



Columbus

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

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- Stephen Akinduro
- Tristen Hyatt
- Molly Jones
- Doris Keene
- Sue Marlowe
- Teresa O'Donnell
- Shelley Reed, Ph.D
- Phil Tirado
- Vanessa Vivas

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

2020 VIRTUAL NAMIWALKS

*Fun
 For
 All*

By Sue Marlowe



2020 did a number on NAMI Georgia by first having to cancel the NAMI National Convention (which would have brought funding in), a \$200,000 DBHDD funding withdrawal because of budget shortfalls, and finally, the pandemic caused our annual Walk to be cancelled.

Because of physical distancing needs, NAMI Georgia came up with having a virtual walk and it proved to be pretty successful.

2020 may have put a lot of plans on hold, but some NAMI Columbus members tried to thwart 2020's plans for us. We have been having a good time having weekly NAMI Connection Zoom meetings. So some "regulars" came up with an idea to have a Zoom activity to publicize the Walk.

Our team named itself *The Masked Warriors*, giving a nod to the masks we need to wear during the pandemic. The team activity was we decorated masks during a Zoom call. The Masked Warriors Team was comprised of 5 members. Following are the members and amount raised:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>AMOUNT RAISED</u>
Jenna Kemp	\$200.00
Mimi Marlowe	\$225.00
Sue Marlowe	\$500.00
Teresa O'Donnell	\$105.00
Vanessa Vivas	\$500.00

Some more donations were made to the team and not an individual. That helped bring the total funds raised to \$1,965.00. **Until December 4th** we will continue to raise funds. If you meant to make a donation, you can still go to: <https://www.namiwalks.org/team/39662> and make a donation to the team or a team member.



Welcome New Leadership Team Member

By Doris Keene

Welcome, Teresa O'Donnell!

The Leadership Team of NAMI Columbus would like to introduce our newest member. Teresa O'Donnell was voted onto our Leadership Team in August. Teresa is a retired teacher having taught children with behavioral and emotional disabilities for over 10 years plus she was a professional librarian with library research background.

Teresa has been a member of NAMI since 2015. She personally understands our many NAMI perspectives because she is an advocate, a consumer, a family member, and a friend. Teresa is deeply involved with many of our activities as follows: she created the in-person NAMI support group at Pierce Chapel United Methodist Church, hosts Thursday evening NAMI Connection support groups, has attended CIT (certified), and F2F (certified), and has conducted NAMI meetings in the Bradley Center. Also, we are especially grateful that Teresa along with Vanessa Vivas worked together to bring NAMI Connection meetings to our membership via Zoom.

In Teresa's own words...

"I have struggled with mental illness for more than 40 years. My diagnoses are Treatment Resistant Major Depressive Disorder, Anxiety, and PTSD. I had a great deal of success with the TMS treatment.

"I've experienced a lot of healing through my relationship with NAMI and interaction with the people of NAMI, and I would like to serve them."

Please join the Leadership Team in welcoming Teresa to a leadership position for NAMI Columbus.



NAMI Columbus

CONNECTION

Recovery Support Group

Virtual Meetings

Although in-person support groups are still cancelled, NAMI Connection Support Groups are meeting virtually.

Saturdays 1:00pm – 2:30pm

Thursdays 6:30pm – 8:00pm

Email Vanessa.M.Vivas@gmail.com for an invite/link to either group.

Please email at least 24 hours prior to the session.



The Importance of Accepting Help

SEP. 25, 2020

By Sterling Pohlmann

Accepting help for mental illness is hard, especially while experiencing delusions. Many people don't trust that their doctors have their best interests in mind, do not want to take medication or stop treatment once they start feeling better, thinking they no longer need it.

Treatment is a matter of trial and error. If you need medication, it is often a battle to find the right one. I certainly had a hard time, myself. It took a while to find meds that worked for me, and I didn't trust my doctors at first. Eventually, I learned to entrust my doctors with my life.

I still understand why it's difficult to get to this point. You probably feel scared or vulnerable and it's hard to let others in. The thing is, unless you accept help, progress to stability is impossible.

Learning To Be Honest With My Doctors

When I was first diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, I didn't believe I had mental illness. I thought the government was involved in the experiences I was having. I thought I was being poisoned. I refused to ever set my drink down and leave it in a different room. I took my drinks everywhere I went.

At one point I had been brought to the hospital after I attempted suicide. I didn't trust the doctors that were treating me. I just wanted to get out of the hospital and said whatever it took to make that happen. I turned down their help.

I struggled for years after battling the drugs which pushed me into toxic relationships, which in turn pushed me toward more drug and alcohol use. It didn't end until I finally opened up to my doctors and was honest with them about everything.

Doctors can't do their job to help you unless you are honest, even about the most seemingly insignificant details. They need to have a lay of the land before they can guide you along a healthy path. Think of mental illness like you would a physical injury. If you lie, that affects the quality and efficacy of the treatment, and could result in your health worsening.

Preventing Crises

Now, I am open with my doctors about everything. Even when things are going well, I still tell them every last detail. I have a lot of responsibilities that hinge on me being stable. And it's easier to prevent an issue than it is to come back from rock bottom.

For example, back in March, I started having nightmares every night in which my wife was dying of COVID-19. I started going to bed later and later because I was afraid of having another nightmare. I'd wake up after only a few hours, unable to go back to sleep.

My overall stability and mental health soured as the stress of the pandemic heaped itself on my exhausted psyche. The final straw was one nightmare where I went to check on my wife, and I found her dead in our bed. I remember sobbing, barely able to catch my breath, crying that "I'm not ready for this. I can't do this!"

As soon as I woke up, I called my doctor, who then prescribed a new medication. It resulted in me not remembering my dreams, but it meant I was free of the nightmares.

If I didn't think telling my doctor was worth it, if I thought she wouldn't listen or believed she was out to get me — I would have had to continue living my life on two hours of sleep a day. Like a series of dominoes falling, it would have been only a matter of time before I would have been hospitalized. Being hospitalized is not a failure, but in many cases, it can be prevented.

Accepting help allowed me the necessary momentum to crawl out from rock bottom into a stable, happy life. I haven't been hospitalized in seven years. After nine years of marriage, my wife and I are happier now than in the beginning.

My accomplishments are not worthy of a movie, but I think the circumstances make them worth mentioning. I still struggle, even now. I just struggle less. Struggling is inevitable in this life regardless of who you are. You may not be able to avoid it, but you can accept help to make it a little easier.



It's Not "Just" Anxiety

OCT. 07, 2020

By Jessica Walthall

In some ways, I long for the days when I thought I was "just" anxious — when my anxiety simply fueled my perfectionism.

Sure, I'd have plenty of late nights completing school projects at the last minute due to the weight of my own high expectations. But overall, it felt like my anxiety *helped* me. It gave me the drive to achieve and the drive to care about *everything*. It was my identity.

However, after a while, "just" anxiety became something far more insidious.

While I am genuinely glad that so many people now feel comfortable sharing their experiences with anxiety — and there are no "mental illness awards" where only people with certain symptoms get to be heard — an anxiety *disorder* is more than perfectionism. It is more than being shy or quiet. It is more than worry or not feeling good enough.

An anxiety disorder can be serious. It can be debilitating. It can affect your body in ways you never would have imagined. It can make you feel like your life has been taken away from you.

This is what anxiety is for me:

It's Extreme Fatigue

I'm tired all the time. It's a function of a couple different things, the first of which being the more well-known side effect of anxiety: insomnia. As soon as your head hits the pillow, no matter how tired you feel, you are plagued by fears about the past, the present and the future that keep you wide awake. No worry is too small or too great to remind you that sleep won't be happening anytime soon. Repeating this pattern over the course of 10 or 15 years takes its toll.

What's talked about less, though, is the profound fatigue you get from simply going about your day with a brain that doesn't know how to relax. Every single moment is consumed by the thoughts in your head that you can't seem to stop. Your mind is constantly "on." It's exhausting.

Do my friends think I'm funny? Am I being too quiet? Did I offend someone? Should I have put on more sunscreen? Am I going to give myself wrinkles? Am I going to give myself a blood clot? Should I have chosen a different college major? Are my parents okay? Why aren't I more social? Did I eat too much food? Am I wasting my life thinking about all these things? How do I fix it? How do I make it stop? Why am I like this? Would another shirt have matched my outfit better?

These are just a few of the questions I ask myself each day. Not only am *I* tired, but my *brain* is tired; burnt out from incessant use. On top of its normal functions, my brain is thinking about 7,000 things at the same time. And as powerful as the human brain is, that's a lot to handle.

This combination of insomnia and rumination means that I don't remember what a "good night's sleep" is. I don't ever feel refreshed or recharged or ready for the day. Despite being an active person who loves sports and running and going places and doing things, my energy levels are extremely low and very easily depleted. Gearing myself up, even to see my own friends or do other activities I enjoy, can feel like an insurmountable task.

And if I do manage to jump that initial hurdle, I know the rumination isn't going to stop. Instead of fully enjoying myself, I am stressed and anxious, trying desperately to pull myself into the moment and be present with the people around me. It's incredibly taxing. It's not that I can't have fun. I do. But I also know that I will be tiring myself out with each additional moment. And sometimes it feels like all that effort isn't even worth it.

I'm not lazy and want more than anything not to be boring — I'm just chronically mentally exhausted.

It's Concentration And Memory Problems

Another symptom of anxiety that we don't talk about enough is the effect on your concentration and memory. I never struggled with concentration or comprehension. But as my anxiety has gotten worse, I find myself re-reading things repeatedly, catching my mind wandering to some intrusive thought entirely unrelated to the task

at hand.

It happens when I'm talking to people I genuinely care about, saying things that are genuinely important to me. I still can't focus without mentally interrupting myself. And when I notice I'm doing this, it just increases the panic. I start to worry that I've somehow personally ruined my brain and my cognitive capabilities; which of course is unlikely, but that's not a convincing argument to someone with anxiety.

Because it can be so difficult to concentrate, my anxiety has also affected my memory. There are significant parts of my life over the past few years that I don't remember. Someone can mention a place we went or a movie we saw together, giving me all the details they can, but it doesn't ring a bell. And it makes perfect sense. If I'm not really *all there* when something is happening, how can my memory recall it later?

I'm not flighty or careless or uninterested — sometimes my thoughts are just too loud to concentrate.

It's An Inability To Trust My Body

For me, one of the worst aspects of severe anxiety is health anxiety. You are constantly searching for a new pain or a funny feeling that could mean you are danger. Maybe you think you're sick or having a stroke or need an appendectomy. But what's truly fascinating is that this experience is not solely mental.

I can induce my body into feeling anything just by worrying about it. Because of my anxiety, I constantly experience weird pressures and tingles, stomach pain, chest tightness and heart palpitations, numbness and headaches; all while being an extremely healthy 26-year-old who has been tested for every possible condition by some very kind and understanding doctors.

While our bodies and brains are supposed to work together, alerting us to potential threats and keeping us safe, I feel like mine don't do that. My bodily experiences go through so many filters because of my anxiety that I don't know what's real anymore. I don't know when to go to the doctor. I don't know when to wait something out. It feels like there's some special code I have to crack just to know whether I'm actually in pain or whether my anxiety is taking over.

This makes me feel like a burden, both to the people around me who I pester about my liver or my spine or whatever body part it may be, and to the doctors who hear my laundry list of concerns every few months.

But real or not, these experiences feel real to me — and I can't just make them go away.

I don't have any answers. I wish I did. I would love to be one of those people who has found a way to live with anxiety in a healthy way. I am not. At least not yet. It's confusing and scary and surreal to feel like the person you were has disappeared, all because of such an "ordinary" condition like anxiety. But it happens.

If you know people with an anxiety disorder, know that they are not lazy. They don't want to be boring or lame or seem flighty or careless. They don't want to feel like a burden. Their brains are working so hard just to do the things most people take for granted.

And while they may be perfectionists, that serves more to hide what they actually go through on a normal day, rather than a reassurance that their condition isn't a big deal.

When you live with an anxiety disorder — it's not "just" anxiety.

The NAMI Columbus Mission

We will use **Support**, **Education** and **Advocacy** to throw out lifelines of hope and help to families and consumers seeking recovery. Our vision is to create an effective and active affiliate which delivers what consumers of mental health services and families need. We work to build an area where leaders and citizens work well together to create a caring, compassionate and educated public that realizes mental illness is a biological illness and is not a character flaw or due to bad upbringing.



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.

✂ Please Cut and Mail ✂

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!!!)

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:
NAMI Columbus
P.O. Box 8581
Columbus, Georgia 31908

You can also join safely online at www.nami.org/join.