

Support Groups Help People Connect With Peers And Cope With Mental Illness

(NAPSA)—According to NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 58 million American adults experience a mental health disorder in a given year, and one in 17 lives with a serious mental illness. Without proper care, which may include medication, exercise and peer support, these illnesses can have debilitating effects.

To help assist people with mental illness, NAMI hosts weekly support groups, free of charge, in local communities throughout the country. Led by individuals who are in recovery, NAMI Connection offers people with mental illnesses an environment of respect, understanding, encouragement and hope.

For more information about NAMI Connection, call (800) 950-NAMI or visit www.nami.org/connection.



“Mental illness can be extremely isolating, especially for people who are newly diagnosed. Connecting with other people who are dealing with the same issues can be an important part of recovery,” explains Ken Duckworth, M.D., medical director for NAMI. “Support groups are a cost-efficient way to bring individuals with similar experiences together to share their stories and offer support.”

When she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder more than 10 years ago, Deanna Green felt isolated and misunderstood. The complex illness, which caused her to experience bouts of depression as well as periods of extreme “highs,” called mania, was difficult for others—and for Deanna—



Participants in a free mental health support group offered by NAMI.

to understand. Eventually, a combination of medication and therapy set Deanna on the road to recovery. But it was her involvement in a peer support group that truly helped her come to terms with her illness and educate the people in her life about it.

Today, Deanna is a NAMI Connection field manager as well as a mother and grandmother. “NAMI Connection gave me an outlet to share my thoughts with others in a safe and supportive environment,” she said. “The support of my peers has been instrumental in helping me deal with my illness and develop strategies to educate others about what it’s like to live with a mental illness.”

Launched in 2007, the NAMI Connection program has grown to more than 35,000 participants in nearly 400 groups held in 43 states throughout the country. For more information on the NAMI Connection program or to find a location near you, call (800) 950-NAMI or visit www.nami.org/connection.

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