

With more than 1,200 affiliates, NAMI is America's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of all individuals affected by mental illness.

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### NAMI Columbus

P.O. Box 8581  
Columbus, GA 31908  
(706) 320-3755 (leave a message)  
Website: [namicolumbusga.org](http://namicolumbusga.org)  
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### Board of Directors:

Shelley Reed, Ph.D	President
Molly Jones	Vice President
Tristen Hyatt	Treasurer
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Doris Keene	
Sue Marlowe	
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### Newsletter Editor:

Teri Owens

### Georgia Crisis & Access Line

Single Point of Entry to access mental health, addictive disease and crisis services 24/7/365  
Adults, Children & Adolescents  
1-800-715-4225

### Peer Support "Warm Line"

1-888-945-1414 (toll-free)  
The Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network operates a state-funded, consumer-directed "warm line" for anyone struggling with mental health issues, 24 hours a day

### Columbus ACT Team

AmericanWork, Inc.  
706-641-9663

## Monthly Education Meeting

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer,  
4700 Armour Road, Cols., GA 31904  
January 20, 2020 -- 6:00 P.M.



Join us on January 20<sup>th</sup> to **Welcome 2020**, think about positive ways to **Impact** our lives and have some **Fun** with **New Year's Resolution Bingo!**

Let's start the new year with an evening of fun and friendly competition. There will be prizes, too.

Hope to see you there!

**If you are able, please bring an item for the refreshment table.**



If you aren't receiving your newsletter via email, and have provided us your email address, please check your spam folder. To avoid the newsletter going to spam, add our new sending email address, [news@namicolumbusga.org](mailto:news@namicolumbusga.org), to your contacts.

# Upcoming Events

(Below are chances for you to get involved)

## January 2020

Jan 20 – Monthly Education Program, 6:00-7:30pm – New Year’s Resolution Bingo

Jan 25-26 – NAMI Connection Support Group Facilitator Training – Atlanta, GA\*

## February 2020

Feb 9 – In Our Own Voice Presenter Training – Atlanta, GA\*

Feb 17 – Monthly Education Program, 6:00-7:30pm – TBD

Feb 21-23 – NAMI Family to Family Teacher Training – Atlanta, GA\*

*\*If you are interested in attending a training session, a letter of recommendation from a member of the NAMI Columbus Board of Directors is required. Please secure this recommendation prior to submitting the application for the training.*

### “Open” Support Groups:

Every Monday night, 6-7:30 pm

Family/Friend and NAMI Connection Recovery Support Groups

***Both groups meet at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 4700 Armour Rd.***

Every Saturday, 1-2:30 pm

NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group

***Meets at The Bradley Center’s Multipurpose Room  
(Use 22<sup>nd</sup> St. Parking Lot for easier access)***

Every Thursday night, 6:30-8 pm

NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group

***Meets at Pierce Chapel United Methodist Church, 5122 Pierce Chapel Rd.***



# NAMICon 2020

## Atlanta • July 15-18

### Together Toward Tomorrow

The NAMI National Convention is one of the largest community gatherings of mental health advocates in the United States. Each year, our convention connects and inspires people looking for resources, research, support services and recovery strategies. Join us as we embrace our theme — **Together Toward Tomorrow** — and celebrate NAMI’s 40 years of support, education and advocacy.

### The NAMI 2020 National Convention will feature:

- Top-notch researchers and clinicians providing information and tools to advance and sustain recovery from mental illness.
- Perspectives on recovery and stories of lived experience from people with mental illness and their families.
- The country’s keenest minds and savviest policymakers offering strategies and tactics to effectively advocate for changing the mental health system in our nation.
- Abundant networking opportunities to learn from peers about how we can improve the lives of all people affected by mental illness and their families.
- Inspiration, innovation and an exhilarating four days in Atlanta.

**REGISTER TODAY!** For registration information and early bird rates, visit: <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-National-Convention/Registration-Information>

# Things To Know About Living Well In 2020

By Anna Sharma | Dec. 30, 2019



Mental illness is not just something we cope with or fight against. It is something we must accept as a part of us.

When I was first diagnosed with [bipolar disorder](#), my default thinking was that everything in my life was ruined because I was “suffering.” I thought (and was even told) that I could not safely travel long distance, I could not enjoy a cup of coffee without becoming manic, I could not have a job because now I had a disability that would make every day into a problem.

The language and perception around mental illness is so negative, which is why there’s still so much stigma. But we do not have to listen to it or agree with it. The people who told me every day would be a problem were wrong.

Through my journey, I have come to know that mental illness is not automatically a negative, sinister thing lurking in the shadows, ready to ruin our entire existence. There truly is beauty, humor, creativity and joy that emerges from mental illness. And we can have fulfilling, meaningful lives *with* our conditions.

Here are some tips to help you live well with your mental illness in 2020.

## Know That All Is Not Dark

Many people with brilliant and creative minds have experienced a range of mental illnesses. Vincent Van Gogh had bipolar disorder, and he created the mesmerizing painting, “The Starry Night.” Franz Wright had suicidal ideation, and his poem, “To Myself,” brings comfort to any person who reads it. David Berman was clinically depressed, and he made the beautiful album, “Purple Mountains.”

Every time you feel you cannot do something because of your mental illness, think of what Leonard Cohen said: “There is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in.” If possible, try viewing your mental illness not as something to survive, but as a catalyst to something beautiful: a poem, a journal entry, a drawing, a supportive conversation with a friend. We can all create beautiful things in 2020.

## Know That You Deserve Wellness

Be kind to yourself always. That might mean taking your medication, getting acupuncture, drinking your matcha latte every morning, repeating mantras, reading inspiring poems or quotes, talking to a friend or going on a long walk. I have my own self-care ritual that brings me happiness. I enjoy bubble baths, making my condo smell like a campfire and traveling to restorative places and spas.

In 2020, start cultivating your own self-care practices. Start analyzing what brings you happiness and what is sabotaging your path to fulfillment. For me, the thing keeping me from happiness is my own self, my own pattern of self-defeating thoughts and behaviors. I always think I *cannot* — I cannot succeed in any way. In 2020, I’m practicing self-care: I’m burning sage around every mental space that blocks me, and I’m telling myself I can, and I’m believing I deserve all the happiness in the world.

## Know That You Are Resilient

This one is a hard one for me, as I am prone to hyper-focus on all the painful experiences of my life and forget that I am resilient. I see a therapist because I need help negating the voices in my head that tell me I’m a failure.

My therapist helps me reframe my thoughts and see that I got to this point in my life *because* I’m resilient. After a good therapy session, my therapist makes me feel like listening to Lizzo’s “Good as Hell,” giving a good hair toss and accepting that I am indeed a strong and resilient human being.

## Know That There Will Be Bad Days

While we should go into 2020 with a positive perspective, there is no way to completely control your environment. Sometimes, things in your environment are just painful, causing a variety of symptoms to flare.

I thought in 2019 I could somehow cure myself of my bipolar disorder by being healthy and mindful.

Eventually, I experienced so much stress that I felt the onset of psychosis and needed additional treatment. I felt despondent because I thought all the progress I had been making was ruined. But I now know that these things happen.

There will be many roadblocks that impede your mental wellbeing, but you have to keep fighting for yourself.

Support    Education

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Advocacy    Recovery

That might mean changing your medication, seeing a therapist, changing your job or surrounding yourself with different people. Whatever the fight entails, you must continue on your path to living well — even when it is not linear.

I hope these tips provide some sense of comfort and strength. It is not easy to navigate the road of mental health or to admit you are struggling. Whether you are experiencing anxiety, depersonalization, paranoia, mood changes, never-ending depression, or any other mental health issue — you’ve *got* this.

Know there is beauty in the midst of the pain, and there will be beauty this year and the coming years. Remember every new year is a blank slate: a chance to start again, reframe the past and strategize for the future. There is hope and there is always the chance for happiness.



## 6 Ways You Can Help A Loved One On Their Healing Journey

By Shainna Ali | Dec. 26, 2019



Take a moment to consider all the people in your life: your coworkers, friends, family. At any given time, [1 in 5](#) of these individuals is living with a mental health condition. You may have noticed them struggling, but if you’re not a trained mental health professional, you may not have known how to help.

However, you *can* help. You can be supportive and encouraging during their mental health journey. Here are a few tips on supporting the mental health of those you love.

### 1) Educate Yourself

There are hundreds of mental health concerns; your job is not to become an expert in all of them. When you do notice potentially troublesome symptoms, it’s helpful to determine if those signs may indicate a mental illness. Familiarizing yourself with [common symptoms](#) can help you understand and convey your worries. You may also benefit from [expanding your knowledge](#) by taking a course or joining a support group of individuals who can relate to the hardships you and your loved one may be facing.

### 2) Remain Calm

Recognizing that a loved one might need help can be daunting, but try to remain calm—impulsively approaching the individual might make you seem insensitive or aggressive. Try to be mindful and patient. Take time to consider your loved one’s symptoms and your relationship before acting. Writing down how you feel and what you want to say may be useful to help you recognize and understand your thoughts and feelings, and help you slow down while connecting to your good intentions.

### 3) Be Respectful And Patient

Before talking to someone about their mental health, reflect on your intention to promote healing and keep that in mind. Ask how you can help in their recovery process and be cautious not to come off as controlling. While [encouraging a person to seek help](#) is okay, it is not appropriate to demand it of them. Let them know that if they ever wish to talk in the future, you’re available.

### 4) Listen

Give your loved one the gift of having someone who cares about their unique experience. Don’t bypass their narrative by making connections to others’ experiences. You might recognize a connection to your own experience, however, sharing your story prematurely may undermine *their* experience. You may [be prepared](#) with hotlines, books, or a list of community providers, and although these are excellent sources of support, it’s important to take time to thoroughly listen before giving advice. It’s a privilege to have someone share intimate details of their mental health. Be present and listen before moving forward.

### 5) Provide Support

One of the best ways to help is to simply ask *how*. It’s not helpful to try to be someone’s therapist, but you can still help. People don’t like being told what to do—asking how you can help empowers them to take charge of their recovery, while also letting them know you are a source of support.

### 6) Establish Boundaries

As you support your struggling loved one, it’s important to consider both your boundaries and theirs. When trying to help, you *are* susceptible to neglecting yourself in the process; boundaries will help you maintain your self-care, while also empowering your loved one. Be sure you’re not working harder than they are at their own healing process.

As a caring person, you may grapple between wanting to encourage and support your loved one while wanting to honor their process and independence. Unfortunately, there are no foolproof guidelines for helping your loved one on their journey towards recovery. However, you can connect to your intentions, convey compassion



and maintain your own self-care while empowering your loved one regardless of where they are in their healing journey.



# It's Okay To Not Be Okay, Even If You Are A Professional

By Jessica Smiley | Dec. 11, 2019



I have been through some difficult things in my life. Sometimes those really bad, traumatic experiences can have a life-long impact on our interactions with others and our physical and emotional well-being. Somehow, I managed to get to adulthood, which I attribute mostly to resiliency and a handful of supportive people.

I'm a perfectionist. And during a period of my life, that trait wasn't so helpful. I worked long hours (sometimes 24 straight), skipped meals days at a time and lost all life balance. It seemed like everything was falling apart, and I couldn't put myself back together again.

Of course, I didn't realize my life was out of control until I learned I had a vitamin deficiency and realized how much weight I had lost. I was also constantly sad. This all happened gradually but the outcomes were significant and devastating.

But even then, I didn't really want to own what I was experiencing. I was in the social work field, and I was embarrassed to be struggling. I didn't want to ask for help. I mean, why would I do that? Why would I tell someone that there is something "wrong" with me? That seemed to go against all my perfectionist ideals. What if someone deemed that I was incapable because of my past trauma or my current mental state? Those thoughts pushed my [depression](#) further and further into a very deep, dark place.

Depression is exhausting. It is horrible. It's not just being sad — but it's all the guilt, shame and worthlessness that comes along with it. And during that period of my life, I was so utterly sad and incredibly hopeless. I felt alone.

I had people in my life who were available to me. I had a faith community. I had supportive people who knew I was struggling. I had people who came to my home and brought me food and checked on me. But I still felt unwanted and unloved. I felt like I didn't deserve to have people help me or support me. I didn't want to get up, work, shower, anything. And not doing those things made me feel even worse. It was a vicious cycle that kept going.

Thoughts of ending my life came and went. I dismissed them only because I was terrified of dying and terrified that it wouldn't work. However, I kept thinking about ending my life. The pain I was experiencing was unbearable. I hated feeling so sad, so alone, so miserable. It sucked. During that time, ending my life seemed easier.

I thought about going to the hospital because I knew I was not well. But I was conflicted. What if I ran into a co-worker? Or worse, what if I ran into one of my clients? The stigma with mental health treatment is a real thing for someone who works in the mental health field. So I decided that I couldn't go to the hospital.

Instead I told one person, maybe two people (it's fuzzy now), that I wanted to die, and that I had a plan. In that same breath, I told them I wouldn't really do it, so they could trust me and know I would be safe.

My friends chose to believe that I would not act on my plan. And for whatever reason, I didn't. I can't tell you how that came to be. It just was. But if they had taken me to the hospital or encouraged some type of treatment, perhaps I could have experienced fewer symptoms sooner.

I would never wish my painful experiences or severe depression on anyone. Life can be hard and messy, and unfortunately, suicide is [steadily increasing](#)— a strong indicator that people aren't getting help soon enough. It's time for us to pay attention. It's time for us to talk about things like mental health, depression and our feelings even when it's difficult. It's important for us to ask the tough questions and if a friend, client or family member says they have a plan — we need to step up. We need to make sure they get the help they need, even if they try to talk their way out of it or tell you they are okay.

If you see [signs and symptoms](#) indicating otherwise, do what you can: share resources, encourage treatment, call emergency personnel if needed. Take this kind of discussion seriously. Everyone deserves a tomorrow. Suicide shouldn't and doesn't have to be the end to a person's story. So take care of yourself and always take action if you see a person in need. Your actions could save a life.



# Columbus

P.O. Box 8581  
Columbus, GA 31908  
(706) 320-3755  
*Our Area's Voice on Mental Illness*



Many people find their way to our classes by first attending a support group. If you are a NAMI Columbus "long timer" (we don't want to call you old), please attend either of the two weekly NAMI Connection support groups or the weekly Family support group. Newcomers can use your wisdom and hard-earned experience. Sharing a message of recovery gives the hope they are searching for. Many people tell us that the NAMI motto **"You Are Not Alone"** is the initial feeling they realize at their first meeting. If you are willing to train to be a support group facilitator, let us know!

## I want to support NAMI Columbus and NAMI's mission.

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone Numbers (do not enter a number if you do not want to be listed in the Membership Directory (members only).)

E-Mail (Please include so we can be green and email you our monthly newsletter.)

### Please check type of membership desired:

- ☐ Individual Membership - \$40 Dues
- ☐ Household Membership - \$60 Dues
- ☒ **\$5 Open Door Membership (financial hardship)**  
(All dues are for 1 year and are tax-deductible.)

All memberships include NAMI National, NAMI Georgia, and NAMI Columbus membership.

- ☐ I am not joining at this time, but I would like to make a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_. (Thank you!!!)

*✂ Please Cut and Mail ✂*

NAMI National, NAMI Georgia and NAMI Columbus are dedicated to eradicating stigma and improving the lives of persons with mental illnesses thereby also benefiting their friends, family and community. Catch the wave and be a part of change.

NAMI Columbus is an affiliate of NAMI Georgia, which is a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible. Membership includes a subscription to our monthly newsletter and access to immediate news on advocacy, treatment and support issues from our national, state and local organizations.

Please make checks payable to:  
**NAMI Georgia** & enter **"NAMI Columbus membership"** in the memo field.

Mail your check and membership form to:  
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P.O. Box 8581  
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You can also join safely online at [www.nami.org/join](http://www.nami.org/join) .