



Schenectady

PO Box 974, Schenectady, New York 12301

NAMI Schenectady E-News

June 2020 Edition

Acting Editor*: Cynthia Seacord Send address changes, requests to discontinue and comments to: namischenectady@gmail.com
or contact temporary acting editor at 518-374-8071 (home #)

*** Please NOTE: We need one or two members to take on the editorship of this newsletter!**

Support Group Meetings

Family support groups that have been meeting at Ellis Hospital (Wednesdays at 6 pm) and at CDPC (Tuesdays at 5 pm) are cancelled for the foreseeable future. We will let you know if and when we are able to offer a remote support group. In the meanwhile, we refer you to the NAMI-NYS Temporary Helpline and the COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline announced by Governor Cuomo (see ad this page). For more help see page 2.

Programs and Board Meetings

Obviously our board meetings this spring were cancelled. We have several topic meetings planned but need further guidelines and places to meet. Virtual meetings may be necessary. As the various phases of reopening are delineated more fully over the coming weeks and months, and we understand what the “new normal” will look like, we will announce programs and meetings via e-mail and on our website.

Thanks goes out to all who have been providing people with the care, support, information and services required to keep our communities functioning safely during this trying time. We are grateful to essential services providers, especially first responders and health care workers, who have been working hard, often putting themselves at added risk, to ensure our access to vital resources. We especially applaud the NAMI-NYS office for providing its wonderful on-line programs in recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month, and for keeping its members and friends informed. Please take a moment during the days ahead to thank all essential workers. Together, we will make it through this challenging time!



We are still looking for a member willing to complete Roy Neville's term on our board. If you are interested, write to the board at our g-mail address (above), and include “I want to be on the board” in the subject heading. Not on e-mail? Call the editor at the number in our heading.

Feeling overwhelmed about COVID-19?

Help is waiting for you.

NEW YORK STATE
COVID-19 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT HELPLINE:
1-844-863-9314
8 AM - 10 PM, 7 days a week

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced a new helpline for people who are experiencing overwhelming anxiety, stress and depression brought on by the coronavirus emergency.

Call now for free and confidential support.



NAMI-NYS COVID-19 Info and Helpline

NAMI-NYS has a great deal of current information related to COVID-19 on its website. Go to naminys.org and click on its COVID-19 Information link. For support call NAMI-NYS's temporary Helpline number (518)-248-7635, available on weekdays from 8:00am-4:30pm. (NAMI National also has information and a helpline at nami.org.)

Helping Hands and Hotlines:

- NYS COVID-19 Hotline 1-888-364-3065
- NYS COVID-19 Website:
coronavirus.health.ny.gov
- Schenectady County Public Health Services, Communicable Disease Dept. 518-386-2824, option #4, Monday-Friday 8:30-4:30.
After hours: 518-437-7878
- Schenectady County COVID-19 Emergency Response Coalition Hotline: 518-621-3536. **This hotline is not for coronavirus-related questions.** Its objective is to ensure that those in quarantine or isolation, especially the high-risk elderly, get basic supplies while they remain at home. **NOTE the supplies are limited so use this contact in an emergency situation only.**
- NY Connects for Seniors: 518-382-8481
- Schenectady County COVID-19 help website for the most up-to-date information about resources available from partner organizations:
www.schenectadycounty.com/covid19help

Resources:

- NYS Health Department COVID-19 website:
www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/
- CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) FAQs and information:
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- Schenectady County Department of Health:
www.schenectadycounty.com/publichealth
- Montgomery County Public Health:
518-853-3531 or at website
www.co.montgomery.ny.us/publichealth
- Albany Co. Dept. of Health, 518-447-4580 or
www.albanycounty.com/departments/health



MORE SCHENECTADY COUNTY AREA SUPPORT

Anxiety Counseling:

- EMOTIONAL SUPPORT LINE: 844-863-9314
- CRISIS TEXT LINE (Anxiety Counseling over Texting) Text smart phone HOME to 741741
Website: www.crisistextline.org

Child Abuse Reporting

- OCFS CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE: 800-342-9720

Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention for LGBTQA+ Youth

- THE TREVOR PROJECT: 866-488-7386
Text by smart phone: Text START to 678678

Crisis Services (Mobile crisis)

- MOBILE CRISIS SERVICES (NORTHERN RIVERS)
Serving Albany (children only), Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren & Washington counties
General information: 518-952-9032
Immediate services: 518-292-5499
M-F 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Sat-Sun 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Domestic Violence Services, incl. Shelter, Counseling:

- YWCA NORTHEASTERN NY
All services line: 518-374-3394
Domestic violence line 24/7: 518-374-3386

Emotional Support (Peer)

- MENTAL HEALTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (MHEP) 800-643-7462

Health and Emotional Support

- ELLIS MEDICINE'S LIVING ROOM
518-243-1523

Substance Use Services:

- PROJECT SAFE POINT: 866-930-4999
- VIRTUAL RECOVERY MEETINGS
Website: www.unityrecovery.org/digital-recovery-meetings/

You should **seek immediate help** if you experience significant changes in your energy level, your eating or sleeping patterns, or have difficulty concentrating, or suffer from prolonged and overwhelming worry and a sense of hopelessness, or thoughts of self-injury or suicide. **Contact:**





DID YOU KNOW NAMI OFFERS SEVERAL OF ITS SIGNATURE PROGRAMS ON-LINE?

NAMI offers a number of educational courses designed to provide support and practical information to persons in recovery, their families and friends. All are welcome to take those courses that are designed to meet their needs. The ones taught as a class can be taken through our affiliate or through other NAMI affiliates in our region. NAMI courses are **free** and you do not have to belong to NAMI to take a course. Many people are not aware that several courses are available for individuals to take on-line! These popular courses are:

NAMI BASICS, for parents and caregivers of children (under age 22) with mental illness, taught in 6 weekly sessions. To learn more or signup see NAMI BASICS OnDemand at www.nami.org/basics.

NAMI HOMEFRONT is 6-week course for families, caregivers and friends of military service members and veterans with mental health conditions. It is meant to help families understand these challenges and improve their ability to help their loved ones. Learn more or register for this on line at www.nami.org/homefront.

NOTE: See page 4 for a brief description of two major NAMI courses offered in our region which are taught in a small group setting.

Helpful COVID-19 Resources from OMH To Assist New Yorkers Feeling Anxious and Stressed

From OMH dated 6/3/2020

The New York State Office of Mental Health has issued a list of public resources **in addition to its Emotional Support Helpline (see ad page 1)** that it hopes will help people dealing with stress and anxiety.

- **Tips for Mental Wellness** – check out

<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/guidance/covid-19-managing-stress-anxiety.pdf>

- **Mental Health Resources During an Emergency** – knowing the signs of anxiety and getting help:

<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/disasterresources/pandemicinfluenza/>

- **Coping with Grief** – reminders and other resources to help you cope with your own and others' grief (these can also be found on the OMH web site above)

IS KETAMINE A DEPRESSION MIRACLE CURE?

from HealthyPlace.com

While depression currently lacks a definitive cure, especially a miracle cure, ketamine (esketamine, Spravato) seems to come close - at least so far in its short history of depression treatment. After years of clinical studies, the FDA approved a ketamine nasal spray for severe depression in 2019.

Ketamine was first used in the 1960s as an anesthetic. Later, it proved useful for pain relief. Unfortunately, ketamine also has a dark side: it is used illegally as a club drug and has been used as a date rape drug. Now, in a nasal spray format and used in conjunction with oral antidepressants, it's offering promising results for depression.

A small number of approved doctors have begun prescribing ketamine for treatment-resistant depression with positive results. People with severe depression have seen improvements in their symptoms quickly - within mere hours. Traditional antidepressants can take weeks to months to have full effect. Ketamine has also helped people who have had suicidal ideation and behavior.

Doctors remain hopeful but cautious. Ketamine for depression is too new to know the long-term effects. Further, it carries risk of serious side-effects as ketamine has potential for abuse, tolerance, and addiction. When used as prescribed and under close medical supervision, though, these effects have thus far been minimal. While not a miracle cure, ketamine could be extremely beneficial in depression treatment.

NAMI-New York State's *Perspectives* Series: Introduces Its Audience to Interesting People and Topics, Like NAMI's New CEO

By Cynthia Seacord

By the time you read this newsletter, it is possible that Matthew Shapiro of NAMI-NYS will have made over 30 videos over the past several months of his interviews with a wide variety of interesting persons who have cared about the many challenges faced by people living with mental health conditions, both during the COVID-19 crisis, and before its appearance. If you have not seen any of these programs, you should visit the NAMI-NYS website (www.naminys.org), peruse the list of programs, and pick a few to watch. You may find the programs so compelling, that you'll opt to binge-watch!

I admit that I have had other things to attend to during my time "at home," but I checked out several of the *Perspectives* videos. Each runs about a half hour or so; you who have Internet have probably tuned into a YouTube video of comparable length. I was especially interested in the video that introduced viewers to the new CEO of NAMI national, Daniel H. Gillison, Jr. Gillison took over as CEO from Mary Giliberti in January, just a few weeks before the COVID-19 virus turned into a global pandemic and tipped our world upside down.

Gillison reported to Matthew Shapiro that his family is safe, and has been sheltering in place, but shared that he is concerned about his 86-year old father, last seen by him 8 weeks prior to the broadcast date (5/13).

One of the first chores Gillison handled upon moving into his new position was helping NAMI national's office move to a newer building. It was then only seven days beyond that before he and his staff began to work remotely; Gillison's Action Plan for NAMI quickly went out the door. Something had to be done about the NAMI Help Line, which, according to Gillison "has always been brick and mortar." It had to go virtual, and that meant learning quickly whether the volunteers that manned the line had the technology, and if they would roll with the changes required due to COVID-19.

Matt Shapiro commented that families dealing with mental health have one thing going for them: many of our folks are accustomed to dealing with crisis, and may even look at it as a way to get better. He asked his guest how he sees the response to the COVID-19 crisis as helping our folks. Gillison replied, "Our voice is going to resonate much more pervasively through many communities that didn't listen before." He used the story of Hurricane Katrina as a case in point. The Army

Corps of Engineers had prophetically warned people in the New Orleans communities about the delicate shape of the dams surrounding the city. Then the hurricane happened, and suddenly, the problem had to be dealt with. Gillison then said that, similarly, our country's mental health system has been broken, and NAMI and others have been telling our leaders this for more than 15 years. The current crisis provides us with an opportunity to be listened to. In other words, Gillison believes what has been happening will help "move this conversation along."

Gillison believes that among the many roles NAMI plays, it is here to redact stigma, minimize shame, recognize (and support) people as they share their vulnerability, and attract and provide best practices for advocates and ambassadors for mental health in our communities.

When Matthew asked his guest about how he has been during the crisis, Gillison admitted that he's not a "virtual" person. He, like most of us, needs the "human dynamic;" working from home has not been easy for him. Both he and Matthew agreed it's been pretty inspiring, seeing what other are doing "virtually" out there. Gillison sees that people working for NAMI want to make a difference; they have no personal agenda, and they are "the grassroots and DNA of NAMI."

CEO Gillison says that he is doing his own self-care because he "cannot do it all." Matthew asked him for some of the lessons he has learned from previous challenges that others can benefit from during this one. Gillison said: 1) there is always someone less fortunate than you, 2) it's important to walk in one another's shoes and look outside of yourself to help one another, 3) self-care is critically important, 4) try to keep the bigger picture in mind, and 5) maintain a sense of balance.

NAMI SIGNATURE EDUCATION COURSES

Are you a peer, or a caregiver who wants to learn more about mental illness and treatment? Two excellent NAMI programs taught in a group setting are available. Contact us if you want to take either NAMI Family to Family (for family and friends) or NAMI Peer to Peer (for persons living in recovery.) Classes in 2020 will resume as soon as the "all's clear" signal is given or sooner if we can do remotely. *Bravo to our member, Donna W., who is working to get Family to Family instructor certification this month!*

(See Page 3 for info about **on-line** NAMI courses.)

NEWS FROM NATIONAL NAMI

FCC's LIFELINE PROGRAM: The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Lifeline program provides monthly discounts on phone and broadband service to qualifying low-income consumers. For more information on the program and how to apply, please visit:

<https://www.lifelinesupport.org>

NAMI's Statement On Recent Racial Events

On May 29th the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) released the following statement from CEO Daniel H. Gillison, Jr., regarding recent racist incidents across the country and their impact on mental health:

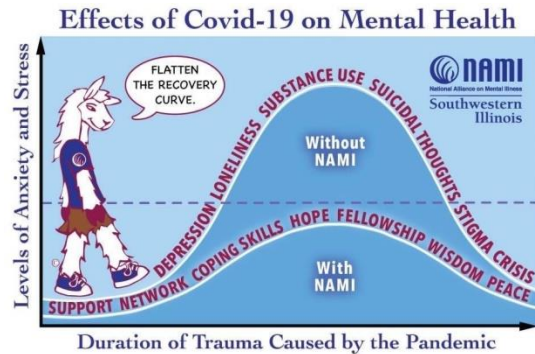
"The effect of racism and racial trauma on mental health is real and cannot be ignored. The disparity in access to mental health care in communities of color cannot be ignored. The inequality and lack of cultural competency in mental health treatment cannot be ignored.

"Our nation's African American community is going through an extremely painful experience, pain that has been inflicted upon this community repeatedly throughout history and is magnified by mass media and repeated deaths. We stand with all the families, friends and communities who have lost loved ones senselessly due to racism. And, with more than 100,000 lives lost to the coronavirus pandemic - disproportionately from minority communities - these recent deaths add gasoline to the fire of injustice.

"While there is much we need to do to address racism in our country, we must not forget the importance of mental health as we do so. Racism is a public health crisis.

"As the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization, it is our responsibility to serve all. While as an organization we are still early in our intentional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion journey and have much to do, we have renewed our commitment to our values. We continue to strive to deliver help and hope to all who need it.

"NAMI stands in solidarity with everyone impacted across the country. You are not alone."



NAMI Part of National Coalition Formed to Destigmatize Mental Health Conditions

On, May 15, NAMI champion Kenneth Cole launched the [The Mental Health Coalition](#) which aims to create a coordinated effort to destigmatize mental health conditions. The Coalition is bringing together the community to help end the stigma against mental illness. NAMI is among the founding members. You can follow along and engage with social posts via #HowAreYouReally, tagging @MentalHealthCoalition. The organization's website is:

www.thementalhealthcoalition.org



NAMI Schenectady Participates in Mental Health Awareness Month

By Cynthia Seacord

May was Mental Health Awareness Month. Despite the limitations we operated under due to COVID-19, I think that we should be proud of what we did do, which was produce a short video presentation about NAMI Schenectady to offer to the Schenectady community at the invitation of the Schenectady City School District for its second annual Mental Health Awareness Fair. The Fair, held last year at one of the city schools, was held virtually this year. We strongly encourage you to peruse this awesome website that the folks at SCSD put together. It's a tremendous source of information:

<https://sites.google.com/apps.schenectady.k12.ny.us/scsdmentalhealthawareness>

Accepting and Embracing Change – A Useful Framework to Help Us Post-PAUSE

By Cynthia Seacord

As I was thinking with impatience about “getting our lives back to normal” it reminded me about something that happened when I was working in an office maybe thirty years ago. I struggled with learning *WordPerfect*, an intricate word processing program. Then, just when I was starting to feel confident using it, my boss insisted that I set aside the skills I had developed and learn something entirely different. It was a software product known as *Word for Windows*. I needed to do this; it was going to be so much easier to use, etc. So I was told. I remember the frustration I felt, and how, for days, I complained about being made to do something I didn’t want to do.

Well, in looking back, I have to chuckle, for where would I be today if I hadn’t made the change and learned what I ultimately found to be a much simpler, and more user-friendly tool? This experience also taught me something about overcoming resistance to change.

Fr. Thomas E. Konopka, LCSW, the director and a therapist for the Consultation Center of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, has written a series of articles in *The Evangelist* newsletter about coping with anxiety and stress during the PAUSE. This past week his article was about dealing with change. Since control does have a great deal to do with coping with change, the words to the Serenity Prayer, central to many a 12-step program, may be helpful. While we may not like change, Fr. Konopka points out, “we have control of the how.” His article is intended to help us with “the how.”

Like with grief, Fr. Konopka explains, we go through stages in dealing with change. What he calls the Stages of Change Model (developed by Prochaska and DiClemente in the 1970s) might help us make sense of our journey of facing up to the reality of the changes taking place in our “post-PAUSE world.” We may not go through these stages in a straight line; we might go through several of the first stages in a relatively short period of time, but still not be convinced that the change is even necessary. Often, the way a person goes through these stages is in a more circular than linear fashion. Can’t you identify with most of these?:

- 1) I don’t need to make any changes in my life.
- 2) Maybe I need to make a change; maybe not.
- 3) I have to make a change, but I don’t know how.
- 4) Here is how I’ll make the change.
- 5) Here is how I’ll maintain the change.
- 6) What’s the next thing I need to change?

It is now looking as though the world we are returning to, post-PAUSE, is not the same world we had prior to March 2020; we are going to have to learn to live with how this pandemic has impacted our reality. We may not make it go away, but we can learn to keep safe. This model can help us, if we feel we don’t need to change, “to ask ourselves what the reason is why we are ambivalent. Is it because of fear? Is it because of stubbornness? Is it because of my approach that no one can tell me what to do?” Whatever it is we are thinking with respect to change, Fr. Konopka suggests, it is important that we examine just how reasonable our thinking is, and figure out and weigh the relative costs and benefits of making new paths versus standing still.

Ultimately, Fr. Konopka says, we will motivate ourselves from within. This model hopefully will help us work through whatever ambivalence or resistance we have, and help us see that if we stay at the first stage, we will become unhappy, even angry and that, furthermore, our “refusal to change has the capability to harm ourselves and others.” If we don’t change, there is a cost, but caring about “our health and the health of others may be the motivation we need” to move through the stages and get on with the journey of “accepting and embracing the change.”



The Schenectady Foundation’s Rebuilding Families Fund is there to help people in Schenectady wherever it is needed. The needs have been great especially during the COVID-19 Crisis. The Fund supports the Schenectady County COVID-19 Response Coalition made up of community organizations and institutions that joined together to assist those in need in our community. To donate give on line at:

www.schenectadyfoundation.org

“Learn from yesterday, live for today,
hope for tomorrow.”
-ALBERT EINSTEIN-

Book review of: *Let's Pretend This Never Happened: A Mostly True Memoir*

(Lawson, Jenny 2012, New York: Berkley Books).

Reviewed by Cindy Sood. Opinions expressed in this review are solely those of the reviewer.

Jenny Lawson's *Let's Pretend This Never Happened* is a quirky and humorous account of one woman's journey through the difficulties of life. While not strictly a book about mental health, themes such as childhood trauma, severe anxiety, and suicidal thoughts are interwoven throughout the book. Jenny herself perhaps gives the best description of what this book is about in the dedication where she states, "It's about the surprising discovery that the most terribly human moments – the ones we want to pretend never happened - are the very same ones that make us who we are today." In the end, it is about accepting who you are and turning the difficulties into strengths.

Rather than writing in typical prose, this book is written in a stream of thought style and thus is not a linear progression through her life, but a selection of stories of events both big and small that have shaped who she is. This gives it the feel of a conversation with a friend. Jenny Lawson is also very frank in her descriptions of the emotional impact of various events and her overwhelming anxiety, especially in social situations. Along the way, she has a successful marriage and daughter and with encouragement from her husband, develops lasting friendships.

I enjoyed reading *Let's Pretend This Never Happened: A Mostly True Memoir* and found it to be an uplifting story of resilience in the face of trauma and significant mental health challenges



NAMI SCHENECTADY WANT ADS
(Many of these jobs can be done at home!)

respond at: namischenectady@gmail.com



WE NEED YOU TO HELP US DO THE VITAL WORK THAT MAKES NAMI WORK!

- Two members are needed to take over production of our *E-News*. We have one volunteer. Contact us if you want to become our 2nd co-editor. Will train.
- Reporters are needed for our newsletter. Review a book or movie, advocate, or share recovery and wellness-related tips.
- A co-webmaster is needed for our website, namischenectady.org. Put your technology know-how to work today.
- Create and maintain our Facebook account.
- People are needed to serve on committees (example: nominating, program planning, finance) **and we need to fill one board vacancy with term running through 2020!!**
- Drivers for events, especially peer activities.
- NAMI Family to Family class graduates to become certified Family to Family teachers so we can offer more classes (ask us how!).

JOIN NAMI SCHENECTADY

Membership in NAMI Schenectady also makes you a member in
NAMI New York State and national NAMI

To join choose your annual membership dues type(x) below and
complete form to accompany your check: ____ individual \$40

____ Household \$60 ____ Open Door \$5 (limited
income)

____ Additional Donation Total enclosed

Name(s)

Street Address or PO Box

City, State & Zip

Phone _____ e-mail
address _____

NAMI Schenectady is a 501(c)3 organization.

**Make your check payable to: NAMI Schenectady,
PO Box 974, Schenectady, New York 12301**

Healthy Minds = Healthy Communities

**NAMI Schenectady
PO Box 974
Schenectady, New York 12301**