NAMI PITTSBURGH/NORTH SUPPORT GROUP

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**JUNE 5, 2019**

**7:00PM – 9:00PM**

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

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**Tidying for Your Mental Health**

By Sarah Roethlinger | Apr. 29, 2019 *taken from NAMI Blog Online*

Tidying has become a popular trend this year. If you haven’t seen her series on Netflix or read her book, [Marie Kondo](https://konmari.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) is a Japanese consultant who helps people tidy their homes by reorganizing and only keeping things that “spark joy.” In her technique, the KonMari method, there is an order to the tidying process, and it’s essential to being successful. After watching the series, I began thinking about ways we can “tidy” our lives to increase self-care and improve our mental health.

Carefully Choosing Friendships

As a working mom with two young children, I don’t have much time to spend with friends. And I’ve realized the importance of only maintaining friendships that are supportive, healthy and, of course, spark joy. Life can get busy. There may be times of conflict with a friend or times when they need you. It’s important to feel *reciprocated*love and support. If you surround yourself only with people you love and who love you, you’ll feel better and have more time to dedicate to those individuals.

As a parent, I know that I’m modeling behaviors for my children. And I like to ask myself: What are my friendships teaching them?

Saying No to Over-Committing

The Shinto roots of the KonMari method is a way to treasure what you have and treat your things as valuables opposed to disposable objects. You can think about your commitments the same way. Do you cherish them and are they valuable to your life?

I’m a people-pleaser by nature, and one of the hardest lessons I’ve had to learn in life is to just say *no*. I can’t be everything to everyone. I can’t be everywhere. I can’t do everything that’s asked of me. It’s not beneficial to me or to anyone. When we run ourselves ragged with commitments, we damage our mental health.

Take the time to think about what matters in the big picture. Are your commitments a reflection of the things that matter to you and your family? Would you be happier and healthier if you committed to less? Keep in mind there’s not a gracious 90-day return policy on your time—once it’s given, it’s gone.

Making Time For Yourself

What are you doing in your life that’s just for you? I know how hard it is to make time for ourselves. But now that you’ve let go of some time-drains that weren’t sparking joy for you, you can do some of the things you love. We often justify the time and resources we spend giving and providing for others, but not for ourselves. I’m giving you permission to let go of that mentality because it’s self-care and not an act of selfishness.

Wherever your passion lies, whether it’s volunteering, finishing that creative art or home project, traveling, cooking, writing, training to be a bodybuilder, you should do it. Schedule it just like you would anything else in your life.

Marie Kondo says it’s important to thank the things we get rid of. So, as you let go of some of the unhealthy friendships, time commitments and habits from your life, take the time to appreciate what those things gave or taught you, mindfully thank them and let go.

Sarah Roethlinger is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapist and Supportive Housing Program Director for [Youth Focus](https://www.youthfocus.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), a nonprofit in Guilford County North Carolina. Sarah supervises several programs that serve youth experiencing homelessness including [Act Together](https://www.youthfocus.org/emergency-housing/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) and [My Sister Susan’s House](https://www.youthfocus.org/maternity-housing/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).  She’s a mom of two children, enjoys trying different pesco-vegetarian cuisines with her husband, and she never leaves the house without a reusable straw.

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**The Example Celebrities With Mental Illness Set**

By Izzy Gonçalves | May. 15, 2019 *taken from NAMI Blog Online*

We have seen the story many times: a celebrity starts behaving erratically and it’s plastered across headlines. Their actions become increasingly self-destructive. People might question if it’s an issue with drugs or alcohol. Their friends and family may express concern. The downward spiral continues. Then, the announcement—they’ve gone to rehab or a hospital to get help. In some cases, we learn the reason is bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety or another mental illness.

If that [celebrity shares their diagnosis](https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/October-2018/What-Happens-When-Celebrities-Speak-Out%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), it can be illuminating to people who follow them. In particular, people with mental illness might welcome a high-profile person “coming out” about their condition. They might feel less alone or even feel a sense of pride from what they have in common with a celebrity. They might feel better about themselves. Society might also revisit its perceptions and expectations of those with mental illness. The “celebrity endorsement” might help reduce stigma and shift public attitudes around mental illness.

But is the example set by that celebrity helpful? Being famous is often about creating and managing a public image. So, it’s fair to question the authenticity and motives of their “coming out.” In fact, some celebrities romanticize aspects of mental illness, such as the connection between certain conditions and creativity. For example, Kanye West has openly disclosed that he has bipolar disorder. He has suggested that it enhances his creativity and artistry, and even suggests that it is a “superpower” in his lyrics.

The Good and the Bad

It is clear that mental illness “celebrity endorsements” are not all the same. While the mental health community would hope that celebrities only raise awareness in a positive way, it is possible that their behaviors perpetuate stigma. The celebrity’s message may not be the most informed or helpful.

Sometimes, a celebrity discusses their refusal or reluctance to take medication. They make it sound like they don’t need medication or that it stifles their creativity. This can be a particularly risky message. Medication is critical for so many, particularly those with severe mental illness. Celebrities may be accomplished and admired, but they are not doctors.

However, some celebrities speak very frankly about their diagnosis and struggles. They focus more on the challenges they encounter. One example is Saturday Night Live cast member Pete Davidson. A couple of years ago, he disclosed that he has borderline personality disorder. His ups and downs have been very much on public display, particularly following his split from fiancée Ariana Grande last year. Pete has openly addressed his issues on and off the show. His story is a very relatable account of a young adult recently diagnosed and coping with mental illness, free of romanticism.

I believe that these celebrity examples can be very positive if they are authentic, not just a tool to raise celebrity status. If the celebrity is authentic in their ownership of mental illness, they should feel a sense of responsibility as a representative of this community.

For me, both the examples of Kanye West and Pete Davidson can be constructive but for different reasons. We can also pick and choose the parts of their message and story that are most relevant and sensible to us. For example, Kanye West’s lyrics might offer valuable inspiration and empowerment to those struggling with mental illness. *“I’m okay thinking of my mental illness as a superpower, but I also know that I need my medication to keep these powers in check.”*While Pete Davidson’s down-to-earth attitude might help create understanding about mental illness. When celebrities share their meltdowns and challenges, their followers can relate and feel less alone. There is power in this empathy, a sense of shared experience and community.

If a celebrity is being honest about their mental health issues, their example is likely to be helpful. More of these “endorsements” can certainly help reduce stigma. This can help people with mental health issues avoid isolation and seek out treatment and support. It can help them find hope and inspiration to persist on their journey of recovery. These very visible examples of celebrities living with a mental illness also show that we are not alone. Mental illness does not discriminate. The rich and famous have it too.

*Izzy Gonçalves is a finance professional, "part time celebrity watcher" and the primary caregiver of his wife who is living with bipolar disorder. Together they built [ForLikeMinds](https://www.forlikeminds.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), the first online peer-based support community dedicated to people living with or supporting someone with mental illness illness.*

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**Why It’s Important to Unplug Sometimes**

By Carrie Cantwell | May. 10, 2019 *taken from NAMI Blog online*

I love technology. I can keep in touch with friends all over the world through social media. With the click of a button, I can order groceries, shoes and furniture. I can even use [apps](https://www.facingus.org/tour/tracker%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) on my phone to help manage my mental health and medications. Having easy access to so many things can be wonderful, but it can also be dangerous, especially for [someone with bipolar disorder](https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/January-2019/How-I-Recognize-My-Early-Warning-Signs-of-Mania%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

I’ve discovered six ways technology can fuel bipolar symptoms like mania and depression, and I’ve found solutions for each that work for me. They may work for you, too.

**How Online Shopping Fuels Mania**

**Amazon**
It seems there’s nothing you *can’t*buy on Amazon. The problem with easy access to online shopping is just that: It’s too easy. It’s simple to buy things, so it’s virtually effortless to spend money impulsively, especially during mania. The instant high I get when I click “Submit” in the shopping cart can be addictive and financially destructive.

Solution: When I’m hypomanic or manic, I delete the Amazon app from my phone and I remove my credit card from their website. I don’t close my account altogether, but I make it harder to purchase with one click. This eliminates the dopamine rush that accompanies online buying, so it keeps me from pursuing the addictive reward system in my brain.

Since it can be hard to maintain that level of self-awareness, I’ve made an agreement with my boyfriend that if he notices a lot of Amazon packages appearing at our door, he'll gently say something to me like, "Hey, it looks like you've doing a lot more online shopping recently, how are you feeling?" And that signals that I’m symptomatic, and I may need to delete the app.

**Coupons**
Many websites display email newsletter sign-up messages that offer discounts for opting in. Then, they bombard my inbox with urgent messages like “SHOP NOW!” With little time to think through the consequences of my actions, I’ll buy things I don’t need because why not, it’s discounted! Then, the things I shouldn’t have purchased show up on my doorstep and I’m overwhelmed with regret.

Solution: I don’t sign up for these email newsletters. No discount is worth the cost of destroying my bank account, and the shopping high never lasts. It just becomes buyer’s remorse.

**eBay alerts**
eBay is a great place to find deals on everything. The thrill of the bid in a heated auction can be addictive to everyone, not just people with bipolar disorder. I noticed something interesting recently while I was on eBay, searching for a cord for my cell phone. I watched a couple of items, so I could remember them and come back later when I’d done my research and compared prices. Then I got an alert email pressuring me to jump on the sale. The message said something like “There are only 2 hours left, Carrie!” I can imagine this sense of urgency is unhealthy for anyone, and it certainly wasn’t good for me. It could lead to destructive impulse buying.

Solution: I don’t watch items on eBay anymore, so they don’t know what I’m thinking about buying. I’d rather just bookmark the links to the items on my computer or email myself a list of links, so I (and only I) know what’s on my mind. That way I’m not pressured into buying anything.

**Booking trips**
I love to travel as much as possible, within reason. Unfortunately, reason doesn’t always guide my decisions. It’s just as simple to reserve hotel rooms and purchase airline tickets online as it is to buy jeans, and travel costs a lot more than clothes. The other problem with booking online is most reservations are non-refundable, so I could be stuck with a bad decision.

Solution: I don’t save my credit card data on travel websites, and I refuse to subscribe to their email newsletters. That way I’m never tempted to jump on the latest last-minute deal for a cheap flight.

**How Social Media Can Worsen Depression**

**Facebook**
I’m linked to both local and distant friends on Facebook, and I often interact online with people who live around the corner instead of in-person. When I’m depressed, it’s hard to motivate myself to get out of bed, much less get out of the house. Because of that, I end up replacing healthy face-to-face interactions with virtual connections on platforms like Facebook. It turns into a cycle: The less I go out to meet up with friends, the harder it is to get out of the house, and this can deepen my depression.

Solution: I make a concerted effort to spend [quality time with friends](https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/February-2019/Maintaining-Healthy-Friendships-with-Mental-Illness%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) and family that live nearby. I call on the phone to make plans. Often just hearing a friend’s voice on the other end helps pull me out of my own head. The get togethers don’t have to be big events. Sometimes just calling a friend and scheduling an hour for an afternoon cup of coffee is enough to keep me from feeling alone and disconnected from the world around me. It keeps me from falling into the vicious cycle of isolating myself and spiraling downward into the darkness of depression.

**Instagram**
I follow interesting people and friends on Instagram. The thing is, no one posts pictures of themselves in yoga pants with uncombed hair, laying around on the sofa. Everyone shares their ideal image. When I’m stable, I find these posts inspirational and positive, but when I’m depressed, they make me feel worse. I tend to compare myself to others, and when I’m struggling with a depressive episode, I feel like a worthless failure when I see the supposedly perfect lives of others in my feed.

Solution: I remove the Instagram app from my phone when I’m depressed. By removing the trigger, I’m practicing self-care that will help me avoid this pitfall and hasten my recovery.

For me, recovery means being self-aware, asking for and accepting feedback and help, and taking action when needed. And that applies to my use of technology. It’s what keeps me healthy.

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**STORIES THAT HEAL**

NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania is hosting *Stories That Heal* in collaboration with [**City**](https://default.salsalabs.org/T973cdd73-acd1-475e-9c73-23ea7936d932/b43d7d73-4279-4f7c-8a2a-8e18e42f2e07) [**of Asylum**](https://default.salsalabs.org/T712892b9-d962-4bfd-a645-9649e1324ff5/b43d7d73-4279-4f7c-8a2a-8e18e42f2e07). Events will take place at the **City of Asylum Bookstore located at 40 W. North Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15212**. This is a free event but registration is appreciated.

**Thursday, May 30, 2019 - Corrine Jasmin —**[***Tread***](https://default.salsalabs.org/Te57c6ea5-1e0e-4735-b3e4-3d1c44d20ce8/b43d7d73-4279-4f7c-8a2a-8e18e42f2e07)

Corrine Jasmin is a writer, artist, and filmmaker currently living in Pittsburgh. Her first book, [***Tread***](https://default.salsalabs.org/T8ea363cf-c71e-4695-a26e-f725be64267b/b43d7d73-4279-4f7c-8a2a-8e18e42f2e07), includes 49 poems that give readers insight into Corrine's life over the past three years. The poems are an honest behind-the-scenes look at how she navigated life while experiencing mental health issues.

**Thursday, June 27, 2019 - Kristie Knights —**[***Unsung Heroes: Deconstructing Suicide Through Stories of Triumph***](https://default.salsalabs.org/T24d6af83-1154-48b3-816e-d265de1d9d29/b43d7d73-4279-4f7c-8a2a-8e18e42f2e07)

Kristie Knights is a psychotherapist, podcaster, and founder of IRise Leadership Institute, a nonprofit that works to eradicate suicide one life at a time. In the book, [***Unsung Heroes: Deconstructing Suicide Through Stories of Triumph***](https://default.salsalabs.org/T2e92aab5-c7cd-4709-b36e-b4132e9be1be/b43d7d73-4279-4f7c-8a2a-8e18e42f2e07)*,*Kristie compiles stories from 35 writers from five countries. While each story differs in details, they all give readers raw insight at their experience with suicide, both thoughts and attempts.

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**NAMI MEETINGS – 2019**

 July 3, 2019 October 2, 2019

 August 7, 2019 November 6, 2019

 September 4, 2019 December 4, 2019

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