

## NAMI PITTSBURGH/NORTH

NAMI / Southwestern Pennsylvania  
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Pittsburgh, PA 15237  
(Turn at light by Dollar Tree and Flowerama)

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**MAY 4, 2016**  
**7:00PM – 9:00PM**

### GENERAL MEETING AND DISCUSSION

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#### MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH.....



During the month of May, NAMI and participants across the country are bringing awareness to mental health. Each year we fight stigma, provide support, educate the public and advocate for equal care. Each year, the movement grows stronger.

We believe that these issues are important to address all year round, but highlighting these issues during May provides a time for people to come together and display the passion and strength of those working to improve the lives of all Americans whose lives are affected by mental health conditions.

1 in 5 Americans will be affected by a mental health condition in their lifetime and every American is affected or impacted through their friends and family and can do something to help others.

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#### THE POWER OF ONE: What Can One Person Do .....

Effective advocacy for men, women and children needing treatment for mental illness begins with one person. You. A new world of possibilities and a brighter attitude about the challenges you face open up when you decide to take direct action and become a force to be reckoned with instead of a victim of circumstance. But where do you start?

**CHANGE YOURSELF.....**Make yourself aware of stigmatizing language—often implicit—that diminishes people who experience mental illness. People must not be defined by their disease. They should never be labeled by their limitations. Learn to use “people first” language. A young women seeking treatment for schizophrenia is not “a schizophrenic.” She is a daughter, a friend, has a career, may be a mother, has talents and interests and dreams like anyone else—and she has a treatable mental illness. Discipline

yourself to treat people with the dignity to which they are entitled, and choose words and phrases that put people first, and the disability second.

**CHANGE OTHERS,,,,,** Become a messenger of recovery, making others aware that we now have well-established and effective roads to recovery. Make other people aware of the importance of “people first” language. Hold news media organizations accountable for the words they use when they broadcast language that includes harmful stereotypes about those with mental illness. It is their responsibility to get it right, and our right to be respected.

NAMI Website

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## **Five Ways to Stay Productive During Depressioen**

By Jeremy Rinkel | Apr. 04, 2016

When I fell into depression in September 2012, watching Netflix, eating ice cream and lying on the couch are what my days consisted of for months. I felt exhausted without doing anything physical. The hours of sleeping, lack of exercise and half-gallon containers of ice cream were making my symptoms much worse.

My family, therapist and doctor helped me create a plan to get me back to health spiritually, mentally and physically. The plan significantly improved my symptoms, so I thought I would share what worked best for me. Here are five ways to stay productive and avoid isolation during depression:

### **Create a daily schedule**

Without a daily routine in place, it’s easy to stay in bed longer, sit on the couch longer and take longer to recover. Writing my to-do list and recording my thoughts in my journal became a critical part of my daily routine and my recovery.

Not having a schedule makes me feel like a ball in a pinball machine. It’s like life is flying around me without a particular direction or goal, which ultimately increases my anxiety levels. A schedule keeps me organized and focused and gets me going in the morning.

Michael McCullough, Professor of Psychology at the University of Miami said, “Routines are like mental butlers. Once you have a routine in place, then the mental processes that make the behavior happen take place automatically.”

When creating your schedule, build in challenges every day. In the beginning, one challenge was to shower by 10 a.m. This ensured that I was out of bed and ready to start the day at a reasonable hour. Having this extra challenge will help you prove to yourself that you can handle more than you think.

### **Create a list of “must-have” relationships to focus on**

Friends and family are instrumental for recovery. We were created to be with people. Feeling comfortable talking to someone about what you are going through is so important.

There was a day when negative thoughts wouldn’t quit entering my head. I took a walk with my minister, and we discussed my situation and feelings. I shared my desire to be happy again and my negative feelings and thoughts. I was in a ‘scary’ place, and telling someone helped me to process my feelings. Graduate Student John Rapping wrote in *Out of the Blue: Understanding and Responding to Depression*, “If you want to leave depression behind in your life, nurture significant relationships with friends and family. List the most important people in your life. With these people in mind, work on enriching your relationships with them. Listening to another’s feelings and goals can help put life in perspective and ease your feelings of sadness.”

It was nice to know that I had multiple people on my team that I could call if I needed. Ultimately, you need people to remind you that you are not alone.

### **Set boundaries with yourself and others**

Setting boundaries isn't easy, particularly because not everyone agrees with the boundaries each person sets. My wife thought being around people was what I needed, instead of spending my days laying on the couch. My therapist agreed with her, and month after month, told me I needed to walk or exercise.

Each person in my life offered support and suggestions, but I believed that stressful situations would deter my recovery. So I fought it. Sometimes I wanted to be around people, but most of the time, I wanted to be left alone.

You may feel the same way. You may have well-meaning friends and family offering support and advice that feels overwhelming. This is normal. You need to know your limits of what is helpful and what is too much.

Dr. Henry Cloud in his book *Boundaries: When to say yes, when to say no to take control of your life* said, "Boundaries help us keep the good in and the bad out. Setting boundaries inevitably involves taking responsibility for your choices. You are the one who makes them. You are the one who must live with their consequences."

Your friends and family will want to help you, but they won't always know the best way to do this. Being honest and setting boundaries with them can help you avoid overwhelming interactions and prevent unproductive arguments.

### **Write down specific goals and dates you wish to achieve**

In May, I set the goal of losing 20 pounds by the end of summer. A study conducted by Psychologist Dr. Gail Matthews at Dominican University in California found that you are 42% more likely to achieve your goals by writing them. So, I wrote the phrase "Lose 20 by August 20" everywhere—on sticky notes in my car, on my bathroom mirror and on my office whiteboard. Setting a deadline helped me work harder and be more mindful of my actions as the deadline came closer.

Writing down goals also gives you a visual of what you want to achieve. Not only did I write down my end goal, but I created a graph to chart my progress. I found it interesting to see how my chart went up and down depending on my exercise and eating patterns. Keep your goals in front of you and review them daily.

Productivity experts stress the importance of setting SMART goals:

**Specific**—set specific goals

**Measurable**—set measurable goals

**Actionable**—start every goal with an action verb

**Realistic**—be realistic but also challenge yourself

**Time-bound**—set a date for reaching your goal

What do you want to achieve in the next week, month, three months, six months or year? Write it down and get to work.

### **Volunteer and help others**

Numerous studies show that being involved with others increases the chance of bouncing back from depression faster. Mark Snyder, a psychologist and head of the Center for the Study of the Individual and Society at the University of Minnesota believes volunteerism helps mental well-being. "People who volunteer tend to have higher self-esteem, psychological well-being, and happiness," Snyder says. "All of these things go up as their feelings of social connectedness goes up, which in reality, it does. It also improves their health and even their longevity."

Getting involved for me was a gradual process. Shortly after taking medical leave from the classroom, Serve India Ministries, a missions organization my church supports, was looking for some technology help. I volunteered 10 hours a week, helping establish technology policy and creating their social media campaign.

I didn't want to share that I was no longer working. I was afraid to talk about my depression and health issues, and I was ashamed and scared about what people would think. It wasn't until I realized my experience could help someone else that it was easier for me to open up.

Having a purpose and using my talents to help people was therapeutic, even though being involved was difficult. After being so isolated, I had to relearn how to be part of a close-knit group. But getting involved made a significant difference. Taking steps to reach out and continue being involved with others is a crucial step to recovery.

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### **NAMI NATIONAL CONVENTION – WEDNESDAY TO SATURDAY, JULY 6 – 9, 2016**

Sheraton Denver Downtown  
1550 Court Place  
Denver, CO 80202

The NAMI 2016 National Convention will feature:

- Top-notch researchers and clinicians providing information and tools to advance and sustain recovery from mental illness.
- People living with a mental illness and their families providing their own important perspectives on recovery.
- The country's keenest minds and savviest policymakers offering strategies and tactics to effectively advocate for changing the mental health system in our nation.
- Abundant networking opportunities so we can learn from each other about how we can improve the lives of all people living with mental illness and their families.
- Inspiration, innovation and an exhilarating four days in Denver.

More information to come!

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### **NAMI SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS – 2016**

June 1, 2016  
July 6, 2016  
August 3, 2016  
September 7, 2016  
October 5, 2016  
November 2, 2016  
December 7, 2016

