

accept it and then moving beyond it.

This includes learning coping mechanisms, believing in themselves as individuals by learning their strengths as well as their limitations, and coming to realize that they do have the capacity to find purpose and enjoyment in their lives in spite of their illness. RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE!

How to Get Help

No insurance? Call the NAMI Southern Arizona office to help guide you to access mental health services.

If you have mental illness:

- ◆ Seek medical care through a psychiatrist and/or your primary care physician.
- ◆ Find the right combination of treatment that works for you which may include medication, therapy, support groups, etc. **Sometimes people must try several different treatments or combinations of treatment before they find the one that works for them.*
- ◆ Take NAMI's Peer-to-Peer course and/or join the NAMI Connection support group.
- ◆ LEARN about your illness. The more you know, the more you are able to help yourself. Start with NAMI today!

If you are a family member with a loved one who has mental illness:

- ◆ Take care of yourself.
- ◆ Take NAMI's Family-to-Family course, join a Family & Friends Support Group and/or take NAMI Basics if you have a loved one who is a child or adolescent.

- ◆ Family, friends and partners of military service members and veterans can take NAMI's Homefront course.
- ◆ Learn about your loved one's illness.

NAMI Programs & Services

ADVOCACY*

We offer assistance and resources for individuals with mental illness as well as for family members. You or your loved one may ask us about patient rights, and how to obtain quality mental health services and information.

EDUCATION

Family to Family*: An 8-class course for family and friends of adults with mental illness.

Homefront: A six-session program for family and friends of Military service members and Veterans with mental health conditions.

NAMI Basics: A 6-session course for parents and caregivers of children or adolescents with a mental illness.

In Our Own Voice*: A presentation by individuals sharing their personal stories of living with mental illness and achieving recovery.

Ending the Silence: An early intervention program that engages students in mental health education and discussion. participate in social activities.

Peer to Peer*: An 8-class course for people with mental illness focusing on recovery.

TRAINING-Peer Leader & Peer Support Specialist Upon successful completion of Peer-to Peer participants can apply for Peer Leader and Peer Support Specialist (PSS) training and receive a state certification number preparing participants to be better equipped to acquire a job in the behavioral health field.

**Program or Service Available in Spanish*

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS

**SHOW YOU CARE.
WEAR A SILVER RIBBON.**



- Help break down the barriers to treatment and support.
- Help reduce stigma —talk about it!



**FIND HELP.
FIND HOPE.**

Mental illness affects 1 in 5 people. We provide resources and support to all those affected by mental illness.

**NAMI SOUTHERN ARIZONA DEPENDS ON YOU.
THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO HELP.
BECOME A MEMBER, VOLUNTEER OR DONATE.**

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Tucson, AZ 85711
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What is Mental Illness?

When mental illness strikes, it can turn lives upside down. Some people may not even recognize what is going on, especially during a first episode of psychosis or early on in the illness process. It's important to understand that episodes of psychosis and symptoms of mental illness can be challenging to diagnose and treat effectively and quickly. Getting a comprehensive assessment is the first step toward plotting a recovery strategy.

Mental illnesses are medical conditions that can disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are brain-based conditions that often result in a variety of symptoms that can affect daily life.

Mental illnesses include depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, borderline personality disorder and others.

One in five adults—approximately 60 million Americans—experiences a mental health disorder in a given year. One in 17 lives with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, depression or bipolar disorder and about one in 10 children lives with a serious mental or emotional disorder.

When people are diagnosed with mental illness, finding effective medical and psychiatric care is the first priority. But once such treatment begins, individuals living

with mental health challenges and their families soon discover that the illness affects many aspects of their lives—and that they need more than medical help. Services to optimize recovery usually include some combination of psychosocial supports (e.g., family involvement, work or school support, psychotherapy and self-management strategies) and medications (to reduce symptom intensity). Unfortunately, fewer than one-third of adults and one-half of children with diagnosed mental health disorders receive treatment every year.

No single, coordinated system of services for mental health care exists across the United States. When someone is diagnosed with mental illness, and if the individual is severely disabled, the person's family often assists in managing the person's comprehensive care. Although the service system is often fragmented, support groups of other NAMI families and people living with mental illness who have faced the same challenges exist in every state to share experience and knowledge.

Every person with mental illness requires his/her own treatment plan tailored to a specific situation. NAMI recommends that individuals consider some combination of medication, psychotherapy and lifestyle choices along with community supports to facilitate robust recovery. Recovery is a holistic process that integrates hope and strengths with services. Recovery from mental illness also includes attaining, and maintaining, physical health as another cornerstone of wellness. Finding a trustworthy and experienced health care

provider is key, and discussing medication options is paramount after diagnosis. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) periodically approves medications. For a current list, visit www.fda.gov.

If you or someone you love has symptoms of a mental health condition or is diagnosed with a mental illness, the information in this brochure can help you take the first steps toward recovery. Mental illness affects every aspect of life and presents many challenges to individuals and their families. People who struggle with mental health conditions need community support and continuity of care to move toward recovery

Diagnosing a Mental Illness

As with all types of illness, a doctor must be seen to provide a proper diagnosis. The doctor may perform a physical examination, an interview and lab tests. Unfortunately, an accurate mental health diagnosis cannot be identified through a simple blood test or brain scan. But these tests can help rule out other potential causes, such as a stroke or thyroid disease. If it is determined that the symptoms are not caused by any other illness, the doctor may recommend the individual sees a mental health professional such as a psychiatrist.

Getting a thorough medical workup is important to understanding the cause and diagnosis of psychosis and/or mental illness. It is important to rule out other medical causes as these have different treatment pathways. For example, some

medical issues (like an infection or out-of-control diabetes) may worsen existing illnesses and responses to treatment. Health care providers need to take a good history and conduct exams and laboratory studies as needed

Treatment

Because mental illnesses are typically persistent illnesses, continuous maintenance to help prevent the reemergence of symptoms is recommended. The management of the illness should include attention to lifestyle, stress management, supports and also medication options. There is no one approach. It is essential to put together a care plan with elements specific to individual needs. If mental illnesses are left untreated, the symptoms can become more pronounced. Recognition and diagnosis of any condition in its earliest stages is important so that one can receive effective treatment. Effective treatment plans usually include medication, psychotherapy, education, self-management strategies and external supports such as family, friends and formal support groups. Combining these elements and revising the treatment plan based on assessment of an individual's response is the best means of preventing relapse and reducing the severity of symptoms.

Recovery

Recovery does not mean that the illness has gone into complete remission. Over time, and after what for many can be a long and difficult process, individuals can come to terms with their illness by first learning to