



National Alliance on Mental Illness

Newsletter of NAMI Frederick County MD

Winter 2018

Thoughts from the President

Happy New Year! As I'm sure it does for you, the New Year makes me reflect and think about what I want to do better. It is a chance to start fresh, set new goals or make changes in my life. Yes, we can do this anytime during the year but it is this time more than any other when we make changes to improve the course of our life. Maybe it's because another year has gone by and the holidays provide time to reflect on what we've accomplished or it simply gives us some reason to wipe the slate clean.

This year, NAMI Frederick has helped educate and support over 250 people with our Family to Family classes and Family Support Groups but we all know there are many other people we have not helped. Not because we can't, but only because they may not know of what we do. That is one thing we want to improve this year. We know that there are many people in the Frederick area that are coping with mental illness, but they're doing it alone. That's the sad part, because if they knew about NAMI Frederick, they'd know they're not alone.

So one of our New Year's resolutions is to try harder, reach out to people in the Frederick area so that they know they are not alone, that they are able to get the same support that we have by learning more about mental illness, how to cope with it and how we can support each other and our family members.

So how does this trying harder impact you? If more people attend our classes and support groups we need more teachers, more leaders and board members to support these programs. So I would like for you to include helping NAMI Frederick in your list of New Year's resolutions. So please, call or email us and let us know that you want to become more active in supporting the programs of NAMI Frederick whether it be as a Board member, a support group leader, teacher, visiting FMH or however you think you can help. Even if it is just making a donation to support the efforts of those that do volunteer. We need you, this year perhaps more than ever.

Warmest regards for a healthy and happy New Year!

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An Ode To Schizophrenia

By Stephen Wilson

I suppose all people who are affected by mental illness have that moment when "it" happens—the moment when their condition makes itself known. My moment happened when I was an undergraduate in college. It was in the form of voices, hallucinations and paranoid thoughts that one of my professors was trying to kill me.

I was scared and acted like it. I was in trouble, but I acted like everything was fine. My mind split, but it seemed to repair itself enough to get by. I learned one thing that proved to be true in the real world: When you struggle with an invisible disease, many won't believe you. That realization hurt the most and still hurts to this day.

Many years after college, my father passed away on Jan. 2, 2007, due to natural causes, then my sister died the very next day in a car accident on her way to the funeral. I cannot express the pain and anguish that came over me.

The months that followed brought back all of the horrors of my collegiate break, but this one seemed much deeper. My mind split again, but this time there was no repair. I decided to get away from everyone, moving into a serene house in the woods with a pond and vocal wildlife. I loved to gaze at the moon and listen to an orchestra of fireflies and bullfrogs.

To Read the Rest go to <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/December-2016/An-Ode-to-Schizophrenia>

Mental Illnesses and Resources

Schizophrenia: Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness that interferes with a person's ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others. It is a complex, long-term medical illness, affecting about 1% of Americans. Although schizophrenia can occur at any age, the average age of onset tends to be in the late teens to the early 20s for men, and the late 20s to early 30s for women. It is uncommon for schizophrenia to be diagnosed in a person younger than 12 or older than 40. This is a disorder in which a person's functioning deteriorates (work skills, social skills and generalized care of self) because of disturbed thoughts, distorted perceptions of reality (what's happening vs what's not happening), hallucinations (false sensory perception), and delusions (false beliefs). A person suffering from schizophrenia might have disordered speech (word salad), a flat affect, lack of emotion, or have odd gestures/movements and lack energy.

Source: <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Schizophrenia>

Depression: Depression can present different symptoms, depending on the person. But for most people, depressive disorder changes how they function day-to-day, and typically for more than two weeks. Common symptoms include: changes in sleep and appetite, lack of concentration, loss of energy, lack of interest in activities, hopelessness or guilty thoughts, changes in movement (less activity or agitation), physical aches and pains, suicidal thoughts. emotional, motivational, behavioral, cognitive and physical areas of life are affected. There are symptoms of sadness, fatigue, loss of concentration, thoughts of not being good enough, withdrawal from so-

cial circles, sleep disturbances, self-blame, guilt.

Source: <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Depression/Overview>

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that causes dramatic shifts in a person's mood, energy and ability to think clearly. People with bipolar experience high and low moods—known as mania and depression—which differ from the typical ups-and-downs most people experience. The average age-of-onset is about 25, but it can occur in the teens, or more uncommonly, in childhood. The condition affects men and women equally, with about 2.6% of the U.S. population diagnosed with bipolar disorder and nearly 83% of

cases classified as severe. If left untreated, bipolar disorder usually worsens. However, with a good treatment plan including psychotherapy, medications, a healthy lifestyle, a regular schedule and early identification of symptoms, many people live well with the condition.”

Source: <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Bipolar-Disorder>

In Bipolar disorder there is a decreased need for sleep and an experience of a flight of ideas with a loose association between the thoughts. “Racing thoughts” has been used to describe this in a person suffering with Bipolar Disorder.

To make it more complex a person can be diagnosed with Bipolar I, Bipolar II and Bipolar with rapid cycling. Bipolar I has full manic episodes with depression following, Bipolar II has mildly manic episodes alternating with major depressive episodes, while a person experiencing four or more mood episodes within a 1 year period is considered to be rapid cycling.

Source: <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Bipolar-Disorder>

Are You Connected?

Are you 18 years or older and dealing with a mental health diagnosis? If so this group is for you. We all need to be connected, just as our brains are connected to our bodies so that when our brain tells our legs to walk they do! The NAMI Connections Peer Support Group offers you an opportunity to safely share how you are living with your mental illness and an opportunity to help others learn how to live with their challenges. We meet once a month on the 3rd Tuesday from 7-8:30pm at the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The church generously provides us a lovely living room in the house located next to the church at 35 E. Church Street, Frederick.

NAMI Connection is a peer-led support group for adults living with mental illness. Family and Friends Support Groups

Please join us, we would love to have you CONNECT with us.

Kathy and Cheryl, co-facilitators and peer members

Keys To Managing Schizophrenia

By Andrew Downing | Dec. 08, 2017

When I was 16, I was ranked number one in North America's National Hockey League central scouting agency. Most scouts considered me a shoe-in to play professionally. But by the time I turned eighteen, both my grasp on reality and my aspirations to be a professional hockey player were gone. This is when my mental illness journey began. This is when I was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Since then, I've been hospitalized twice—both times in a dramatic fashion. Before my second hospitalization, my visual hallucinations were out of control and I nearly died. I was carving gibberish on the walls of my apartment with a knife and I thought I was made of sand. I threatened to prove this reality with the knife and began gliding a (thankfully) dull knife all over my body. My mother was forced to call the police.

I spent two weeks in a psychiatric ward after that episode and narrowly avoided being committed to a more permanent facility. Nearly every time I write or talk about this time of my life, I cry. I feel so blessed and lucky to be alive so many years later. My symptoms have never completely gone away, and I'm always at risk for a psychotic episode if I don't take all my medications. But I've learned to better manage my condition.

After nearly twenty years living with schizophrenia, I'd like to share a few key pieces of advice that have helped me during my recovery:

Find The Right Treatment Plan

Managing schizophrenia starts with finding the right medications, and there are more options for treatment now than ever before. Everyone reacts differently to various medications, so getting the proper diagnostic assessment is very important. And developing a relationship with a professional can be very valuable, as it increases a person's chance of finding a medication that works. Learning to speak truthfully and openly to a medication provider may

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Resources

- **NAMI.org**

You will find treatment options, discussion groups, tips, blogs and much more. Pick up a brochure from any NAMI affiliate and you will find local resources. For Local resources in the Frederick area, got to www.namifrederick.org and click on "NAMI County Resource Information."

- **GoodRx.com** — Find coupons and where to find the lowest prices for medications.

- **NeedyMeds.org** — a non-profit giving free information on programs that can help people who can't afford medications.

- Short and informative overviews of Mental Illness can be found on **Youtube** (www.youtube.com). There you will find wonderful videos of both researchers and consumers giving perspectives on many disorders, including their own lived experiences.

- Stephen Fry, actor and comedian, has done a documentary on having bipolar disorder: "The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive." Part 1 of the documentary can be found at <https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/stephen-fry-the-secret-life-of-the-manic-depressive/> or by searching www.youtube.com

- Elyn Saks, is an Associate Dean and Orrin B. Evans Professor of Law, Psychology, and Psychiatry and the Behavioral Sciences at the **University of Southern California**. Her **TedTalk** is entitled, "A tale of mental illness: From the inside" found at www.ted.com/talks/elynn_saks_seeing_mental_illness

- Also, check out Kay Redfield Jamison, professor of psychology at John Hopkins University, on her experiences with bipolar disorder. She is the author of *A Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness*.

- FREE educational teleconferences/workshops and new resources can always be found at NAMI.org

prove to be the greatest asset to a person living with schizophrenia, especially in the beginning stages of treatment.

Find A Support System

Sometimes people experiencing mental illness choose to isolate, but we can all benefit from relationships—remember that no one is an island. Finding healthy activities that foster relationships may be intimidating for someone with schizophrenia, but having a support system is invaluable. One place to start is support groups within organizations like NAMI.

There is a special bond between people who have mental illness or have a loved one living with a mental illness. Having an informed, listening ear can provide immense healing for someone with schizophrenia. While living in fear of relationships is a reality for many, there are tools and programs to help people conquer these fears and maintain fulfilling relationships.

Find Your Own Road to Recovery

Medicines and relationships are incomplete without addressing what a person can do to improve their *own* quality of life:

Eat healthy. A well-balanced diet offers many mental health benefits. Side effects of antipsychotic medicines can cause constipation, dehydration and weight gain. A healthy diet and plenty of water can remedy those issues.

Exercise. Walking is a fantastic source of exercise and many people find peace in the great outdoors.

Find work that isn't too stressful. If a person with schizophrenia is unable to work, they can still accomplish small tasks that can make them feel productive.

Spirituality. Religion can offer help in conquering addictions, finding community, support and help in navigating delusional thinking.

Art therapy. Painting and drawing is a common practice in mental health facilities throughout the world. Expressing yourself through creative art can help reestablish identity lost to delusional thinking.

Schizophrenia is *not* a hopeless situation—people living with schizophrenia can experience recovery and live fulfilling lives. I'm an example of that. I may not be a professional hockey player, but I'm grateful for my life. I've learned to manage my mental illness and you can too.

nami.org/blogs/December-2017/Keys-to-Managing-Schizophrenia

Just what is mental illness?

I can't think of anyone I know that at some time hasn't said to me: "I'm so depressed." Perhaps we all should take a closer, more clinical look at mental illness and what it means to have mental illness. If we understand what mental illness is, then we can affect the changes needed to support those impacted by mental illness. **Queens Public Television** has a wonderful series titled *Understanding Mental Illness*. The first episode looks at "*What is mental illness?*" and can be found at <http://www.qptv.org/content/understanding-mental-illness-episode-1-what-mental-illness>

Research has shown that mental illness is associated with brain chemistry, influenced by genetics and brain structure. The prognosis for someone suffering with a mental health issue is good; with treatment (chemical, psychological, and emotional) comes recovery, with support of our loved one comes success. Through our newsletters, we plan to present a rather generic look at schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, PTSD, and borderline personality disorder. We want to address the importance of education in schools and how we can politically encourage a greater focus on mental illness.

Family to Family

The Family to Family course is ramping up again. This course is offered by NAMI over a twelve week period and deals with experiences and the impact that mental illness has on the family and friends of those suffering with mental illness. Our teachers are trained and certified by national and state trainers and are family members (parents, siblings, adult children, spouses or partners) of a person with mental illness. You do not need to be a NAMI member to attend this course but by becoming a member you help support the work that NAMI does — like this very valuable course.

Help support NAMI by shopping on-line

The following are sites that will donate a percentage of the purchases you make through their shopping links.

- Amazon: <http://amzn.to/2jFCOKE>. This customized link will automatically donate up to 8% of your purchase to NAMI Maryland without adding any cost to you.
 - Giving Assistant: <http://bit.ly/2f8QyZI>. This site allows you to shop at 3000 stores and will give a percentage of your purchase to NAMI Maryland.
 - eScrip: <http://shopping.escrip.com>. Pick NAMI Maryland as your designated beneficiary. This site also provides special deals like free shipping and discounts by using their links.
 - iGive: www.igive.com. Pick NAMI Maryland as your designated beneficiary and shop at over 1700 stores. They will donate a percentage of your purchase to NAMI Maryland.
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NAMI Membership & Support

Please make sure that your membership is up-to-date. Go to <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Join> to check.

() Basic Membership \$40 — () Household Membership \$60 — () Student/Limited Income Membership \$5

Either go to the website above or you may send a check payable to NAMI Frederick **along with your Name, Address email and phone Number to:**

**NAMI Frederick County
P.O. Box 3056
Frederick, MD 21705-3056**

NAMI is a non-profit 501(c) organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. copy of our current financial statement is available upon request. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland are available from the Secretary of State.

We need your help

You can also help support NAMI by making a tax deductible contribution and/or volunteering. While all of the programs we offer like the Family to Family course, Support Groups, Brochures and our Lectures are available to all free of charge, we have to pay for all of the materials and brochures needed to support these programs. All of our board and staff are completely volunteer so any money you contribute goes directly to supporting all of our programs. So please consider sending us a donation or offering to volunteer to help support not just NAMI, but all of those in the Frederick area that are coping with mental illness.

Monthly Support Group Meetings

Family Support Groups

1st Thursday — 7:00pm to 8:30pm
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 1415 West 7th St.

3rd Wednesday — 6:30pm to 8:00pm
All Saints Episcopal Church, 106 West Church St.

Connection Peer Support Group

3rd Tuesday — 7:00pm to 8:30pm
Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rupp House
35 East Church St

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