

With more than 1,200 affiliates, NAMI is America's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of all individuals affected by mental illness.

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NAMI Columbus

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Georgia Crisis & Access Line

Single Point of Entry to access mental health, addictive disease and crisis services 24/7/365
1-800-715-4225

Peer Support "Warm Line"

1-888-945-1414 (toll-free)
The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network operates a state-funded, consumer-directed "warm line" for anyone struggling with mental health issues, 24 hours a day

AmericanWork, Inc.
Columbus ACT Team
706-641-9663

The Virtues of Selfishness As Applied to Self-Care and Emotional Wellness

Monday, May 20, 2013

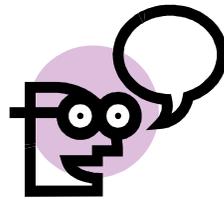
Education Meeting 6:00 PM

CONTACT Training Building – 1520 22nd Street

In the world of mental and emotional wellness, few terms are bandied about as much as *self-care*. This, of course, can be attributed to the extreme importance of taking preventative steps in managing one's symptoms and triggers. However what does one do when his or her self-care efforts are seen as selfish or are misunderstood by others? May is Mental Health Awareness Month and is the perfect time to open up discussion about prevention, management, and the importance of a self-care plan in the daily challenge to maintain one's emotional wellness.

This month NAMI Columbus' guest speaker for the educational meeting on Monday, May 20th at 6 PM. will be Elizabeth J. Brown, a local counselor and recent graduate of Columbus State University's Master of Science in Community Counseling program.

Please plan on joining us and bring something for the refreshment table if you are able.



Frankly Speaking

Hello all,

Recently, I posted the following statement on our Facebook page. "NAMI is a family, a very large and widespread kinship that knows no strangers yet has little time for those who cannot see the person within us. We stand strong against forces that try to tear us down and we will use our last ounce of strength to help each other get up, time after time. Mental Illness is something we have but respect is something that we've earned by carrying twice the burden that anyone would ever want to bear. When our brothers triumph, we celebrate like sailors, and when our sisters suffer we feel their pain to the deepest corner of our hearts. And we all look forward to the day when everyone who walks the face of the great planet Earth will join our family, not because they are ill, but because they can all finally see the person within." It was dedicated to two of our family members who suffered a very heartbreaking loss recently. It is also a testament to the courage our consumers have shown against so much adversity and what it has meant to me and others who have witnessed your resiliency. What a great family it is.

Frank Dunford

Frank Dunford, President
NAMI Columbus

Upcoming Events

May 2013 – Mental Health Awareness Month	June 2013
05-11 Children’s MH Awareness Week 06 Mental Health Court Graduation <i>(You are cordially invited to attend at 5 pm at the Columbus Government Center, Plaza Level)</i> 08 Nat’l Children’s MH Awareness Day 12-18 National Suicide Prevention Week 16 Suicide Prevention Day 17 Mental WELLNESS Day 20 Monthly Education Program	07-08 NAMI Cols Semi-annual Yard Sale 17 Monthly Education Program 20 Peer-to-Peer Class Begins (10 wks) 24-28 Muscogee County Sheriff’s Office CIT 27-30 NAMI National Convention, San Antonio

REGISTRATION is always open for the 2013 NAMI Education Classes

Family-to-Family is a free 12-week course for caregivers of individuals with severe mental illnesses that discusses the clinical treatment of these illnesses and teaches the knowledge and skills that caregivers need to cope more effectively. The next Family-to-Family class will begin **Thursday evening, September 5th**. Call our NAMI Columbus Office and leave a message that you’d like to register for this class.

Lisa Dixon, M.D. at the University of Maryland School of Medicine conducted an evaluation of the Family-to-Family course. Her results showed that "course participants gained a greater understanding of mental illness, coped much better, worried less, and felt newly empowered to advocate for better treatment and services for their relative. Many family members described the impact of taking this course as life changing".

Peer-to-Peer Education Course is a free ten week–2-1/2 hours per week–experiential education course on the topic of recovery for any person with a mental illness who is interested in establishing and maintaining wellness. The course uses a combination of lecture, interactive exercises and structured group processes. The diversity of experience among course participants affords for a lively dynamic that moves the course along. The next Peer-to-Peer class will begin **Thursday evening, June 6th**. Call our NAMI Columbus Office and leave a message that you’d like to register for this class.

NAMI Basics is a free six-week course for family caregivers of children and adolescents who have either been diagnosed with a serious mental illness / serious disturbance or who are experiencing symptoms but have not yet been diagnosed. This free course is taught by trained NAMI members. The start date for the first class for 2013 has not yet been set, but you CAN pre-register and place yourself on our waiting list for our next class. When we have enough people registered, we will announce a start date.

To register, or to obtain more information, please call the NAMI Columbus office at (706) 320-3755 or e-mail us at info@namicols.org. To ensure we will have enough textbooks, the class location for each class will be given at time of registration. Seats are always limited to encourage class bonding, so reserve your seat now.



Change and Save the Date/Gather Your Stuff!

This is a reminder that our next indoor yard sale will be **8 am-2 pm, Friday June 7th and 8 am-noon, Saturday June 8th**. Usually our semi-annual spring yard sale is held the last weekend in April. But because the NAMI Georgia Annual meeting was held that weekend, (and many of our volunteers needed to attend in order to be recertified) and there was a conflict with booking our room at CONTACT, we’ve changed the date for our spring sale.

On **Thursday, June 7th between 10 am to 6 pm**, you can drop your “gently used” stuff off at CONTACT (1520 22ND St.).

The money we raise from the yard sale helps fund our education and support programs. Many people now put the yard sale in their yearly calendars and have come to expect it. We always need clothes donated. We are especially looking for large sizes and men’s clothing. Furniture always sells well. Do you have an old sofa or dresser that you really don’t need? Let someone else get some good use out of it. When the yard sale is over on Saturday, consumers are able to come “shop” for free. It is heartwarming to watch their excitement when they find a good deal.

We need people to sign up to work the day before the sale (Thursday, June 7th) helping to organize and price. We also need people on Friday and Saturday of the sale helping to keep things organized and to help with speeding up the checkout process.

This is the **11th year** for our semi-annual indoor yard sale. Please help us to make it a success.



Mental Illness and Christianity

By Stephen O. Akinduro

‘To the extent that we respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, we do the most to promote the health of the nation.’ ~ Former Surgeon General and mental health advocate Dr. David Satcher.

I love the above stated quote because it reminds me of the words of Jesus when He said, *‘whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’* (Matthew 25:40). In other words, we can only judge the real health of our society when we are honest about how we treat the most vulnerable among us – and many people with severe mental illnesses fall into this category because of the stigma and discrimination they face. Let me also preface this essay by saying that I realize every NAMI member is not a person of faith, so please do not take this essay as an attempt at proselytizing, because I also have my own issues with aspects of organized religion.

Within the past few of weeks, I have had some heated debates about the subject of Christian faith and mental illness. There are many who believe that mental disorders are not real disorders, but character flaws or a sign of weak faith. To those people, I ask them to talk to a soldier or veteran suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or to someone so clinically depressed they think suicide is the only answer to end the internal pain.

My first discussion about this issue was when I was speaking to a Crisis Intervention Team class (a NAMI sponsored class that trains members of law enforcement on how to de-escalate people with mental illness and get them treatment). As I was telling my story of my struggle with clinical depression and how it had affected my life, a young Marshal’s Officer looked up at me during the Q & A phase and asked me almost in shock, *‘are you talking about yourself?’* Of course I was, but he was texting most of the time I was speaking so he may have missed my introduction. He then went to

say he was a Christian and asked me if I was involved in the church and for how long, adding that he did not see how someone who was dedicated to their faith could struggle with some of the things that I mentioned. This is one of my biggest pet peeves; when people assume that just because you struggle with a mental disorder, you have poor character or are spiritually weak. I did engage in a debate with him on the spot about the issue. I am no theologian, but I have read the Bible a lot and I told him that if he read the words of Jesus or the book of Job, he’d realize that it is misguided to assume that someone is suffering (whether mentally or physically) simply as a consequence of poor faith, sin, or a character flaw.

The debate was starting to get heated until the class facilitator, Joyce Dent-Fitzpatrick had to interrupt, saying, *“trust me, I know Stephen, you don’t want to go there on this subject with him because I know him well and have read his essays on the subject.”* But to say I was angry with some of the comments the Marshal made would be an understatement, because he was basically implying that if I just applied my faith and were a good disciple of Christ, I would not have such problems. This is the main reason why I stopped going to church for years and became disillusioned with Christianity and religion as a whole; I still loved Jesus because of His compassionate spirit and gracious sacrifice He made for us. But I really began to understand why people become agnostic or atheist, and why these groups are one of the fastest growing demographics in America right now.

I could write a ten page single spaced essay on all the spiritual gymnastics I went through trying to “rid” myself of my depression: from giving my life to Christ as a

teenager; rededicating my life to Him several times; going to deliverance services to cast that spirit of “depression” out of me; getting re-baptized; studying my Bible religiously, tithing faithfully etc. At one point I even seriously considered going into ministry full time. I could have been a candidate for most dedicated Christian of the year, and when all failed to “cure” me of the depression, it only added to the guilt and made me feel like maybe God didn’t love me and I become enraged with religion and God. Besides, I was totally against seeing a shrink, counselor or taking psychiatric meds, because I had been told by many in the church that doing so was a further sign of weak faith. But then I asked myself, would we make the same assumptions about someone with cancer, or cardiac problems or any other physical illness? Why is it that when it comes to mental illnesses, there is this assumption that there is a character flaw or if the person is religious they aren’t dedicated enough to their faith?

The second incident was a debate I had with my sister-in-law. My brother had told her that I had recently been hospitalized for suicidal ideation and to pray for me, and she proceeded to send me this long text and then an email saying that if I just gave my life to JESUS (she capitalized it) and had faith in him I would not have these problems. She also added that I needed to stop focusing on the suffering in my life and just focus on JESUS. Now this is a short paraphrase of what she said, she even added comments on my Facebook page (which really ticked me off). I responded to her privately via email – after I had calmed down – and told her that since she didn’t know my full story it was inappropriate to make misguided assumptions. First of all, how does she know I don’t have faith in Jesus? And

secondly, where does it say in the Bible that just because you have faith in Jesus, you won't have challenges or maybe illnesses in life? To be fair, she later apologized to me saying she was misguided in her assumptions and added 'I was wrong.'

Is Billy Graham any less faithful to Jesus now that he is terminally ill? Great men and women of God have died, some early, some from diseases or even assassination. Death bats a 1000 every time. Did all of these people not have faith in God? There are two great books that I often recommend that delve into the question of why there is often unexplainable suffering among some Christians. One is by Bart D. Ehrman called 'God's problem, how the Bible fails to answer our most important question – why we suffer.' The other book is Philip Yancey's "Disappointment with God – three questions no one asks aloud." Philip Yancey is one of my favorite Christian writers.

What I got from reading these books is that the Bible gives no

single answer to the reason why people suffer. Sometimes, it is because of sin, but if we are all sinners as the Bible says, why do some suffer more than others? Sometimes it is due to illness (physical or mental); other times it is God's purpose in the person's life to foster humility and compassion for others; other times it is being the victim of other person's harsh actions etc. This is one reason why I am very cautious before I start making assumptions about anyone's problems.. If you don't know the whole story, the best thing is to listen attentively or keep quiet. That is my new motto. I don't always do it, but I am a work in progress.

To be fair, attitudes are starting to change in many Christian circles. And this is reflected in some of the books currently being published and how many in the church who have mental illnesses are starting to speak out to break the stigma.

Steve McVey, a fabulous Christian-writer has a great book, *52 Lies heard in Church every*

Sunday, and he has a whole chapter addressing the lie "it is a sin to be depressed". This is what McVey says:

"This genuine clinical form of depression is a medical condition, and it needs to be addressed by trained medical and therapeutic professionals. It is dangerous because it could even lead to life-threatening problems. Even people who have lived decades happily and responsibly have run into this monster, and they see themselves collapse and become nonfunctional. If you have this type of depression, your brain – which, remember, is an organ – simply cannot function properly. The chemicals necessary for a functioning brain are lacking. Then along come some "spiritual" Christians who proclaim that depression is a sin, adding to the pain of those who are in the middle of one of those legitimate types of depression. Those suffering believers then have guilt added to the pain they already feel, and they begin thinking that God must be angry at them too because of their inability to overcome their "sin".

Here are 5 books on the subject of *Christian faith and mental illness* recently suggested in the magazine 'Christianity Today' by [Amy Simpson](#) the author of "[Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission](#) (published: Apr 3, 2013):

1. [Why Do Christians Shoot Their Wounded? Helping \(Not Hurting\) Those with Emotional Difficulties](#)

Dwight L. Carlson, M.D.

This clear and practical book rejects the idea that hurting people should be condemned for their pain, and it succeeds in equipping churches to provide more effective care for these people.

2. [Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness](#)

Kathryn Greene-McCreight

In this book, an Episcopal priest and college professor afflicted by bipolar disorder shares her experiences and wrestles through theological questions pertaining to mental illness.

3. [Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness](#)

Matthew S. Stanford, Ph.D.

This book contains detailed information and biblical perspective about various types of disorders. It is an excellent reference to better understand the problem as well as help people with mental illness.

4. [When Your Family Is Living with a Mental Illness](#)

Marcia Lund

Part of the Difficult Times series, this is a small booklet that church leaders can give to families affected by mental illness. It refers readers to other resources, and assures families that they are not alone in the challenges they face.

5. [Ministry with Persons with Mental Illness and Their Families](#)

Edited by Robert H. Albers, William H. Meller, and Steven D. Thurber :These essays from psychiatrists and theologians discuss mental illness from medical, theological, and ministry perspectives. They provide detailed information for church leaders about various types of disorders.



How I Put the Happy in Mother's Day

By Dawn Brown, NAMI HelpLine

When someone wishes me a Happy Mother's Day they have no idea what it means to me; if you have an adult child with mental illness perhaps you can understand. Before I could have a happy Mother's Day, I needed to recreate the mother I was and become the mother I needed to be.

When a woman becomes a mother everything changes as we take on the mantle of motherhood. Since there is no job description for mother, we tend to combine different experiences and expectations to create a rosy notion of motherhood. But nothing prepares you for being the mother of someone who develops a mental illness.

As my son began to experience the symptoms of mental illness, I believed as his mother that we could overcome anything, even schizophrenia. I was wrong. I was unprepared. I was doing more harm than good. He was slipping away, and as I stood in the kitchen and looked at the screaming, irrational stranger my son had become, it quickly became obvious that he needed a very different type of mother. Everything changed. My sense of loss was profound. My ability to protect and nurture my child was limited by my lack of knowledge and understanding. I needed to grieve and get my bearings, but mental illness demands action. I didn't know what questions to ask, what people to see, and where to go. I didn't know much, but I knew just enough to reach out to NAMI.

Using a nationwide network of NAMI State Organizations, NAMI Affiliates and a large Web presence, NAMI is ready to help you find information, gain insight and get support when mental illness strikes. NAMI was created by and for people like you and me, and today tens of thousands of volunteers offer themselves to help individuals and their loved ones find recovery and build better lives.

Being the mother of an adult with mental illness required me to become an expert on community mental health support services, psychiatric medications and psychosocial treatments. I learned a whole new vocabulary for a confusing, disjointed system that was adequate at best and harmful at its worst. I graduated from the NAMI Family-to-Family education program, plugged in to a NAMI Family Support Group, added the NAMI HelpLine to my speed dial (1 (800) 950-6264) and learned the art of patience and persistence.

It has been over 10 years since my son was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and everything has changed, including me. Today I am strong and assertive in advocating for my son. My boundaries are clear and defined. I respect him and expect respect. Treatment and medication are non-negotiable. I don't indulge any illusions about what living with a mental illness means. My son and I have been through some very bad times and traveled through many dark places.

I've also learned that my son is not a burden that I must carry through life. His life is his own. Life's lessons are best learned through natural consequences, both good and bad, resulting from our choices. And, I've learned that my son desperately needs me to walk alongside him offering love, support and guidance, as he finds his place in life. I love him dearly. He is doing well. I am very happy to be his mother.

This Mother's Day if I could send every mother who has a child living with mental illness a Happy Mother's Day card it would have this message taken from NAMI's Family-to-Family education program.

Sometimes Love Means Let Go...

- To let go does not mean to stop caring. It means I can't do it for someone else.
- To let go is not to cut myself off. It's the realization I can't control another.
- To let go is to allow someone to learn from natural consequences.
- To let go is to recognize when the outcome is not in my hands.
- To let go is not to care for, but to care about.
- To let go is not to fix, but to be supportive.
- To let go is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.
- To let go is not to expect miracles, but to take each day as it comes, and cherish myself in it.
- To let go is not to criticize or regulate anybody, but to try to become what I dream I can be.
- To let go is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future. To let go is to fear less and love more.



We are very lucky to have a lot of volunteers for NAMI Columbus. But we need even more. The following are just some of the ways you could help NAMI Columbus:

- Train to be a Family/Friend or NAMI Connection Support Group Facilitator.
- Train to be a teacher for Family-to-Family, Peer-to-Peer or NAMI Basics classes.
- Write an article for our monthly newsletter.
- Work in our NAMI Office (inside The Bradley Center) ½ day a week.
- Help distribute brochures in area psychiatry offices.
- Help organize our local fundraising activities like team building for the annual NAMI Georgia Walks.
- Take one of the week-long CIT classes held in Columbus and then become active with future CIT classes.
- Help welcome newcomers to our monthly education meeting.
- Help with _____ (fill in the blank for whatever you have a passion for).

Call the NAMI Columbus Office at (706) 320-3755 and leave a message for what you would like to volunteer for. We need and want you!!



Columbus

P.O. Box 8581
Columbus, GA 31908
(706) 320-3755
Our Area's Voice on Mental Illness

Support Our Support (Groups)



Many people find their way to our classes by first attending a support group. If you are a NAMI Columbus "long timer" (we don't want to call you old), please attend either of the two weekly NAMI Connection support groups or the weekly Family support group. Newcomers can use your wisdom and hard-earned experience. Sharing a message of recovery gives the hope they are searching for. Many people tell us that the NAMI motto "**You Are Not Alone**" is the initial feeling they realize at their first meeting. If you are willing to train to be a support group facilitator, let us know!

I want to support NAMI Columbus and NAMI's mission.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Numbers (do not enter a number if you do not want to be listed in the Membership Directory (members only).

E-Mail (Please include so we can be green and email you our monthly newsletter.)

Please check type of membership desired:

- Individual Membership \$35 Dues
- Professional Membership \$50 Dues
(Individual and Professional Dues are for one year and are tax deductible.)
- \$3 Open Door Membership (low income)
- I am not joining at this time, but I would like to make a contribution of \$ _____. (Thank you!!!)

✂ Please Cut and Mail ✂

NAMI National, NAMI Georgia and NAMI Columbus are dedicated to eradicating stigma and improving the lives of persons with mental illnesses thereby also benefiting their friends, family and community. Catch the wave and be a part of change.

NAMI Columbus is one of the largest affiliates in Georgia. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible. Membership includes a subscription to our monthly newsletter, membership directory, and access to immediate news on advocacy, treatment and support issues from our national, state and local organizations.

Please make checks payable to:
NAMI Columbus
P.O. Box 8581
Columbus, Georgia 31908

You can also join safely online at www.nami.org/join (\$35.00 by credit card).