



## Greetings and Welcome Back!

As chair of the Peer NAMI St. Louis Advisory Committee, I want to apologize for missing an issue. Many exciting things are going on at the NAMI office. First our Executive Director, Dar Walker, has retired and we hope his retirement will be a long and enjoyable one spent in good health. Mr. Walker will surely be missed. We welcome aboard new Executive Director, Christine Patterson, Ph.D.

Secondly, our office has a new location. We moved from Brentwood to Maryland Heights effective July 3. Please make a note of our new address at the end of the newsletter.

The third thing I'd like to point out is that we encourage and welcome peers to submit an article or poem that has to do with your journey with mental illness. Maybe it is about coping with some of your darker days, celebrating some of your triumphs over difficult challenges, or advocating to break stigma. These are a few examples of the types of material we welcome.

In the beginning of July, we celebrate our country's Declaration of Independence, and we have come such a long way on so many subjects for the improvement of this country. I started to have symptoms of mental illness when I was eight years old. It was the summer of 1973, so I can say first hand that this country has come a long way with extinguishing the stigma of mental illness. I realize we have a long way to go and a lot of hard work to do in education and advocacy, and I am so thankful that we all have that freedom to have a voice and speak openly about mental illness.

Here's to the mental health community in St. Louis Missouri –USA. Happy Birthday! Be safe this summer, keep hydrated, keep cool and stay healthy.

Chair, Peer Advisory Committee,

Christopher Lee

Check our website for  
more information at  
[www.namistl.org](http://www.namistl.org),  
or give us a call at  
314-962-4670.

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## Fireworks Safety

- Fireworks Safety
- Obey all local laws regarding the use of fireworks.
- Know your fireworks. Read the cautionary labels and performance descriptions before igniting.
- A responsible should supervise all fireworks activities.
- Never give fireworks to children.
- Wear safety glasses when shooting fireworks.
- Light one firework at a time and quickly move away.
- Use fireworks OUTDOORS in a clear area away from buildings and vehicles.
- Never relight a “dud” firework. Wait 20 minutes and soak it in a bucket of water.
- Always have a bucket of water and water hose nearby.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket or shoot them in metal or glass containers.
- Do not experiment with homemade fireworks.
- Dispose of spent fireworks by wetting them down and placing them in a metal trash can away from any building or combustible materials until the next day.
- Don’t forget about safety for your pet. Don’t bring your pets to a fireworks display.
- If fireworks are being used near your home, put your pet in a safe interior room to avoid exposure to the sounds.
- Never shoot fireworks of any kind near pets.

Source: *National Council on Fireworks Safety*



## Freedom and the Fourth of July

By Ellen Fein Rosenbaum

It's summertime. Some of us love this time of year...the warm weather, playing in the water, camping and hiking, the list goes on and on. Part of the summertime experience is celebrating the Fourth of July. What we tend to do on this date is barbecue and watch fireworks. We may not take the time to honor the importance of having a holiday where we celebrate our democracy. Politics aside, our country has been a successful experiment. No other country can claim to accomplish what we have. We can vote and see our candidates elected. If we don't like what our government is doing, we can protest. We can call our legislators to express our points of view. We can even run for office, for a position on the county council or in the State Legislature. If we want to work on getting a bill passed, the system is set up to allow our voices to be heard. Grassroots support has played an effective way of raising funds to run a campaign. Instead of feeling overlooked, each one of us has the power to vote. And each of us has the freedom to campaign for whomever or whatever we want.

So whenever you feel like your voice is overlooked and that no one cares what you believe, remember what our country was founded upon. Freedom of speech. Freedom of expression. The constitutional right to vote. Our democracy is working. It is easier to see our voices being recognized.

I know that there are laws that differentiate rights for people with a mental illness. Collective advocacy can work. If we work as a movement, we will have a better chance of getting our voices heard. As the saying goes, no man or woman stands alone. We're Americans. And we're free. And we are lucky to be

## Freedom

By Helene Gottesmann, Ph.D.

The Fourth of July is a day that celebrates independence and freedom. This holiday celebrates the signing of The Declaration of Independence where the members of congress declared independence and freedom from British rule.

Independence is a very important goal for those struggling with mental illness. The St. Louis mental health community is fortunate to have the Independence Center which provides important services for the mentally ill. The Independence Center is a clubhouse where people suffering from chronic mental illness can become members. These clubhouses are in different cities in the U.S. and around the world. Members work at the clubhouse and/or find part time employment outside. Work brings a sense of independence and purpose. The Independence Center also provide community and a sense of belonging.

The Fourth of July also celebrates freedom, equality and the individual's rights to pursue life, liberty and happiness. Persons with mental illness should be free of stigma from the community and free from their symptoms. NAMI and other mental health organizations fight stigma that persons with mental illness feel in the community. NAMI has a program, In Our Own Voice, where people are trained to speak about their mental illness.

Psychiatric research enables individuals to have access to new and better medications, thus providing freedom from symptoms or weakening of those symptoms. This will give individuals the freedom to pursue life, liberty and happiness.

## Mental Illness and Family Life

By Karl Miller

My Dad and I were the “black sheep” in our family. It seems mental illness struck my Dad like lightning from out of nowhere. I believe it came from overwork. I had signs of mental illness in my early 20’s due to drinking a lot in my senior year of college.

Another “out of the blue” is nature. Mental illnesses are not totally genetic but a vulnerability to developing a mental illness might be inherited.

Sometimes physical and spiritual abuse cause trauma in a family. Abuse in little things can result in big problems later for both parents and children. Some types of mental illness can add depression upon depression with the feeling you will never capture the good old days. In fact if you do that, you might be worse than before. You might also experience the feeling of being suicidal.

Mental illness can cause collapse of the family’s economic condition. Even bank robbers need money for their basic needs outside of the money they steal. How would one sister with a mental illness respond to another sister who sold her shoes to buy illegal drugs? Possible financial help comes from government sources such as Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare, and tax credits. Support may also come from friends and well family members.

Children need help to understand a parent’s illness. In terms of an adult coming down with lung cancer as opposed to being diagnosed with a mental illness, which do you think will be better understood by a child?

Basically a healthy family is a significant part of the common good.

## Person First Language

By Sharon Lyons

Efforts to change how society refers to people with mental illness began in the 1990s when several professional publications proposed the use of what they called "person-first" language when talking about people with disabilities. The idea then, as it is now, is to stop referring to people by their disability. For example: referring to someone as “a person with schizophrenia” is preferred to referring to someone as “schizophrenic”.

Studies have found that the language we use has real effects on the way we treat people. Even the slight difference between “the mentally ill” and “people with mental illness” have been shown to make a difference in eliminating stigma and discrimination.

NAMI St. Louis is beginning to eliminate the use of the word “consumer” in referring to people with mental illness. Instead you will see a more positive and accurate term- “person with lived experience”. We want to be respectful of all and value each person’s lived experiences whether they have a mental illness or have a family member with a mental illness. People with lived experiences are valued as our readers, volunteers, donors and staff.

## NAMI St. Louis 2017 Respect Awards

NAMI St. Louis established the Respect Awards in 2009 to honor professionals who have gone above and beyond their usual responsibilities to serve those with a mental illness. Two Award Categories: Outstanding Mental Health Individual Worker and Outstanding Mental Health Agency/Organization. Nominations must be from individuals with mental illness or their family members. Nominations must be from the person or family member of a person who has received services from the individual or organization. Nominees for the individual award should have at least 5 years work experience in the mental health field. Nominees must meet at least 5 of 10 criteria below.

**NOMINATIONS ARE DUE BY AUGUST 1, 2017.** The selection committee will be comprised of mental health consumers and the family members of people with mental illness. The awards will be presented at the NAMI St. Louis Annual Meeting held in July.

Return nominations to: NAMI St. Louis, 1810 Craig Rd, Ste 124, Maryland Heights, MO 63146, or by fax 314-962-4678, or email Sharon@namistl.org.

### **NOMINATOR**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

I am:  A consumer of mental health services/person with a mental illness  A family member of an individual with mental illness.

**I NOMINATE:**  Outstanding Individual  Organization \_\_\_\_\_

### **CRITERIA** (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS USING A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER, PROVIDING SPECIFIC EXAMPLES)

1. How does the person or organization establish trusting relationships where the consumer and mental health provider trust one another?
2. How does the person or organization maintain current and accurate knowledge of mental illness, treatments, and resources?
3. How does the person or organization acknowledge that mental illness is a common human occurrence, and as such treats people with mental illness with dignity given those with other illnesses?
4. In what way does the person or organization advocate for public policies that improve the lives of people with mental illness?
5. How is the person or organization responsible for physical, social, spiritual, and cultural needs of the consumer?
6. How does the person or organization include family, friends, and/or other providers in treatment planning, treatment, and follow-up?
7. In what ways does the person or organization demonstrate that the best interest of the consumer is a priority when making decisions?
8. Provide examples of how non-stigmatizing, person-first language is used when referring to people with mental illness.
9. Provide examples of the individual's involvement in activities outside their workplace that advances community mental health.
10. How does the person or organization go above and beyond their job description and usual work to help clients?

## Summer Mania

### A dangerous path to mania

Gone is the gloom of winter and out comes the sun and everything springs to life. However, this increased energy can be the perfect path to mania. After a depressive winter, many people will like the reenergizing of all their senses, feeling more attuned to the world and nature—but it can prove dangerous to welcome these manic symptoms. The need for sleep decreases, the thirst for romance is heightened and the world just seems more vibrant. Before you know it, you can find yourself in the throes of a full-blown mania or hypomania.

### Be on the lookout for early signs

Pay attention to triggers. The turning seasons can spark mood episodes in many people with bipolar disorder, with spring and summer known for shifts towards the elevated end of the spectrum. It's helpful to have people around you who are clued in to how hypomania hits you, so they can alert you to the mood shift's leading edge or, if necessary, make a doctor's appointment for you if a few days have passed without improvement.

### Pay attention to your thoughts

How you see your situation is critical. By being aware of what you're thinking, you'll be less likely to react emotionally, but rather consciously. You will be more successful in managing your bipolar disorder when you're mindful of what you're thinking and doing. Meditation can help you learn how to step away from stressful moments in life and manage them with a clearer mind.

### Always take prescribed medication

One of the gravest hazards of hypomania: feeling so good you decide you don't need your meds at all. "It's hard to tell someone, 'You're not doing well,' when they have lots of energy, are meeting new people, and coming up with new ideas," notes Tammarra Letbetter, a licensed professional counselor in Texas. "But medication should always be taken as prescribed."

### Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and drugs

Alcohol and sedatives can provoke depression and drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine and amphetamines can trigger mania. Any of these substances can interfere with sleep and can affect how your medications work. Remember that even limited social drinking can upset your state of emotions and possibly spark a mood episode.

### Slow down, smell the roses and meditate

Meditation can help better regulate surges of enthusiasm that are genuine but not sustainable. A daily 20-minute practice can be beneficial for self-awareness and self-restraint. When you are more grounded in reality, mindfulness comes naturally and you're able to think things through before getting too excited.

### Get some peaceful slumber

Sleep may seem overrated when you're hypomanic, especially since you don't feel fatigued despite needing less shut-eye than usual. Yet it can be dangerous to rob your body of this important respite. Getting a good night's rest is crucial for regulating emotion, impulsivity, and risk-taking, as well as other important jobs such as cognitive functioning. Healthy sleep also has been shown to decrease the risk for relapse.

Source: *BP Magazine*

## Stress Management Prescription

Here are some great thoughts to help deal with the stress and burdens of life. Pick one or two or more that appeal to you and apply as needed.

- Accept that some days you're the pigeon and some days you're the statue.
- Always keep your words sweet, just in case you have to eat them.
- Drive carefully. It's not only cars that can be recalled by their maker.
- If you can't be kind, at least have the decency to be vague.
- If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.
- Never buy a car you can't push.
- Never put both feet in your mouth at the same time, because then you won't have a leg to stand on.
- Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance.
- Since it's the early bird that gets eaten by the worm, sleep late.
- When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.
- Birthdays are good for you. The more you have, the longer you live.
- You may be the only person in the world, but you may also be the world to one person.
- Some mistakes are too much fun to only make once.
- We could learn a lot from crayons...Some are sharp, some are dull, some are pretty, some have weird names. All are different colors but they all have to live in the same box.
- A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.

Have an awesome day and know that someone has thought about you!





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## Newsletter Mission:

The newsletter, established by the NAMI St. Louis Consumer Advisory Committee, will tell the stories of individuals with mental illness who are doing interesting things. It is a forum for information, inspiration, and creative expression.

## Publication Guidelines

- Materials should be from individuals living with mental illness in the St. Louis area, unless invited by the Consumer Advisory Committee.
- In an attempt to decrease stigma and isolation that often accompany mental illness, we ask that you identify yourself by providing your name, address, and either phone number or email address. You will be contacted if there are questions about your material. You will also be contacted if your material or question is published. Names will be published, but no other identifying information will be made public.
- Items for publication should be free from profanity or language that is prejudicial toward any culture, race, religion, gender, type of mental illness, or type of disability.
- Submission does not guarantee publication. Items are published at the discretion of the Consumer Advisory Committee.
- Please keep stories, articles, and poetry to two pages or less. Please do not send originals as they will not be returned.
- Submissions may be made by email, U.S. Mail, or fax.

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