

# NAMI Overview

**Margaret Murphy**  
**Executive Director**  
**NAMI Lehigh Valley**

# WHO IS NAMI LEHIGH VALLEY?

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is the nation's largest grass-roots mental health organization

NAMI LV is one of hundreds of local affiliates and state organizations

Dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans and families affected by mental illness

# OUR MISSION

Provide education, support and hope for individuals living with mental illness and their families



Our advocacy efforts and educational programming seek to:

inform the public about  
mental illness

remove the stigma  
attached to mental illness

garner support and  
services for those affected  
by serious mental illness

# HOW DOES NAMI LV PROVIDE SUPPORT?

- Weekly peer and family members support groups. These confidential sessions allow attendees to share and benefit from experiences of others
- The support groups are for individuals facing challenges of recovering from severe and persistent mental illness or for their family members
- Individuals and families who have found a supportive place at our meetings have diagnoses including major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and general anxiety disorder





## HOW DO WE EDUCATE?

### Education courses for peers and family members

- 8 week courses meet once a week
- Evidence-based; covers diagnoses, medications, resources, coping skills
- Led by individuals living with mental illness or by family members of someone living with mental illness
- Leaders trained by NAMI national organization
- No fee to attend, registration is required

HOW DOES  
NAMI LV  
EDUCATE OUR  
COMMUNITIES?

- **Hospital Support Program**
- **Presentations to schools—Ending the Silence**
- **Professional and Community Groups**
- **Local Church Connections-- Faithnet**
- **Anti-stigma Campaign—including NAMI Talks**

# Stigma and Mental Health

- Leads to fear, blame, over control, underestimating
- Self stigma and external stigma
  - Often cited as primary reason preventing people from seeking treatment
  - Fear of being labeled; fear of discrimination from health care providers, employers, friends and family members, others
  - Myth that mental illness is a character weakness rather than an illness or is something that can be remedied by faith alone or by “toughening up”

**Mental  
Health/Illness  
covers a range**

- **Like physical health**
- **Can range from mild or one-time to chronic and severe**
- **Most people fall in the middle**



# Eliminating stigma

## Three methods: (Patrick Corrigan and others)

### ➤ Protest

- Effective against specific aspects
- Doesn't replace negative with positive beliefs

### ➤ Education

- Most effective with those ready to hear message
- Content matters (biologically based)

### ➤ Contact

- Believed to be most effective
- Combine with education
- Goal to replace stereotype

# Six categories of Self-Care Habits

## Care of self

- Physical-eating healthy, sleep, exercise, rest, breaks, meditating

## Feelings

- Develop comfort with negative feelings
- Self-compassion—what would you say to a friend
- Ability to regulate
- Don't avoid by alcohol, substance use or overeating
- Be aware of stressors

## Social Support

- Network, friends, shared activity or interest, family, coworkers –uplifting
- Connection
- Online can be good

*Healing Magazine, vol 27, #2*

# Self-Care, continued

## Enjoying life

- Fun!
- Vacation
- Humor
- Community service, boundaries, do what you can--connection

## Planning

- Plan realistically
- Delegate, ask for help
- Flexibility

## Responsibility and Curiosity

- Creative
- Learn new things
- Responsible with finances, etc

# Remember



**Activities Not static, may try different things**

Physical, creative, spiritual, pampering



**Build into routine**

Breathing, music  
Environment



**Don't compare self care routines**

Someone else's 10 mile hike may not be your self care



**Self reflection**

Where am I at today?



**What does a good day look like?**

Try to incorporate aspects



**Ask for help! Professional and informal**

Strength in seeking care  
Which takes us to next slide

# How to help

- Listen
- Listen
- Listen
- Ask someone how they are doing; use what you've observed
- Don't judge their feelings. Remember mental health issues are not character flaws or weaknesses
- Crucial role of offering help, support
- Don't point out all the good things in their lives; don't say you know just how they feel, don't compare. Do validate "It must be very difficult to feel that way."
- If you've had similar experience, and feel better, share this
- Be aware that mental health provider shortage exists
  - -BUT-primary doc, physician extenders, county supports
    - **-Support groups, education courses**
- If crisis: ER, county crisis lines, 988

## When to seek help (for yourself or others)

- When symptoms interfere with daily living
- Don't enjoy usual hobbies, interests
- Can't do things used to do; no energy, paralyzed by anxiety
- Intensity and duration—generally two weeks or more
- Discussion-or action-of harming self or others