

# Consumer Newsletter

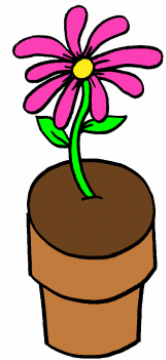
Northern Affiliation

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## STAYING WELL WHEN YOU HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

When you have a mental health condition, you may not realize how important your overall health is to your recovery. Having poor overall health can get in the way and make recovery harder. Finding ways to take care of your health can aid your recovery and help you feel better. Here are some things you can do.

### Connect with Others

Spending time with positive, loving people you care about and trust can ease stress, help your mood, and improve the way you feel overall. They may be family members, close friends, members of a support group, or a counselor at the local drop-in center. Many communities even have warm lines you can call to talk to someone.

### Advocate for Yourself

You deserve good health care. All too often, people with mental illnesses develop other health conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes, because their health is overlooked. If your doctor is not asking about your overall health, let him know that it's important to you and essential to your recovery.

### Get the Care You Need

Get routine check-ups and visit your doctor when you're not feeling well. It may be due to your medicine or a symptom of your mental illness. But it could also be a different health problem.

### Plan Your Sleep Schedule

Sleep can affect your mood and your body and is important to your recovery. Not getting the right amount of sleep can make day-to-day functioning and recovery harder.

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*STAYING WELL WHEN YOU HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION**continued from page 1***Watch What You Eat**

Sometimes, medicine can cause you to gain weight. Other times, eating unhealthy foods can cause weight gain. Foods high in calories and saturated or “bad” fats can raise your blood pressure and cholesterol. This can increase your chances of gaining weight and having other health problems, like heart disease and diabetes. Here are some shortcuts you can take to healthy eating.

- If fresh vegetables are too costly, buy frozen vegetables. They can cost less and last a long time in your freezer.
- If you eat at fast food restaurants, many now offer healthy foods such as salads or grilled chicken.
- Talk to your doctor to learn more about how to have a healthy diet.

**Manage Stress**

Everyone has stress. It is a normal part of life. You can feel stress in your body when you have too much to do or when you haven't slept well. You can also feel stress when you worry about your job, money, relationships, or a friend or family member who is ill or in crisis. Stress can make you feel run down. It can also cause your mind to race and make it hard to focus on the things you need to do. If you have a mental illness, lots of stress can make you feel worse and make it harder to function. If you are feeling stressed, there are steps you can take to feel better:

- Slow down and take one thing at a time. If you feel like you have too much to do, make a list and work on it one task at a time.
- Know your limits. Let others know them too. If you're overwhelmed at home or work, or with friends, learn how to say “no.” It may be hard at first, so practice saying “no” with the people you trust most.
- Practice stress reduction techniques. There are a lot of things you can do to make your life more peaceful and calm. Do something you enjoy, exercise, connect with others or meditate.
- Know your triggers. What causes stress in your life? If you know where stress is coming from, you will be able to manage it better.
- Talk to someone. You don't have to deal with stress on your own. Talking to a trusted friend, family member, support group, or counselor can make you feel better. They also may help you figure out how to better manage stress in your life.

**Exercise**

Along with a healthy diet, exercise can improve your health and well-being. Exercising regularly can increase your self-esteem and confidence; reduce your feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression; improve your sleep; and help you maintain a healthy weight.

Find a type of exercise that you enjoy and talk to your doctor. You might enjoy walking, jogging, or even dancing. You don't have to go to a gym or spend money to exercise. Here are some things that you can start doing now to get active:

- Check out your local community center for free, fun activities.
- Take a short walk around the block with family, friends, or coworkers.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Make sure that the stairs are well lit.
- Turn on some music and dance.



STAYING WELL WHEN YOU HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

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### Do Something You Enjoy

During the week, find time – 30 minutes, a couple of hours or whatever you can fit in – to do something you enjoy. Read a book or magazine, go for a walk or spend time with friends. Taking time for yourself to have fun and laugh can help you relax, ease stress and improve the way you feel.

#### SUBSTANCE ABUSE

If you find yourself drinking or using drugs to cope, it is time to seek help. Although using drugs and alcohol may seem to help you cope, substance abuse can make your symptoms worse, delay your treatment, and complicate recovery. It can also cause abuse or addiction problems. To find help now, call 800.662.HELP or visit [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

#### SMOKING

If you smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting. Smoking puts you at risk for problems like heart disease and cancer. For more information about quitting, call 800.QUIT.NOW or visit [www.becomeanex.org](http://www.becomeanex.org).

BEACON CENTER

*This article is taken, in part, from staff notes at the Beacon Center.*



by: Roy G.

One of the things we tend to avoid is self criticism, especially of how we treat others who suffer from some forms of mental illness. The other person may display symptoms of varying degree which are worse than ours or more pronounced than some we have seen. This should never inhibit us from befriending the person or seeking to provide services at the Beacon Center. One of the things we try to do is continually improve the quality and nature of the efforts being made at the Beacon Center and on the services we are providing our members.

While we, the service providers, are not professionals in mental health, we are expected to carry out our duties in a professional manner; always remembering that the good of the mental health consumer is more important than how we may feel at the moment.

Speech patterns and mannerisms are not to be construed as being worthy of disrespect or disciplinary action. We must not allow actions to be a motive for saying or doing anything that shows disrespect or pushes us into arbitrary conduct.

Consumers are never an interruption of what we do but the very reason our jobs exist. We are here to serve and work for the people who use our services. This goes to the heart of stigma; to stigmatize someone is to, in effect, mark them as not being worthy of our best efforts.

Policies and procedures are designed to ensure the well being of members, give us guidance in the performance of our daily tasks and provide for smooth operation of the drop-in. Our goal is to work for the best outcomes in every situation; when we do, we are carrying out our job and showing that we care for the persons involved.

## 2008 MEMBER OF THE YEAR

On February 24, 2009, the Light of Hope Clubhouse in Alpena, Michigan held a banquet honoring Lucy as the member of the year for 2008. Lucy was chosen by other members and staff of the clubhouse because of her willingness to help others and because “she is nice to everyone.” She is adaptable and has worked in all the different units of the Clubhouse.

Lucy has been a member since 2002 and is truly a special person. She was born in Detroit, moved to Atlanta and finally to Alpena where she now resides. Lucy lives in her own apartment and enjoys spending time with her boyfriend and visiting with her grandchildren.

Congratulations, Lucy!



## LIFE IS SIMPLE... IT IS US HUMANS WHO MAKE IT HARD

by: Lisa K.

This is some good advice! If a dog was the teacher, you would learn stuff like: when loved ones come home always run to greet them; never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride; allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy; when it's in your best interest, practice obedience; let others know when they've invaded your territory.

Take naps, stretch before rising; run, romp, and play daily; thrive on attention and let people touch you; avoid biting when a simple growl will do; on warm days, stop to lie on your back on the grass; on hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree; when you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.

No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout... run right back and make friends; delight in the simple joy of a long walk; eat with gusto and enthusiasm and stop when you've had enough; be loyal, never pretend to be something you're not; if what you want lies buried, dig until you find it; when someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by, and nuzzle gently.



## LIFE'S EXPERIENCES

by: Carol S.

When I was a baby, doctors told my parents I'd never sit up or function as a normal child. Furthermore, they advised them to admit me to a state hospital. These doctors didn't have any hope for my life. My parents walked out of the office with a very sick baby to care for, in addition to their other sons and daughters. With a resolve to raise and teach me to the best of their abilities, they showed me how a child can climb above difficulty.

I remember playing with my brothers and sisters in a cherry orchard while our mom was picking cherries. Our dad invited us to ride with him while working on his crane at work. Dad taught me how to clean the tracks. What child wouldn't want to play with water and mud on a hot day? Mom made sure the mud stayed outside!

When people tell us what we can't do, I just say, "Watch Me!" and proceed to climb higher and laugh.

## SURVIVING THE MENTAL ILLNESS MERRY-GO-ROUND



I have suffered from some form of mental illness since I hit puberty at age 11. The puberty was likely early onset due to the stress of a terrible hit-and-run at age 9; I broke my leg, pelvis, arm, and collarbone and was in bed for months. The kids at my junior high school picked up on my lack of self-confidence and my embarrassment at my early development of womanly traits and attacked like rabid dogs. I suffered silently until age 14 and then tried a handful of Tylenol with Pepsi. I did not receive compassionate or helpful care from our family doctor. I just retreated into a shell and pretended I was candy sweet when really I was in a seething rage against the hypocrisy of the “me” generation of Ronald Regan.

In my late teens I discovered some of my mental health symptoms were related to allergies and I began to take pseudopheds. This is probably a factor in my later having a manic break in 1994. In 1988 I had a wonderful psychologist, Jan Cox, in Flint who told me about Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). At present, I use full spectrum lights in winter to reset my body clock and take lots of B-vitamins. I was fairly happy until I was 21 and got slammed by another car. I racked up horrible bills that I was unable to pay and was not insured for; although I was under the impression I was insured for. I began having serious problems with hypoglycemia. I had given up on bulimia (not before ruining most of my teeth, but before I rotted my throat, said my doctor.) I was, however, “into” a vegetarian low-fat diet with too much caffeine. I was a “squirrel nut zipper” to borrow the name of a pretty good musical band if I may.

I was beginning to display classic bipolar behavior. I told a friend at work I was going to see a psychiatrist and she talked me out of it, inferring that to do so would make me appear weak and incompetent at work and socially. Instead, I wandered from New Age book stores to churches, to Bahá'í firesides, to political groups. I never found what I sought but somehow I had enough gumption to keep searching. I prayed for a husband when I was 23. I almost got one. He and I met at a family wedding, he being a non-blood related uncle of my cousin. I moved to frigid and forbidding ugly Green Bay, Wisconsin for the winter of 1994, went home, and returned against my better judgment to the fiancée who was not really ready to be a fiancée. Why I did not leave Wisconsin I will never really know but probably it had to do with growing mania. I liked my job and had some chums so I signed a 6-month lease for an apartment in Howard with a roomie.

They have some nice parks in Brown County and Brett Favre was always more than civilized when he patronized our Applebee's restaurant. I upped my doses of diet drugs to fend off the demon SAD. It worked... too well. I went out for my birthday, the first of autumn, and felt as if I was the queen of the harvest, predicted my newest romance and found him in sight. In place of SAD for the winter of 94-95, I received an episode of “*I remember this windsurfer freak Dave T. was the Baron Von Esterhaza in a time before time*” mania that lasted from about Thanksgiving to Easter. Have no pity on that man though, he tormented me terribly; he thought it was cool to be stalked - all I ever did was mail him poems after we broke up. My family and friends brought me home to Michigan after my release from hospital and I tried in vain to go without medication.

I have struggled and failed many times to reenter society since my first total breakdown in the end of February of 1995 when I was involuntarily lodged for my mental illness at Brown County Medical Care Facility. I still struggle. I like the struggle. I find it to be humbling. I am not jealous when I see someone who might look to the untrained eye to be in a better place than I am. Why? Life... is a dance. The sun will shine on my tail some day.

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## SURVIVING THE MENTAL ILLNESS MERRY-GO-ROUND

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Until then, these are the agreements I have made with myself based on those of some human smarter than I that I read in a book.

- Be Impeccable with words always. Say what you mean; mean what you say.
- Never Assume anything. You are only the most important human to you.
- Always reserve the right to revise your original design. You made your plan if not your basic matrix.
- Always do your best. Your best will change from day-to-day; do not fret if you are not topping the chart everyday... but don't slack either.

Time has proven the greatest of all healers and I survive by refusal to admit to any authority that is false to my true heart. I have an unbendable faith in a force greater than the silly problems we humans create for ourselves on this ship called Earth. With wise choices in health care providers (trusting them to keep your confidences and prescribe medications in doses not to harm but to heal), friends, diet, exercise, regimented schedule, I will overcome this "label" and be the real me, the "Betty Supremo" Heather. To all my fellow travelers: JUST KEEP GOING AND BRING A TOWEL. TTFN...



## NEWS FROM THE PETOSKEY CLUB

During the first week of March, several staff and members of the Petoskey Club, a psychosocial rehabilitation program based on standards set by an international "Clubhouse Movement," went to a training conference in Midland, Michigan. Thank you, CMH for helping us to attend this conference. At the conference, members and staff from various Clubhouse programs in Michigan presented information on such topics as clubhouse assessment tools, clubhouse newsletters, and clubhouse employment programs. One workshop addressed the topic of "Fear and Anxiety about Employment." The presenters encouraged the audience members to list reasons why they seek employment and reasons why they are reluctant to seek employment. Among the reasons listed for seeking employment were: adding structure to one's life, gaining independence, becoming more competent, gaining the respect of others, improving income (many people with mental illness receive Social Security benefits). Some things audience members feared were: loss of benefits, expensive uniforms, persecution, harsh criticism, intimidating interviews, long shifts, transportation problems, getting fired, making mistakes, needing to take medical leave, experiencing symptoms at work, and having a dead-end job. Some of the sentiments listed were familiar to me. Overall, the workshop was helpful insofar as hearing about others with similar thoughts about employment helped me realize that most of my thoughts regarding employment are probably rational, but that I sometimes have anxiety because I'm not always able to keep negative thoughts in perspective.

## NAMI CONNECTION RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP

Too often, mental illness is an isolating experience, accompanied by severe anxiety. For anyone diagnosed with mental illness, talking with someone to share coping strategies and insights, as well as problems and concerns, can be an important link in the path to recovery.

NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) Connection is a recovery support program for people living with mental illness that is expanding in communities throughout the country. These groups provide a place that offers respect, understanding, encouragement, and hope. NAMI SUPPORT groups offer an informal and relaxed approach to sharing the challenges and successes of coping with mental illness. Each group meets weekly at a designated place and the meeting lasts for 90 minutes. The group is structured and if you were to go to a NAMI group anywhere in the country, you should fit right in because the same format is followed. The groups are led by trained individuals who are in recovery themselves. They understand the daily challenges and can offer you encouragement and support. All groups are confidential. The Support Groups are open to all adults with mental illness, regardless of diagnosis.

NAMI Connection Recovery Support Groups are peer run groups. We are not therapy groups and we can't and don't assume the role of therapist or physician. Since everyone in the group is a peer, there is no expert. Each individual is free to say what he/she feels or thinks and be accepted by the group. Support sessions are good for problem solving and sharing emotions.

### Goals for the PEER SUPPORT GROUP

- To offer support through showing understanding and empathy
- To share insights about similarities of experience
- To solve problems by using the combined wisdom of group members
- To celebrate good times and "be there" during bad ones



The local NAMI CONNECTION RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP is held at The Petoskey Public Library every Thursday from 1:30 – 3:00 PM. Facilitators: Patti Cosens @ the Petoskey Club 231.347.1786 & Joanne Rackow @ the Affiliation 231.439.1277.

## Northern Affiliation

To access CMH services call:

**1-800-834-3393**

**8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.**

**Monday—Friday**

**24 hr. Crisis Line:**

**1-800-442-7315**

AuSable Valley  
Community Mental Health

Northeast Michigan  
Community Mental Health

North Country  
Community Mental Health

## Article Submissions

If you would like to contribute an article or have content suggestions please contact

Joanne at 1-800-834-3393 or  
e-mail: [jrackow@norco cmh.org](mailto:jrackow@norco cmh.org).

## HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

To help millions of Americans deal with the stress created by the tough economic times, Mental Health America is recommending strategies to help people feel better and protect their mental health.

One recent poll reported that nearly 60 percent of respondents said the current economic situation is a cause of stress in their lives. And one-quarter indicated that anxiety is serious.

“This is a terribly challenging time for many people,” said David L. Shern, PhD, president and CEO of Mental Health America. “But there are things people can do to take care of themselves during stressful times such as leaning on the people who are about them and focusing on the positives in life.”

Here are some simple steps people can take to protect their mental health.

### **Take a problem solving approach:**

Sit down and list your problems and some possible solutions. Weigh pros and cons, and once you have some possible solutions, break them into manageable chunks. This process not only can produce concrete answers, but offers a sense of organization and control at a time that may feel chaotic and confusion.

### **Shift your thinking:**

Review the skills and strengths that have helped you rise to challenges in the past. You can rely on those abilities again now. Try not to blame yourself for matters that may not have been in your control.



### **Get support:**

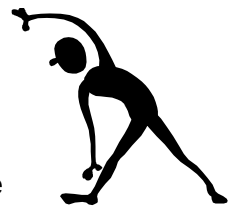
You may feel like you don't want to worry your loved ones. But chances are they want to help. You can just enjoy each other's company or, if you're in a relationship, work with your partner to solve financial problems together instead of isolating yourself and struggling alone.

### **Focus on positive aspects of your life:**

Sure you have worries, but you are likely to have a lot to be grateful for. Thinking about those positives – or writing them down – can boost your mood.

### **Take good care of yourself:**

Exercising, eating right, getting enough sleep and taking time to relax are essential. You'll be able to cope better with stress and take care of those who depend on you if you find even a few minutes each day to refuel. Beware of turning to alcohol to relax. It may seem to offer a release but actually puts more stress on your body and can drag down your mood.



### **Watch for signs of excessive stress:**

Be aware of irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, stomach pain, and fatigue. You might also see if you've developed some unhealthy behaviors, like repeatedly checking the economic news that mostly feed your fears.

### **Get professional help if you need it:**

Some people feel it's a sign of weakness to see a mental health professional, but it can be a sign of great strength to take the steps necessary to get your life back on track.