Welcome to the Newsletter

Hi, welcome to your first peer newsletter, written by peers, for peers. Each newsletter will be a different theme, this one is Principle of Support #12- “We will never give up hope”. The next will be Principle of Support #5--“We find strength in sharing experiences.” Newsletters will have stories written by you and your peers relating to the current theme.

How can you help it be YOUR newsletter? Send me your stories of recovery, your journey, and poetry for the next newsletter. All submissions are welcome.

For any questions and to submit material please send to kathyp@namikansas.org

Letter from the Editor

A year ago, last July of 2020, I started my journey with NAMI.

My name is Kathy, mom of four and grandma to eight. I grew up in a military family and ended up in Kansas.

I struggled with depression for years without knowing what it was, but I still managed to raise my family. I went through a divorce so ended up as a single mom, not something I ever expected. After the divorce I decided to go back to college, I had already completed a year out of high school and that is where I met my now ex-husband. I had always wanted to work in the mental health field and so enrolled in social work and family studies and human services. I had to apply to be in the social work program and I was honored to be selected to continue with the program. I was enjoying my classes, being a student and not a mom. That did not last long. In January of 1998 I had a mental breakdown. I was able to make it through the semester but had to leave school which was difficult for me to do. All my hopes and dreams were gone. I was getting diagnosed with several mental health disorders, going through the trial and errors of finding the right medications, and in and out of the local behavioral health unit a few times.

The process of recovery had begun.

At the beginning I thought it was just going to be a few months of therapy and I would be well again but over twenty years have passed and I feel like I have only just begun the process of recovery. I did get to go back to school, I finished up my family studies degree and added a women’s studies degree. Therapy, medications and case management services
helped me to get through being a student again and a mom to the one child still at home. I made it into graduate school to become a therapist but after a year I had to drop out. I believed that my dreams of working in the mental health field and helping people in their recovery was over. I lost hope. Until last July.

I saw a Facebook post about becoming a NAMI provider teacher. The provider program and training sounded like something I could do. While I was waiting for training to begin I began attending all the online NAMI support groups that I could find. After a few months I noticed I started feeling better about myself, I had a support system that I needed from people who understood me and I began to have hope about my future. I became involved in other NAMI programs. Now I am working for NAMI which I never even thought possible a year ago. This is the answer to the dreams and hopes I had about working in the mental health field. With NAMI I can reach more people and help provide resources, support, education and advocacy in ways I never possible.

I hope that this little I shared about me allows you to believe that you can also keep having hope in the dreams and goals you have set for yourself and be open to them happening in ways you never expected. The twelfth principle in NAMI’s principle of support is “We will never give up hope.” Never give up!

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” ~ Desmond Tutu

Hope for the Future

My name is not important, but my story is. I am probably like many of you or someone you know.

I have suffered from borderline personality disorder (BPD), bi-polar (BP), post-traumatic-stress-disorder (PTSD) since I was a child and have been in therapy since I was 22. I am now 60 and have only in the past year found some balance in my life.

Through the years I have had endless therapy and medications that simply did not work well for me, but I kept trying. Through countless hospitalizations and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) treatments I struggled to keep a sense of normalcy in my life. Working, raising a beautiful daughter, buying cars and purchasing a home I tried to live a “normal” life, but I could not maintain, and I did end up with several long hospitalizations. My family is the only reason I did not lose my daughter to the foster care system.

I keep trying and hoping for a therapy or medication that would work for a long-term effect. Very recently I have found dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) to be the answer to the BPD and some of the newer medications to help considerably with the BP.

Without the struggles and conflicts in the past I would not be the person I am today, full of hope and dreams for my future. My mental illness has not disappeared or magically gone away. I know that mania or depression might just be around the corner, but I do not fear it anymore. With medications and therapy my incidences and severity have lessened. I learn and grow through all I experience in my life.

I pray that my story gives you hope for your future and for the present.

Written by Anonymous.

“Hope is the last thing ever lost.” —Italian proverb.
Angela’s Story

My name is Angela and I am an autistic adult with OCD, depression, and anxiety. I am 38 years old. I was not diagnosed with autism until my 20’s. It was not until much later that I started to understand myself.

When I found out I had autism I did not want the diagnosis. I did not want to be different. Around this time I was employed. This job was a toxic chaotic unstructured environment. It was always changing. I could not keep up with what was going on around me. My worst traits came out with meltdowns and being obsessive over items and people. I was bullied. I was made to feel like I was worthless. I would go home and cry. To me being different was a bad feeling to have. I thought I had no future because I thought I was a failure.

When I left that job and the people there my growth as a person began. Recently I have been learning a lot more about myself and what I am capable of. The experiences that I had have made me the person I am today. I would not want to change that because the more I fall on the ground and fail the more I get up and try again. I have become a well-rounded individual because of that. New doors open while others close. I want to expand my skills so I can be the person I was meant to be and more. I want to keep learning and helping others like parents; children, young and older adults with autism. I am willing to work hard to help my peers develop meaningful lives by using my experiences and peer support training. I am sharing my story thru writing, speaking, and advocating. I have a meaningful life because I found the right medication, the perfect job, and the support of friends and family. I am positive, kind, and love to smile. I get the job done. I have blossomed.

Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality. – Jonas Salk

One Act Plays About Mental Health Challenges

"The Ups and Downs of Tom" is about a person with bi-polar disorder and his family. Written by Conrad Schmechel.

"Illusions of Hope and Despair" is about a person who has schizophrenia and how it affects his family. Written by Jared Adams.

Where: Kansas State University, Manhattan, Purple Masque Theatre
When: November 11th, 12th, and 13th.
Contact: kathyp@namikansas.org

Save the date

3 Days 2 Impact: NAMI Kansas event for National Suicide Awareness Month.
When: September 15, 16, and 17
Where: West Ridge Mall in Topeka.
What to Expect: Kansans’ survivor testimonies, educational webinars, support materials, and provider materials.
Contact staceylyddon@namikansas.org

Fort Hays Back to School Picnic
Where: Quad (east side of the memorial union)
When: August 23rd, 4:00-6:30 p.m.
Visit the NAMI On-Campus table, popsicles and water for those interested in joining.
Contact hunter@namikansas.org

Annual Meeting is October 9th – Online
Contact davidlarson@namikansas.org

Mental Health Advocacy Day on 02/22/22
Contact ryanreza@namikansas.org
**What is NAMI?**

**Mission:**
Dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with mental illness and their families through support, education, and advocacy.

**Our Goals:**
Advocate at the county, state and national levels for non-discriminatory access to quality healthcare, housing, education and employment for people with mental illness.

- Educate the public about mental illness.
- Work to eliminate the stigma of mental illness.
- Advocate for increased funding for research into the causes and treatment of mental illness.

**Our Vision:**
In our envisioned future mental illness will no longer thwart a person’s fulfillment of his or her potential. With early pinpoint diagnoses, interventions and targeted medications and services there is no pervasive disability. Ultimately, we envision a day when prevention or a cure is found.

https://namikansas.org/about-namikansas/mission/

For more information about NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness):

- www.nami.org
- www.namikansas.org

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