



## Peer Advisory Committee Seeks New Members

NAMI St. Louis' Peer Advisory Committee, the producers of this newsletter, would like to add members. We are a committee of the Board of Directors and report to the Board on our activities including an annual workshop, "Opening the Doors to Spirituality".

You must be a person with a mental health condition to be a committee member. If you have ideas on engaging more people with mental illness in the NAMI St. Louis mission, or have ideas for our newsletter or workshop, you are welcome to attend our meetings. Meetings are held monthly, in the NAMI St. Louis office and the time varies but includes late afternoons and evenings.

Please contact Sharon Lyons if you are interested at 314-962-4670 or by email at [sharon@namistl.org](mailto:sharon@namistl.org).

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

## Depression

By Joanie Milligan

Depression. Even the word sounds sad. According to NAMI 6 million people experience an episode of depression each year. Women have a 70% greater risk than men. Mental illness is not a character flaw or weakness. It is a biological illness. I am depressed now and have been for a long time. I feel like the depression is a fixture in my life right now. I don't eat very much. When I do to be at 11 pm I lie awake until 1:30 am. I wake up early in the morning. I am always tired and have no energy. I am not interested in anything. Even though I am not motivated, I try to accomplish one thing each day. Like taking a shower or washing the dishes or sending a birthday card to someone. Everything is too stressful to handle. I have trouble leaving my house. I feel guilty and worthless. I can't concentrate on TV and haven't been able to read anything for years.

Most of my time is spent on the sofa, staring into space with my dog beside me. I have had thoughts of suicide. I will never do it because the only hope I have is my personal relationship with God. My hope comes from Him, regardless of my situations. Sometimes I look at pictures of myself when I wasn't depressed and I tell myself I will feel better someday. Mental illness is not going away. I often look at a sign hanging on my kitchen wall, it says "Never, Never Give Up". I will never give up.

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## Mental Health Conditions of the Older Generation

By Karl Miller

First of all this paper is not a scripture: it is by no means that final authority of elder people's mental health; any more than other research to define, examine and seek cures for any, if not all, in the field of psychology and possible other science. Also, this paper is applicable to basically all ages.

In examining mental health problems or possibly what has been called dysfunctional mental health; few, if any, elders experience hallucinations, voices or irreversible sickness like Alzheimer's disease. Effects of aging are minimized by staying: 1. Mentally alert, 2. Intellectually curious, 3. Physically active.

People can maintain good health, prevent disease and manage symptoms of mental illness. This will be all I know as I have ready many materials. Use the following with caution: 1. Artificial sweetener, 2. Chocolate, 3. Coffee, 4. Caffeinated teas, 5. Sodas.

Good self-help for every possible mental sickness includes:

1. Exercise, like putting you hands on a chair and kicking your feet, individually, back 50 times.
2. Proper diet.
3. Proper medicine.
4. Group support in and out of institutional settings.
5. Civic organizations like Lions Club, Kiwanas, and Masons.
6. Volunteer work.
7. Church membership.
8. Hoping to keep a covenant or covenants that you have made. In other words, stick to a decision.

A typical myth regarding dysfunctional mental health is a belief that people with mental illness are out of touch with reality and are always ill. Recovery is possible when the mentally ill receive the necessary treatment and support. Spirituality can help as well.

Possible traits of elder disease and types of illness are:

1. Grieving, with stages of denial to acceptance
2. Depression
3. Bipolar
4. Anxiety, fear of going crazy or dying
5. Schizophrenia
6. Borderline Personality Disorder
7. Substance Abuse
8. Dementia, not to be confused with schizophrenia
9. Senility
10. Alzheimer's disease
11. Treatable and reversible memory problems.

Depression is not a part of normal aging, not is it a sign of weakness or a character flaw. Symptoms of depression include: 1. Overly tired and sluggish, 2. Frequent headaches, 3. Frequent stomach aches, 4. Chronic pain.

## Election Fallout

Many people with mental illness depend on Medicaid for their insurance. “Medicaid serves as a critical safety net for 10 million+ kids and adults who qualify for the program on the basis of a disability”. Medicaid is funded in part by the federal government and in part by state governments.

The result of the election will likely mean threats to reduce the program at the federal level. President-elect, Trump, and some members of Congress have proposed massive changes to Medicaid that would permanently alter the program. These changes would result in fewer people being able to access coverage and shifting more costs to the states. This could occur in the form of federal block grants or per capita caps.

In federal block grants, the federal government pays the states a set amount annually to provide care for their entire covered population. The amount does not change based on the number of people enrolled. In a per capita cap, the federal government pays the state a set amount per beneficiary and the amount is adjusted annually for general inflation. Either funding method would dismantle the current structure and fewer people will have coverage. Additionally, states will face significant budget challenges as a result of dramatic reductions in federal funding.

Advocacy will be more important than ever to have an effect on these proposals and NAMI will be monitoring legislation. The President-elect and members of Congress need to hear from people with mental illness. They need to know that the Medicaid program is needed by so many.

NAMI will be monitoring legislative action as it moves forward.

## Mental Health Conditions in the Older Generation

By Karl Miller continued...

Experiencing mental disorders is not a part of normal aging. Mental activities could include crossword puzzles, mathematics, movies, reading, radio, or TV.

Normal aging includes stable intellectual functioning, a capacity for change, and productive engagement with life using problem solving and cognitive skills.

Retirement may be viewed as the best or happiest moment in our later years.

It should be noted that 97% of illnesses, mental or physical, are not our own fault or our parent’s fault.

Remember—getting well is only the beginning of the challenge; staying well is the rest of the goal.

Be sure to take your medicines. Just not all at the same time.

If you don’t want to lose your mind, use it!

Hoping for your health.

## Now That the Election is Over

By Ellen Fein Rosenbaum

Now that the Presidential election is over, everyone has something to say about the results. Some of us are shocked, some of us are happy, and there are even some of us who don't care because they think their voices do not count. We live in a democracy, where freedom of speech is in the very first Amendment to our Constitution. Our country began because the Founders wanted to live in a land where the right of freedom of speech was of the utmost importance. We can look back through world history and find that many wars and atrocities occurred because a targeted group of people was being punished. People were being punished by death or by imprisonment or by stigmatization because of who they were. Today, in our country, because of ethnicity, race, religion, country of origin, gender identity, and mental illness, many people are being discriminated. As much as you may feel that your voice isn't being heard as to these matters, now is the time for you to speak out.

Some of you may have already acted as advocated for services for persons with a mental illness. You might have gone to Jefferson City to speak to Legislators. You might have written letters or called those people who represent you. You might have attended rallies or held demonstrations. And your voices were heard. Some bills passed quickly, some took a while, and much to our dismay, some did not go through. But our legislators want to be elected. And the way they can win the vote is to pass legislation that their constituents want. And that's the message I want to share with you. We live in America. Freedom of speech is not only a right but it is what makes our country great. If you don't like something say so to the people who make decisions as to all of the laws that affect us. Senators, Representatives, even Presidents are contacted multiple times a day by those who want to express their beliefs. Those opinions are listened to. Those Legislators, who may not agree with you, still know that you are out there. Your voice matters. You are a voter. They want to stay in office. And they care about the people they serve.

So, back to the Presidential election. If you are not happy with who will be our next President, take action. Elect people in other offices who have an impact on your life—from a City Councilperson, to the Governor. Let your opinions be known. Sign petitions, attend meetings, and organize with people with similar beliefs to get your voices heard. Elect Senators and House members you agree with, in an effort to help them gain control of Congress. President-elect Trump also needs your vote if he wants to be reelected in 2020. There are people working for elected officials who do nothing other than go through the mail daily and record who sent what, where the senders are from, and why they sent the letters. You may not believe it, but your voices are heard. Sometimes you may have to say the same thing over and over again. It may take a while for a law to be passed or for a representative with whom you agree to be elected. Sometimes things go a lot slower than you'd like. But we do live in a country where each one of us has the right to vote in an effort to elect someone they want to see in office. This past election may have some people dismayed at the way the outcome was determined. You may feel like your candidate won the popular vote, and therefore should have gotten the Presidency. If that's true, then let your voice be heard. Don't give up. Sometimes you have to yell so loud that your voice gets sore. Find a way to express yourself. There are good people out there listening. They are listening to you.

*"Stay afraid but do it anyway. What's important is the action. You don't have to wait to be confident. Just do it and eventually the confidence will follow." - Carrie Fisher*

## NAMI St. Louis Blog

Our new website is not live, which means we are ready to start receiving blog submissions. Mike Eisenbath, NAMI St. Louis Board Member, volunteered to take the lead on this project. Please let him know if you are interested in writing for NAMI St. Louis. We also seek a name for this new blog and Mike will also take those suggestions.

If you would like to tackle this, here are a few thoughts from Mike:

- Please try to stay within 205-500 words. If you have something to say that would exceed 500 words, consider breaking that up into a “two-parter” or a series of three or more blogs.
- Please write about something involving mental illness/mental health. The subject can be the relating of a personal experience, either as someone with a mental illness or in a caregiver/family/mental health career capacity. It can offer advice, caution, hope, education, or observation. Anything that might be beneficial to the type of readers seeking information or assistance regarding mental illness. If you want to check with Mike about whether a topic you are considering is a good one, please feel free to ask.
- One subject that would be particularly pertinent is any experiences with NAMI classes or programs.
- If you are writing about something that should be posted at a specific time (around Christmas, in May for National Mental Health Awareness Month, etc.), please submit that piece well in advance, at least two weeks.
- Send all blog submissions and names for the blog to Mike Eisenbath at his email address: [meisenbath@gmail.com](mailto:meisenbath@gmail.com).
- Please try to spend some time re-reading your submission at least twice before emailing it. When you have finished writing, step away from it until at least the next day before you go over it again. Then, read it out loud. If it doesn't sound right when you speak the words, then it likely won't sound right inside the head of your readers. Consider having a trusted friend or family member read it. And try to pay at least some attention to grammar and spelling.
- Mike will give you piece an initial edit—for grammar and spelling, but also for quality of content and clarity. Please don't be offended if some changes were made or he asks questions about your submission. He might request for you to rewrite something or expand on a thought that doesn't seem clear or complete. Never assume that your readers know the full background about something. If you use a source, please disclose that source. If you quote something or someone, please provide attribution. Please, please, don't plagiarize. You can use the thoughts and/or research of someone else, but write in your own words and credit ideas to whom credit is due.
- Trust Mike's assistance will have your best interest at heart and that he will do whatever he can to enhance your experience as a blogger as well as the experience of your readers. He has a bachelor's degree from the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia (the best J-school in the world!). He was a professional writer and editor for a quarter-century, including 18 years at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and has continued to write extensively since leaving that newspaper in 2002 because of mental illnesses.
- Our goal is to assist people whose lives are affected by mental illness, in particular through programs and education offered by NAMI St. Louis.

Now...get writing and have fun doing it!



## Schizophrenia

NAMI views research as a critical source of hope for people with mental illness and their families. Currently we really don't know why people get schizophrenia—there are only theories.

Research catalogs subtle but widespread disruptions of gene activity in the brains of people with schizophrenia. Researchers have identified nearly 700 genes whose activity levels differ in the brains of people with schizophrenia compared to individuals without the disorder. Most of the differences they found were subtle, consistent with the idea that variations in many genes contribute to the risk of schizophrenia, each alone having a small effect.

Many of the genes identified in the analysis fall within DNA regions that were associated with schizophrenia in a large genome-wide association study reported in 2014. Such studies look for genetic variations seen frequently across large numbers of people, both healthy people and those diagnosed with a particular disease.

The new findings, published September 26 in the journal *Natural Neuroscience*, report the largest catalog of genetic influences on the brain gene expression and begin to illuminate the genetic variations associated with schizophrenia. This publicly available catalog (<https://www.synapse.org/CMC>) will markedly facilitate understanding functional effects and underlying mechanisms across many brain disorders.

SOURCE: Brain and Behavior Research Foundation

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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

Newsletter Editor:  
Sharon Lyons

Newsletter Graphic Designer:  
Ann Stackle

### Peer Advisory Committee

Chair:  
Christopher Lee  
Members:  
Arlen Chaleff  
Ellen Rosenbaum  
Joanie Milligan  
Sharon Lyons  
Helene Gottesmann

- 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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