February Meeting Information

Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 19, 7:30 pm. **Guest Speaker:** Brian Haywood, Area Agency on Aging will provide information on Senior Care Services and Domiciliary Care Services.

Contact us via email... Get in touch with NAMI Pittsburgh South at nami.south@gmail.com. In the case of cancellation due to bad weather, please follow the Mt. Lebanon Twp. cancellation directives announced on the media. If Mt. Lebanon cancels activities and meetings, the NAMI meeting will also be cancelled. As always, use your best judgement and be safe.

2019 Meeting Calendar

Next meeting: March 18, 7:30 pm. This meeting will be a Care and Share family support group format.

2020 Membership Dues are due. Dues can be paid online at www.nami.org or, you can print the form from the back page of this newsletter and mail it to the PO box. Lastly, please consider receiving your newsletter via email as mailing costs continue to rise.

Visit the NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania website for information for awareness events, conferences, and NAMI support group information.  
https://www.namikeystonepa.org/support/support-groups/  
https://www.namikeystonepa.org/nami-events/


How to Help Someone With an Eating Disorder in College
By Rae Jacobson

The first step to helping someone with an eating disorder is to recognize that it’s a mental health problem, and not just foolish dieting. It can also have serious medical consequences. Eating disorders can have a severe impact on physical health, with effects ranging from tooth decay to fatal heart attacks. ED sufferers are significantly more likely to attempt or commit suicide and many also engage in other self-
YOU ARE NOT ALONE!
If you need assistance dealing with any type of mental illness, the following organizations are available.

National NAMI Help Line
1-800-950-NAMI/ Web: www.nami.org

SUPPORT
ALANON 412-572-5141

Allegheny Co. Peer Support Warmline
1-866-661-WARM (9276)
10 am – Midnight daily

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Mood Peer Support
Contact: Ray Millsap
Phone: (412) 379-3902
Email: moodpeerspgh@gmail.com
Website: http://www.moodpeerspgh.org/

St. Clair Hospital has partnered with Chartiers Mental Health to facilitate a Mental Health Support Group in Bridgeville. Family members are welcome to attend.
1st Tuesday of each month 6:30 - 7:30 pm.
Bridgeville Library, 505 McMillen Street
Additional Information: St. Clair Hospital Psychiatry and Mental Health Services at 412.942.4850

Mental Health Support Group
Christ United Methodist Church
Bethel Park 412-942-4800

NAMI McKeesport Support Group
3rd Thursday of each month, 7:00 pm.
Penn State McKeesport Campus
Contact: AnnaLisa 412-527-6600

NAMI Borderline Personality Disorder, Family Support Group
3rd Saturday of the month, 11-1 pm.
105 Braunlich Dr, Suite 230, Pgh PA 15237
Contact Jo at 724-776-5974

NAMI Pittsburgh East-FAMILIAS
4th Wednesday of each month, 7-9 p.m., Beulah Presbyterian Church, Churchill
Contact Mim at 412-731-4855


harming behaviors such as cutting and struggle with isolation, depression, and anxiety.

“People need to understand the reality of having an eating disorder,” urges a 24-year-old woman who is now in recovery. “This is not vanity. I was sick and my sickness could truly, honestly have killed me, but people still thought I could turn it off. They thought I was just doing it because I wanted to look better.”

Dr. Allison Baker, a child and adolescent psychiatrist, notes that this is not an uncommon misperception. “If we could move past the idea that these are willful decisions that are made rationally rather than real illnesses that need treatment and our understanding and support, we would be in such a better place.”

Talk about it
“The majority of college age kids want to connect with their family and friends about their mental health,” says Dr. Baker. “Don’t be afraid that you’re going to make a situation worse or cause something by bringing it up. Avoiding and ignoring usually leads to things getting worse, not better.”

That said, it can be hard to open a dialogue about such a serious issue. Try to be calm and non-judgmental. Instead of focusing on her appearance, stick to how you are worried about her unhealthy behaviors and the harmful effect they are having on her. The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) recommends using “I statements” like “I am concerned” or “It makes me afraid” instead of “you statements” like “You need to stop,” which can make people feel guilty or defensive.

Also, be prepared to listen. People with eating disorders often deny that they have a problem, or have complicated feelings about getting better. It is important to take her feelings into account and make her feel heard. If you need to, revisit the conversation later. For you to be helpful you will need to be supportive and persistent.

These talks can be intense and emotional, and are best done in person. If your child is going to a college away from home, it is worth making the trip to visit her as often as you need to.

Here are some more tips for having a productive conversation. NEDA also has an online Navigator Program that helps people with eating disorders or their family and friends with individualized support and guidance about recovery.

Don’t wait
Seeking eating disorder treatment is the first step to recovery and the sooner someone gets into treatment, the better. The longer one lives with an eating disorder, the tougher it is to shake, and the more likely she is to relapse later.

Help on campus
College campuses are required by law to provide basic mental health services. College counseling services are usually included in tuition and can be very good. They can also provide referrals for more specialized care if necessary. Some schools may also have active, student-run ED support groups or other helpful programs.
If your child is feeling overwhelmed, you can help him—boys develop eating disorders too — by researching the treatment options at his college. Some schools may even let you make an appointment for him, although you shouldn’t expect to receive any medical information from his doctor because of privacy concerns.

**Online assistance**

There are some great communities for people with eating disorders online. Finding a place to get support or participating in real world meet-ups can be a good way to bolster recovery. NEDA has forums that offer a great window into the world of online ED support.

Like any good thing on the internet, there are also ED sites that have a dangerous dark side. Avoid anything labeled as “pro-ana” (pro-anorexia), “pro-mia” (pro-bulimia), or “thinspo,” Far from providing assistance, these “thinspiration” sites promote eating disorders by posting things like pictures of extremely thin bodies or tips on how to starve more effectively.

NEDA’s site offers a range services and supports including a comprehensive guide to which colleges offer what services, as well as links to support groups nationwide, and a helpline.

**Financial help**

For more severe eating disorders, more comprehensive or in-patient treatment is sometimes necessary. Since residential programs can be very costly, there are also organizations that offer support. Founded by two women in recovery, Project Heal provides treatment scholarships on a case-by-case basis. They also offer a large online community that is open to anyone seeking support and advice. NEDA’s site also offers treatment coverage resources, forums, and advice on accessing affordable treatment options.

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https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/01/200127164325.htm

**Research leads to life changing improvement for some people living with depression**

By Kelly Johnston | January 27, 2020

Beth MacKay knew at a young age that she saw the world differently than many of her friends and family. She thought her pessimism and cynicism were rooted in realism, a proud reminder of her Scottish roots, and not a sign of an underlying medical condition. But, that understanding of herself changed when at the age of 17, she attempted suicide.

“I was diagnosed with depression, but looking back, it started much earlier,” says MacKay, now 31. “Doctors believe it may have started when I was 10 or 11-years-old. As a child I would go through periods where I couldn’t sleep, I didn’t want to go to school, and I was constantly sick.”

MacKay’s parents tried to find help and support for her. They thought her symptoms may have been related to a learning disorder, but no one suspected depression could be the cause.
Prescribed anti-depressants and therapy, MacKay went on to university. She noticed everyone around her seemed to be functioning, but she couldn’t get out of bed. She spent the next several years pretending to be okay. She would sleep most of the day, and get up-and-out only long enough to put on a front to show people she was fine. It seemed that no matter what treatment options she tried nothing made life manageable.

“Everyday felt like climbing up a mountain. Something as simple as showering, doing dishes or throwing in a load of a laundry felt too difficult at times,” recalls MacKay.

Always open to trying something else to improve her life, MacKay volunteered for a research study at the University of Calgary. Dr. Rajamannar Ramasubbu, MD, was investigating the effects of two different methods of deep brain stimulation (DBS), short pulse and long pulse, for treatment-resistant depression.

“It can be very difficult to find study participants for research like this,” says Ramasubbu, a professor in the departments of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences, and member of The Mathison Centre for Mental Health Research & Education and the Hotchkiss Brain Institute at the Cumming School of Medicine (CSM). “The procedure is invasive, so many clinicians are reluctant to recommend it. It requires implanting an electrode into the brain that is connected to a pulse generator that is implanted under the clavicle into the chest.”

Just as pacemakers deliver electrical impulses to help control abnormal heart rhythms, DBS devices deliver electrical impulses to help neurons (brain cells) within the brain communicate more efficiently with each other.

“Depression is caused by abnormalities in the neural circuit responsible for emotional regulation,” says Ramasubbu. “The region of the brain we target (subcallosal cingulate) is the junction of the limbic and frontal regions. Stimulating this area helps to keep a balance between these two unique systems.”

Multi-disciplinary team collaborates on DBS study
Participants are awake when the device is implanted. Dr. Zelma Kiss, MD/PhD, a neurosurgeon and co-principal investigator of the study performed the procedure at the Foothills Medical Centre (FMC).

Participants were randomized into two groups, one group received short pulse stimulation, the other long pulse width stimulation. After six months, treatment switched for those who did not respond in the first six months. Researchers used the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale to measure change in symptoms.

“Both methods of stimulation were equally safe and effective in reducing depressive symptoms,” says Ramasubbu. “50 per cent of the participants responded to the stimulation with 50 per cent reduction in symptoms. Of which 30 per cent experienced complete improvement in their symptoms, especially those who received long pulse width stimulation.”

MacKay says she’s experienced a massive change. “Basically I was nearly dead and now I’m mostly alive. I’m still figuring out what life feels like,
COMPASS is a website that allows individuals and community-based organizations access to screen for, apply for, and renew a broad range of social programs. It is a single access point for:

- Health Care Coverage
- Food Stamp Benefits
- Cash Assistance
- Long Term Care
- Home and Community Based Services for individuals with mental retardation
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- Free or Reduced Price School Meals
- SelectPlan for Women
- Child Care Works

COMPASS also provides screening for the programs above, which allows a user to provide basic information to determine if they potentially qualify for a service. For more information, visit https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/cmhom.aspx

RESOURCES
Allegheny County MH Emergency Line
412-350-4457 (24 Hour Service)
Allegheny County Jail Forensic Service
412-350-4273
Allegheny County Ombudsman
1-877-787-2424
re:solve Crisis Network
1-888-796-8226. Call before a crisis becomes a crisis.
Depression & Anxiety
1-800-888-9383
Research Into the Causes of Schizophrenia 412-624-0823
Research Brain Tissue Donation Information 412-624-0331

NAMI Veterans Resource Center
NAMI launched this online portal to mental health resources for American veterans, active duty service members and their families. To check out this resource visit www.nami.org

Women’s Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh Hotline
412-687-8005

because it feels so different and so much better than before the implant.”
Ramasubbu adds more research is needed to determine which patients with treatment resistant depression will benefit from DBS. Study participants ranged in age from 20 to 70, with younger participants showing better improvement than older participants.

https://www.namikeystonepa.org/education/conferences/camhcon2020/

RESILIENT YOUTH
Strategies to Overcome Adversity

Friday, February 28, 2020
Pittsburgh Airport Marriott Hotel

NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania’s fourth annual Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference will take place on Friday, February 28, 2020, at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott. The conference, “Resilient Youth: Strategies to Overcome Diversity,” is one of the only events in the region specializing in youth mental health. Participants from all over the country attend to learn about the newest research and best practices to assist and advance the mental health needs of young children, adolescents, and young adults.

The conference is geared toward parents and caregivers, mental health professionals, educators, and students.

Conference includes 3 keynote presenters, 12 workshop presentations, Continuing Education Credits, and over 40 exhibitors from across the country. Registration fee also includes breakfast and lunch.

https://www.namikeystonepa.org/education/conferences/camhcon2020/

Featured Presenters:

“Building Resiliency: The Role Attachment-Based Family Therapy Can Play in Treating Youth Suicide and Depression”
Suzanne A. Levy, PhD, Director, Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT), Training Program, Drexel University’s College of Nursing and Health Professions

“When Youth Feel Helpless and Out of Control: What You Can Do To Build Emotional Resilience During Adolescence”
Kate Fitzsimons, International Youth Speaker, Student Resilience Specialist, Certified Life Coach

“Creating a Movement: Why Young Voices Matter”
Elle Snyder, Founding Member, Upper St. Clair Student Wellness Steering Committee
Make checks payable to: NAMI Pittsburgh South and mail to NAMI South Hills Chapter.

NAMI Pittsburgh South Membership Form 2020