Even though so many people face mental health challenges in the workplace and at home, negative stereotypes still exist. These stereotypes and misconceptions are called stigma. Together, we can all do our part in helping American workplaces thrive by ridding them of stigma. Mental health stigma has kept me from getting help.

Continued on Page 4
Hi Everyone!

We had a successful start to our Fall Quarter with the participation in the GiveMore24 event. For 24 hours, Southwest Washington area nonprofits are represented by GiveGab. Many of you beautiful people contributed and we thank you immensely. The excitement continued to build as we were given a matching grant opportunity of $12,500 and exceeded our goal. We were gifted with $32,288 in all! The most we’ve ever received from this event. What an amazing way to kick off the Fall!

Thank you to our contributors, members, volunteers, and recurring donors! We are one of the only NAMI’s in the nation with an office and dedicated staff who lead programs, spread information and resources about mental health, fight stigma, welcome the community inside for support groups, social groups, and classes, and develop new programs for the community. People have been graciously leaving us responses when it comes to our support groups and classes such as:

“Great leaders full of lived experience, were very engaging.”

“The quality of my life has been significantly reduced due to my mental health issues. Participating in NAMI education classes and support groups has transformed my life. I am learning how to take responsibility for my behaviors and how to keep moving forward.”

“Exceptional leaders, very kind, great sense of humor.”

“What I have learned through NAMI is priceless. I have received so much support and help, even though the topics have been really “heavy.”

We participated in September’s Suicide Awareness & Prevention month by posting tips, symptoms, articles, and advice about how to detect, support, and empower those planning or thinking about ending their lives. Many of these can be found on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Our annual meeting was successful as we welcomed our
members, appreciated our volunteers, and met and heard from our board mem-
ers. We had refreshments, time to connect, and vote on new board members
and the budget. It was a great way to have your voice heard as a member of NAMI
SW WA and NAMI. We hope to see more of our members next year!

NAMI developed a Stigma Free program and presentation to help empower and
support people living with mental health conditions in the workplace and within
companies. Stigma Free Company and Workplace can be read about in more de-
tail on NAMISWWA.ORG.

Every day we meet new people who make their way into our lives and hearts. We
are amazed at the progress we witness within our walls, at support groups, and in
classes. We are so thankful to be part of so much healing in our community.

Stay tuned for more events. This quarter we have a new Hearing Voices Network
Group which is a safe, judgement-free, and a respected space for those who fit
under the umbrella of hearing voices, seeing things, and experiencing altered and
extreme states that may not be in line with consensus reality. It is a great group
and growing in numbers with each meeting!

Check out page 15 for more about our programs. Keep in touch on social media
and online for more about upcoming classes and events.

Thank you for all that you do to heal our community!

Some of the rocks we paint for the community. Found on Pinterest at Expressive
Arts Class– Georgia and Linda. www.pinterest.com/gerriorblue/
health is everyone’s concern and its consequences to the workplace in particular are tremendous:

- Mental health conditions are the leading cause of disability across the United States.
- Untreated mental health conditions cost the economy $200 billion in lost earnings each year through decreased work performance and productivity.
- 8 of 10 workers with a mental health condition report that shame and stigma prevent them from seeking treatment.
- The family is also affected, increasing the use of leave time for family members.

StigmaFree Company is NAMI’s partnership initiative to challenge, highlight and cultivate a company culture of caring and enhanced engagement around mental health. By being a StigmaFree Company and prioritizing mental health as a workplace and community priority, you will help:

- Increase productivity and promote a healthier work environment;
- Decrease the impact of disability;
- Increase retention and engagement of valued employees; and
- Strengthen your company brand by linking to a cause that resonates with so many.

“Loved being here with others, this class uplifted my mood.”
-Connection Group Participant
NAMI SW WA can assist you in creating a culture that values employees’ overall health, including emotional well-being and mental health. Being StigmaFree creates the foundation for a culture of openness, acceptance, understanding and compassion. And NAMI can help, by providing you with:

- StigmaFree Company resources, assets and education materials
- Ideas for events and initiatives around key dates in the mental health movement
- Guidance and expert advice, which could include in-person support, presentations and workshops (expenses to be paid by company)
- Referral to our NAMI National and nearly 900 local NAMI Affiliate networks
- Linkages to other StigmaFree Company partners
- Brand visibility, recognition and social currency
- Benefits of association with a good cause and respected organization

Metrics and impact outcomes

NAMI SW WA is offering StigmaFree Company workshops for your workplace which create a culture that values employees’ mental health and emotional well-being. Raise awareness, create an environment of support, openness, compassion, understanding, and acceptance. We provide StigmaFree Company resources and educational materials; presentations and workshops; advice, guidance, and in-person support; and the benefits of the association with a good cause and respected organization. Call us to schedule a workshop for your workplace at 360-695-2823 or email info@namiswwa.org.

“Your limitation—it’s only your imagination.”
-Unknown

To Former and Future Volunteers

Please Reach Out to Us!

We’re interested in showing you where NAMI SW WA is going next with exciting new changes and opportunities!
What is your background like?
I was a costume designer for 6 years during and after college. I graduated from George Fox University with a BA in Theater design and technology. No, I will not hem your pants for you. I have an old dog, Spencer. He’s a 16 ½-year-old poodle-lhasa apso mix. I’ve had him since he was 3 months old. He’s our office dog because he’s so chill and has a calming effect on everyone.

What do you do for work at NAMI SW WA?
I am the Executive Assistant; I run the office, offer support for volunteers and staff, report information and data, and organize everything. I’m essentially the gatekeeper, you will probably meet me first if you come to our office. Or Spencer since he is here too.

What brought you to NAMI SW WA?
Before recovery, I yearned for people to understand or even just listen. As the gatekeeper of the NAMI office, I get to interact with pretty much everyone who steps through our doors or calls us. I can be that listening ear for others when they need it. I get to talk to others about DBT, something I still use daily. It allows me to practice my skills while helping others learn them. I also love keeping up with the non-profits, companies, and people that make up the mental health community. I’m so glad I have been accepted into the NAMI community after volunteering for several months. I get to talk about mental health without feeling judged for it!

How does your past experience help the people at NAMI SW WA?
Interestingly enough, costume designing is very technical and mathematic. I use a lot of the skills I learned in theater at NAMI as Executive Assistant. I think everyone should take an improv class; it teaches your mind to stay active and focused during conversations.
What are some of your interests?

I like board games, video games, comedy, and cooking. Also, spreadsheets and organizing things. Your environment can affect your mind. Cleaning and having things organized helps me stay balanced.

What is your philosophy about mental health?

You can never have too many skills and planning is essential. Knowing trigger situations and having a plan for what to do is so important. When I become overwhelmed, following a plan, step-by-step, can be so helpful.

What do you do to maintain mental wellness?

I attend therapy regularly, practice my skills daily, and always have a backup plan. I also quick journal twice a day to check in with myself and maintain my emotion levels using the Daylio app. It’s been an amazing help for me to regulate my emotions and stress level.
Navigating a Mental Health Crisis: A Guide by NAMI National

Like any other health crisis, it’s important to address a mental health emergency quickly and effectively.

This guide outlines what can contribute to a crisis, warning signs that a crisis is emerging, strategies to help de-escalate a crisis, available resources and so much more.
The link allows you to download a copy of the crisis guide that was released by NAMI national.


This is an effective guide which helps you navigate a mental health crisis in times of need. It makes us aware of some of the signs to watch out for when faced with crisis. The 33-page guide was developed by NAMI national. We hope you find it interesting and helpful.
My name is Becky Anderson and I have been affiliated with NAMI SW WA for about the last 15 years. I became aware of NAMI from a parenting class I attended with my son in 2013. He had lost custody of his children and was court ordered to take classes.

NAMI SW WA ended up being a life savior. I took a Family-to-Family class and learned that I was not alone in dealing with my grandchildren becoming state children and our lives being turned into chaos because of mental illness (their birth mother) and drug usage (my son and the children’s birth mother).

Luckily my daughter stepped up and adopted the two girls. From that point on, we both started learning all we could about mental health and how it effects families. She also adopted the boy they had two years later.

I started volunteering when I was asked to train to become a facilitator for some of the signature classes NAMI offers. From that point on, I was hooked.

I have been trained to facilitate Family-to-Family, Basics (as a State trainer and affiliate trainer), Connection Recovery, and Peer-to-Peer.

Over the last few years I have taken numerous classes on ACE’s, Mental Health First Aid and Trauma.

I sit on two boards at present, The Behavioral Health Advisory Board as a representative from Skamania county and on the Skamania County Services Advisory Board.

I also have started STRivE in Skamania county.

In my spare time, I read and take care of my black pug, Bo. My partner and I also go to Pendleton a couple times a year for vacation.

My philosophy about mental health is: Learn all you can, have empathy, and try to understand that we can’t always help everyone, but we can try--and always learn.
We have some programs in the works including a Stigma Free Company training, presentation, and educational materials we include where we help educate companies and workplaces to foster an environment of support and understanding for coworkers and employees.

We added a new group in September called the Hearing Voices Network group. To learn more about The Hearing Voices Network USA, the entity that trained us, visit: hearingvoicesusa.org/. We are in the process of adding a second Women’s Group and possibly a second Connection’s group—both groups are filled to capacity most days which is great! We are in the process of training new facilitators for these groups.

We are painting rocks throughout the year for donations and to spread the word about NAMI SW WA in the community. You should see how gorgeous they are! There are some very talented artists and painters of these rocks that have volunteered their amazing work to us this year. We’ll include a picture here!
LET'S BECOME

STIGMA FREE

Stigma is another form of mental stress inflicted on people with mental health issues. We can educate ourselves, see the person, not the illness, take action, and raise awareness. Spread the word #iamstigmafree and visit NAMI.ORG or NAMISWWA.ORG.

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Become Stigma Free

“Stigma is when someone, or even you yourself, views a person in a negative way just because they have a mental health condition. Some people describe stigma as a feeling of shame or judgement from someone else. Stigma can even come from an internal place, confusing feeling bad with being bad.

Navigating life with a mental health condition can be tough, and the isolation, blame and secrecy that is often encouraged by stigma can create huge challenges to reaching out, getting needed support, and living well. Learning how to avoid and address stigma are important for all of us, especially when you realize stigma’s effects:

- People experiencing mental health conditions often face rejection, bullying and discrimination. This can make their journey to recovery longer and more difficult.
- Mental health conditions are the leading cause of disability across the United States.
- Even though most people can be successfully treated, less than half of the adults in the U.S. who need services and treatment get the help they need.
- The average delay between the onset of symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death of youth ages 15-24 and the tenth leading cause of death for all Americans.

1 in 5 Americans is affected by mental health conditions. Stigma is toxic to their mental health because it creates an environment of shame, fear and silence that prevents many people from seeking help and treatment. The perception of mental illness won’t change unless we act to change it."

curestigma.org

We can educate ourselves, see the person, not the illness, take action, and raise awareness. Spread the word with #iamstigmafree and visit and share curestigma.org
Hello Cowlitz County Friends!

I have some very happy news to share with you all!

Our NAMI Signature groups have outgrown our current space and beginning October 3, three of our NAMI SW WA Signature groups, will be moving to a larger and much more comfortable location. The lease on our building expires the end of this year and due to funding, we will no longer be leasing a space. This will all workout for the best! Our last day open to the public, will be Thursday, November 21. But MOST important, NAMI SW WA is NOT going away; we are just changing meeting locations. We will no longer have a permanent building, but we will still be holding our groups in a new location and we will only be a phone call away, or email. Most of you don't realize that we have only had this space for the past 4 years. The previous 36 years, our meetings were held in numerous public places throughout the county.

Our continuing groups/classes will be held at "Canterbury Inn Assisted Living" at 1324 3rd Ave, Longview.

Class/group schedule beginning Thursday, October 3:

STRIvE: Thursday, October 3 from 1 to 2:30pm (same time/day as now)
Connection Recovery Support Group: Thursday, October 3 from 3 to 4:30pm.

Class/group schedule beginning Tuesday, October 8:

Family Support Group: Tuesday, October 8 from 6 to 7:30pm.

At this time, we won't be continuing our Art or Table-Top Games groups after we vacate this location but they will continue the groups in our office until the end of October.

Our Vancouver office will continue overseeing the program leaders in our area and they can be reached at 360.695.2823.

Suzanne, (NAMI SW WA Outreach Coordinator) and myself, will be retiring the end of this year. These past 4 years have been a blessing. I loved seeing all the new faces come through our doors and have witnessed so many positive changes. I love you all and blessings be with you. You've all given me such beautiful memories!

Jan ~
Jan Kell
Social Groups

Writing for Wellness Group  Improve your writing or write for therapeutic reasons, everyone is welcome here. Every week we have an agenda with different writing prompts to ignite creativity or bring work you’ve been working on previously. Then we share what we wrote (or you can pass) and have a discussion.  In Vancouver: Fridays 12:00 pm—1:30 pm. Drop-ins welcome.

Expressive Arts Group  Become inspired by others and join a caring community of people being creative. Creativity is an excellent way to connect with others and supplement recovery. This group is led by two excellent artists, Georgia Gerrior and Linda Harbaugh. Supplies Provided free of charge.  In Vancouver: Fridays 1:00 pm—4:00 pm. Drop-ins welcome.

Tabletop Games  Bring your playful side to play games like Uno, Scrabble, or . It’s a great time to have fun and relax with friends and meet new people! We supply the board games and you bring yourself! You can also bring in your favorite games.  In Vancouver: Mondays 2:00 pm—3:00 pm 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month. Drop-ins welcome.

Hearing Voices Network  Whether you hear voices, see things, or have experienced altered and extreme states different from consensus reality, you’re welcome to connect here with like-minded individuals. We have a discussion and try to find meaning in our experiences without judgement. Confidentiality is respected and encouraged.  In Vancouver: Wednesdays 2:00 pm—3:00 pm. Drop-ins welcome.

Support Groups

NAMI Family Support  In Vancouver at Bridgeview Resource Center: Thursdays 3:00 pm—4:30 pm. Drop-ins welcome.

NAMI Connection  In Vancouver at Bridgeview Resource Center: Thursdays 3:00 pm—4:30 pm. Drop-ins welcome.

Women’s Group  In Vancouver Office: Wednesdays 10:00 pm—11:30 pm. Drop-ins welcome.

For questions call 360-695-2823. There is no charge to attend these groups. NAMISWWA.org for more descriptions, email in-
A BIPOLAR DISORDER DIAGNOSIS IS NOT A DEATH SENTENCE

By Carrie Cantwell | Sep. 16, 2019

I can’t believe I ever wanted to die. Sometimes it’s hard to remember what it felt like to be so hopeless that I was willing to end my own life. The saying “suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem” is so true. Just because one day, one week, even one year or more of your life is rough, doesn’t mean things will be that way forever. Death is forever. And you can’t take it back.

I have bipolar disorder, which means I’m vulnerable to emotional stresses that can trigger a manic or depressive episode. My dad—who also had bipolar disorder—died by suicide. I remember when he started getting really sick. My senior year of college, my mom left him. He was buying guns and shooting holes into the ground. He would drive hours away to cheap motels and call her threatening suicide.

My mom showed up at my job in April of 1998 to tell me my dad had just died by suicide. I was numb until four years after his death, when I crashed, suffering my first major depressive episode. I felt like I was encased in a black, slimy ooze that slowed my mind and body. I cried constantly. Completely unable to function, I went
on disability from work. My mom (who is a therapist) sent me for a psychological evaluation and after six hours of testing, I was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder.

LOSING MYSELF TO BIPOLAR

I was horrified to learn I had the same disease that killed my dad. Would I end up dying by suicide, too? At that moment, a bipolar diagnosis seemed like a death sentence. I started seeing a therapist and a psychiatrist. I tried antipsychotics, anticonvulsants, antidepressants and mood stabilizers. The struggle for chemical equilibrium in my brain was grueling, but I finally found a combination of medications that helped even out the intensity of my moods.

In 2012, I was married to a man who became controlling and verbally abusive. My husband convinced me that everything wrong with our marriage was my fault. I wrongly thought I’d be a failure if I got a divorce. My self-esteem was so low, I felt worthless. We were renovating our condo, and it was incredibly stressful. I was agitated and irritable, and my racing mind was catastrophizing everything that went slightly awry. After a nasty argument with my husband, I attempted suicide.

So, there I was, 38, bipolar, and trying to kill myself, just like my bipolar dad had done when he was 55. What was I thinking? I knew what it felt like to lose someone to suicide. My mom and I have gone through so much pain because of what my dad did. But I was under the spell of mania. I wasn’t thinking about that. I ended up in the emergency room having seizures for 24 hours. I was in and out of consciousness, thrown into and out of reality as I pulled and kicked against restraints that were keeping me from hurting myself. I was then transferred to an in-patient mental hospital.

I’ll never forget the look on my mom’s face in the emergency room. I’d put her through what my dad had, and even though I knew better, I did it anyway. That’s what bipolar disorder does. It makes you lose insight, narrowing your focus to a needle point, and everything and everyone else gets lost in the periphery. It wasn’t me, it was my brain causing these problems.

COMING OUT ON THE OTHER SIDE

In recovery, I finally understood the gravity of my illness. This mood disorder can be fatal, if not managed properly. I know what happens when I don’t take care of myself and give in to the voices that tell me to stay up a little later tonight, or skip my meds. I need to be especially careful when something goes wrong in my life because it could awaken the whispering voice in my head that tells me I can escape by dying. My dad must have heard that same voice. And I don’t want to end up like he did.

I’m both a survivor and an advocate. I’m just finished writing a book about my experiences entitled Daddy Issues: A Bipolar Memoir. I want to give hope to the millions of people whose lives have been affected by bipolar disorder and suicide. I’ve made it through several major manic and depressive episodes, and I’ve come out on the other side. I struggle all the time, but I take care of my body and mind, and I set healthy limits for myself.  

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I work in the film industry as a graphic designer. I've always loved movies, and I feel so lucky that I get to design graphics that bring fictional worlds to life. Several years ago, I was working on a movie that had a hospital set. I was tasked with creating the logo and all the signs. While I sat at my computer, designing a large red and white emergency room sign, it hit me. If I hadn’t survived my suicide attempt, I would never have been there. My life could have ended in an emergency room. Instead, I was living my dreams doing what I love most. The horrible experience that made me want to end my own life was over. It was temporary. Had I died, it all would have been permanent.

I’m living proof that a bipolar disorder diagnosis is not a death sentence. I haven’t just survived, I’ve thrived. And while I’ve had many professional achievements, I’m most proud of my recovery.

Carrie Cantwell is an Emmy-nominated film industry graphic designer with bipolar disorder. She grew up with a bipolar dad who she lost to suicide. She’s written a book entitled Daddy Issues: A Bipolar Memoir, about how accepting her diagnosis taught her to forgive her dad and herself. Her blog is darknessandsandlight.org.

SIX MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

By Sky Lea Ross | Oct. 01, 2019
The stigma associated with mental illness is now called “sanism.” Just like racism or sexism, it is a form of oppression and discrimination. And there is a lot of sanism and misinformation surrounding mental illness still present within our society.

It’s up to us, the mental health community, to educate others and set the record straight.

Here are some of the common misconceptions people make and what you need to know.

**Myth:** Having a mental illness means you are “crazy.”

**Fact:** It's plain and simple, **having a mental illness does not mean you are “crazy.”** It means you are vulnerable. It means you have an illness with challenging symptoms — the same as someone with an illness like diabetes. While mental illness might alter your thinking, destabilize your moods or skew your perception of reality, that doesn’t mean you are “crazy.” It means you are human and are susceptible to sickness and illness, the same as any other person.

**Myth:** People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.

**Fact:** Within the last few years, the U.S. has had an increase in mass violence. Whenever these tragedies take place, the media is quick to judge the suspects and label them as “mentally disturbed” or “mentally ill.” In reality, **hate is not a mental illness.** Only **5%** of violent crimes in the U.S. are committed by people with serious mental illness.

The unfortunate truth is that individuals with mental illness are more likely to be **victims of violence** than perpetrators. There is no reason to fear a person with a mental illness just because of their diagnosis.

**Myth:** People with bipolar disorder are moody.

**Fact:** Bipolar disorder does not cause mood swings. It causes cycles that last for **weeks or months.** People so often throw around the term “bipolar” to describe the weather. When they say this, it downplays the seriousness of the condition and creates misinformation about what bipolar disorder actually is.

**Bipolar disorder** causes you to have episodes where you experience mania (high energy, rampant thoughts, inability to sleep, grandiose ideas or perspectives, etc.) and depressive states (feeling very sluggish, sad, suicidal, having low self-esteem, inability to concentrate, etc.) These extreme highs and lows take turns, but do not change or swing from moment to moment.

Help support the one in four Americans who will be affected by mental illness this year.

Thank you for being part of the team!