceptions of mental illness
2. Share with your community how you stop stigma using the hashtag #IStopStigmaBy.

**“Autum is a second spring when every leaf is a flower”
Albert Camus**

Family Support Groups

We offer two Family Support Groups each month for the family and friends of those with mental illness. These support groups are in a very relaxed, caring, and understanding environment. You can share your story, or just listen to others knowing that all discussions are confidential. The information discussed is ever so valuable.

These monthly support groups are offered on two evenings at the following locations:

- (1) Good Shepherd Church
1415 West 7th St. (just past the 7th St. Frederick shopping center)
First Thursdays – 7:00 to 8:30 pm
- (2) All Saints Episcopal Church
106 West Church St. (please check website for parking & entrance)
Third Wednesdays – 6:30 to 8:00 pm

These meetings are for the family and friends of those with mental illness. We welcome those 18 and older, noting that we follow NAMI guidelines which restrict younger participants as well as those with mental illness.

A Family to Family Class will be forming. Dates are not yet determined. For more information contact: Tracy at tracy.delia@namifcmd.org.

Additional information can be found on our website supportgroups@namifcmd.org or call 240-379-6186.

Become a NAMI member for \$35 per year.

Member benefits include:

- Membership at a NAMI Maryland, a NAMI Affiliate and the NAMI national organization
- Advance notice and information about our free educational and support programs
- Reduced fees for attending NAMI Maryland special events
- A subscription to *The Advocate*, NAMI Nation's quarterly magazine
- A subscription to *NAMI Maryland Connections*, the newsletter of NAMI Maryland and our local affiliates
- Eligibility to vote in all NAMI elections

Access to exclusive members-only material on www.nami.org

Join Online at www.nami.org or send a \$35 check to NAMI Frederick 4 East Church St. Frederick MD 21701



CALENDAR REMINDERS:

Support Groups

- **First Thursdays at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church 7-8:30 pm**
- **Third Wednesdays at All Saints Episcopal Church 6:30 – 8:00**

**NAMI of Frederick County
4 East Church St.
Frederick MD 21701**