YOU ARE NOT ALONE

For 40 years, NAMI Seattle has provided support, education, referrals, and outreach to people directly impacted by mental health conditions.

Our vision is a world everyone impacted by mental health conditions knows they are not alone, and are empowered to live their most fulfilling life. Our vision is connectedness. Our vision is hope.

Join us in that vision. Become a member today.

namiseattle.org | (206)783-9264
At NAMI Seattle, we help people impacted by mental health conditions feel less alone, and know they matter. Our peer-led services bridge the gap when medical models fail to meet our needs. We have over 40 years of experience elevating stories of lived experience and shining a spotlight on the unique needs and strengths of people navigating their mental health journey. Find the NAMI program that's right for you!

**NAMI In Our Own Voice**

In Our Own Voice presentations change attitudes, assumptions and stereotypes about people with mental health conditions. These 45-60 minute presentations provide a personal perspective of mental illness, as presenters with lived experience talk openly about what it's like to live with a mental health condition.

**NAMI Ending the Silence**

Ending the Silence is a 50-60 minute in-school presentation designed to teach middle and high school students, parents, caregivers, and teachers about the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, how to recognize the early warning signs and the importance of acknowledging those warning signs.

**NAMI On Campus**

NAMI on Campus is an extension of NAMI's mission into the campus community. NAMI on Campus clubs are student-led clubs that tackle mental health issues on campus by raising mental health awareness, educating the campus community, supporting students, promoting services, supports and advocacy.

**NAMI Smarts**

NAMI Smarts for Advocacy is a hands-on advocacy training program that helps people living with mental illness, friends and family transform their passion and lived experience into skillful grassroots advocacy.

**NAMI Family-to-Family**

Family-to-Family is a free, 12-session educational program for family, significant others and friends of people living with mental illness. Research shows that Family-to-Family significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to an individual living with a mental health condition. Our Family & Friends Seminar is a very condensed 4-hour class based on the same principles and information.

**NAMI Family Support Group**

NAMI Family Support Group is a peer-led support group for family members, caregivers and loved ones of individuals living with mental health conditions. Gain insight from the challenges and successes of others facing similar circumstances. You're not alone!

**NAMI Peer-to-Peer**

NAMI Peer-to-Peer is a free, 8-session educational program for adults with mental health conditions who are looking to better understand their condition, and journey toward recovery in a confidential space.

**NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group**

NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group is a free, peer-led support group for adults living with mental illness. You will gain insight from hearing the challenges and successes of others, and the groups are led by NAMI-trained facilitators who've been there.

For more information or to request a program, visit namiseattle.org/programs or call (206) 783-9264.
Letter from the Executive Director

NAMI Friends and Family,

I can hardly believe this is my last newsletter as the Executive Director at NAMI Seattle. 5 years has flown by!

We really kicked some butt this year and I feel so fortunate to close this chapter on a high note. In 2016, we implemented our youth education program, Ending the Silence, and we have some big news.

Last month, we found out we secured a three year grant from Kaiser Permanente of Washington, in partnership with NAMI Washington and NAMI Eastside, to support Ending the Silence and NAMI on Campus in King County. This is huge! And wait, there’s more: NAMI Seattle received a two year grant from the Norcliffe Foundation earlier this year, also to support our education and outreach efforts to youth and young adults. Early intervention and youth education is a top priority, and our hard work is paying off. We could not be more excited to continue growing this aspect of NAMI programs, and to forge closer relationships with NAMI affiliates in our region. We are stronger together.

With our big news comes big goals. In 2017, we reached about 1,000 students with Ending the Silence presentations. In 2019, we aim to reach more than 3,000 students across King County.

This is ambitious. And that’s just year one! Over the course of three years, our goal is even bigger: more than 10,000 students. I’m starting to sweat a little just thinking about it. But I know you – we! – are up to the task.
We have the power to educate and connect with more than 10,000 students over the next three years. We just need YOU.

It takes two volunteers to make one presentation. It takes 20 new volunteer leaders to reach 3,000 students.

So, are you in? Together we change lives. It has been an honor to be on this journey with all of you.

Sincerely,

Ashley Fontaine, MSW
Executive Director

Become an Ending the Silence presenter - fill out your application right now!

"I just want to thank everyone, especially Brooke and Amina for this amazing opportunity! Your presentation was beyond wonderful. It resonated with, and expanded understanding for our families and staff. This has definitely sparked a larger conversation at the Center School for exploring ways to support students in a broader sense. Thank you for being such wonderful advocates and all around awesome people."

Julie*

END THE SILENCE MATTERS:

MENTAL HEALTH and YOUTH

13% OF CHILDREN ages 8-15 experience a mental health condition
13-20% OF CHILDREN living in the U.S.
50% OF CHILDREN ages 8-15 experiencing a mental health condition don’t receive treatment
17% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS seriously consider suicide
1/2 OF ALL LIFETIME CASES of mental illness begin by age 14

Despite effective treatments there are long delays—sometimes decades—between onset of symptoms and treatment

Source: National Institute of Mental Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Learn more about Ending the Silence at namiseattle.org/programs
Are You Lonely?
Emotional and Social Isolation, By Gideon C. Elliott

As a society, we are on the brink of an epidemic. The number of people in the U.S. who admit to being lonely is at 40% - double the reported numbers from the 1980s. There is a growing body of literature on loneliness and mental health, but loneliness is a misleading word. We can unpack this term by breaking it into two pieces: Emotional isolation and social isolation. Social isolation is a concrete, measurable concept. How many friends do you have? How regularly do you interact with them? Whereas emotional isolation is a subjective experience, and usually what we mean when we describe the actual sensation of loneliness. Emotional isolation can happen even in a room filled with people; it is the feeling of a lack of meaningful relationships or connections.

Making the distinction between emotional and social isolation is important in understanding the research on why higher rates of loneliness matter. “Feeling lonely rather than being alone is associated with an increased risk of clinical dementia in later life and can be considered a major risk factor,” one study reports. So the number of friends and personal relationships we have may not be as important as the way that we feel about these relationships. Of course, both forms of isolation often go hand-in-hand.

Loneliness may be as bad for us as smoking; research suggests they are equal risk factors in early death and obesity. It may be no surprise that loneliness is associated with negative mental health, but it is showing a link with physical health as well. This includes increased risk for heart disease, impacted immune systems and sleep patterns, dementia, and pre-mature death.

But what do you do when emotional or social isolation is also a symptom of a mental health condition? I have a degree in psychology and have been working in the mental health field in one capacity or another for six years. I am familiar with both the potential risks and causes of loneliness, yet just this summer I found myself stuck in a feedback loop of social and emotional isolation. I’d fallen into a period of depression and while I have people I love and care about who are readily accessible to me, the idea of socializing sounded so exhausting. I just wanted to lay in my bed undisturbed for hours. And I did, for a while. But I noticed that my depression seemed to be worsening, and that the primary feeling driving it was a deep, longing ache of loneliness.

I was lonely, but I didn’t actually want to see anyone.

Once I realized that I was socially isolating myself, I made plans to go out with a friend group that same night. It was hard and tiring, but my friends are lovely people and it was ultimately healing for me to spend time with them. I feel very privileged to have acquired the community that I have, which I know is not an easy task in itself. These friends are actually people I met after my first few months in Seattle – months in which I had met no one and had barely any interaction outside of my siblings and work.
We met when I started volunteering with them at a local nonprofit that was deeply personal to all of us. I had decided to volunteer because I felt aimless and wanted to be attached to something. Even if I had not made the friends that I did, I think building a stronger connection with that community also helped me to feel less alone.

I find support in just texting with friends when I’m not up to being around people. I belong to several closed groups on social media that allow people within those communities to make connections with each other and share resources. I am moving to a new state soon and I have already searched out and joined two of these groups in this new city. People also do use apps like Tinder or OkCupid to find both romantic and platonic relationships (I have! Results vary), and I plan to use Meetup.com to look for social groups relevant to my interests and make additional connections.

The truth is that I’ve always been a bit lonely. For most of my life I was concealing huge pieces of my identity – my mental health conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity, to start with. I was afraid, angry that I was afraid, and I held people at a distance. It’s only in the last few years that I’ve made the conscious decision to be vulnerable with these things. I talk about my mental health in casual conversations and I’ve done everything short of tattoo the word “queer” on my forehead. I’ve found that being open about this has encouraged others to be open and vulnerable with me, and allowed us to get past uncomfortable small-talk to something more meaningful.

Loneliness can happen to anyone. It can happen to people with no support system and to people surrounded by friends. Feeling lonely is not a sign of failure. I don’t have the data on this, but I would guess that almost all of us have felt loneliness at some point or another. We are a social species, but that doesn’t mean that socializing is easy. This difficulty may be compounded by the rapid changes in the way we interact with others. The question of social media and other technology’s impact on our general mental health and feelings of isolation is still up for debate, but preliminary research does seem to suggest a correlation between time spent on Facebook and negative mental health. That being said, mindful use of social media can have a positive effect.

Isolation is often stigmatized in our society, like many aspects of mental health. It is urgent that going forward, we recognize how important loneliness is in our day to day lives. As a risk factor for physical and cognitive decline, we owe it the same space and gravity as smoking cessation. NAMI’s emphasis on peer-to-peer programs was cultivated for just this reason; no matter how lonely you feel today, you are not alone. For further ideas on how to combat loneliness, particularly in the Seattle area, see page ().
Most Valuable Intern

Mixin’ it up for this edition's MVV: Sara Assaad, Intern from SPU

This is your second time interning at NAMI Seattle – what made you come back?

I came back to intern at NAMI Seattle for a second quarter because I believe wholeheartedly in the organization's mission. There is a significant gap between mental health resources and the community that needs it, especially in such a large, diverse city like Seattle. Having the opportunity to work with NAMI Seattle to bridge the gaps between mental health resources all over the city and those in our community that would benefit from them the most is a privilege I have had for several months now. In addition to my interest in the work that NAMI does, I had never worked with people as passionate and educated on mental illness before beginning my internship at NAMI. Being surrounded by people with genuine care for the mental health community has been refreshing, and has further fueled my passion for mental health education and advocacy.

Why does mental health advocacy matter to you?

Mental health advocacy matters to me because the spread of education on mental illness and its effect on every day people is somewhat limited. I pursued an internship at NAMI Seattle mainly because of its efforts to educate the community on mental illness, as well as the resources available to treat them. Millions of people across the country and around the world have been or are affected by mental illness daily, and my goal both as part of NAMI Seattle and in my future career is to educate those in my surroundings on the prevalence of mental illness, as well as the wide array of resources available to the public to combat mental illness.

What project has been most interesting for you?

Being a part of a racial equity workgroup. As part of this workgroup, I’ve had the opportunity to draft a racial equity and inclusion statement for the organization, begin brainstorming ideas for workshops for NAMI volunteers and core members to participate in, as well as articles and videos to watch to shed light on the prevalence and impact of racial inequity on one’s mental health.

What have you learned during your internship that will be useful for you as you prepare to graduate and enter the field?

Through my experience at NAMI, I have gained insight on just how prevalent mental illness is, as well as the lengths that an organization like NAMI has gone to in order to educate the community. After I attend graduate school, I hope to be able to come alongside adolescents and young adults in a clinical setting. I plan to use the knowledge I’ve gained through NAMI on mental health resources and ways to seek help in order to better the community I will serve in the future.
From ME to WE: Connection and Recovery at Clubhouse

The clubhouse model is unique in that it celebrates and honors the whole person. The model holds space for people to simply be human. Inside the clubhouse people are members of a thriving person-centered community, rather than patients in a clinical-centered setting. Members are seen as people, not patients. The emphasis is on a person’s strengths, what they are able to contribute to the community. Member’s limitations take a back seat to their strengths. Recovery involves the discovery of how one’s gifts, skills and talents contribute to the community at large.

Our motto is, “Side by side, stronger together.”

The side-by-side concept is critical to the clubhouse model. Staff and members work side-by-side to cultivate meaningful relationships and meaningful work. One of the most devastating aspects of living with a mental illness is isolation, the loss of connectedness to self, family and society.

Working side by side provides an immediate re-integration back into life itself. Whether members work together chopping vegetables, posting on social media or creating a newsletter, they are engaging in meaningful work that benefits the common good of the clubhouse. The focus becomes less on “me” and more on “we.” Shared purpose connects us to our shared humanity. The essence of our being is connection. Connection is central to a robust recovery process.
One of our members has been struggling with schizophrenia for many years. He just received housing after living homeless for over five years. **Jason* has been in a deep depression for several weeks, yet every morning he finds the strength and courage to come to clubhouse for his morning coffee.** Jason is often in a dark and negative place when he comes in in the morning. But he knows he is welcome and that his presence is appreciated at clubhouse.

Though deceptively small, one encounter I had with Jason stands out vividly to me. It was a day where we both experienced the joy of working side-by-side as two human beings. Nothing extraordinary, just being present to the work at hand and each other. After we finished lunch, Jason was hesitant about what to do next. He didn’t want to stay or leave. He felt the discomfort of indecisiveness and lack of motivation. We sat together, not saying much, just being present to what was happening in the moment. Eventually, Jason looked up with an AHA moment written on his face! He said, “You know, I came in here feeling like I didn’t want to stay, like I couldn’t do anything, I wasn’t motivated, I felt like crap. But then, I made coffee for the members and swept the front of the clubhouse with Colin. We made lunch together and I helped with the dishes. That’s a lot!” I smiled and nodded, “Yes it is!” I watched him really take his words in. I witnessed how much stronger he looked. His pride was self-evident. **He discovered for himself what he had contributed to the community despite how he felt. It took great courage for Jason to step into the ring when he didn’t feel like fighting.** Yet, he realized that he did it anyway and felt just a little better because of it. He smiled and said, “You know I can feel good about all the work we did today.” Jason affirmed his own realization! This is one of the beauties of clubhouse.

Indeed, the **power of being present with others through the side-by-side approach transforms people’s lives.** Recovery happens in so many ways, but perhaps most profoundly in between those small but sacred spaces that are carved out when members are living on purpose and with each other fulfilling the daily tasks of the clubhouse in all of their glorious humanity.

---

**Gretchen Hawkins**  
Program Director, Seattle Clubhouse

Gretchen's nickname at Seattle Clubhouse is “Soul Momma.” She lives and breathes calm transformation through nurturing side by side work in the Clubhouse. Gretchen puts people at ease with unconditional positive regard, and she’s known for her good taste and appreciation for the little things that make the Clubhouse space cute and cozy.

---

You can honor a loved one with a Memorial or Tribute donation. A generous way to express sympathy for the loss of a loved one, or to mark anniversaries, weddings, graduations, and other special occasions. Make a note with your donation, and we will recognize your loved one in the NAMI Newsletter as well as send a card.
2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINEES

As a NAMI Seattle member, you get the opportunity to vote on our incoming nominees for the Board of Directors. This is the "business" portion of our annual meeting every year. Below are the bios for the four candidates who have been nominated for service by our Board Development Committee and current Board of Directors. We had more applicants than open seats this year! Our thanks to everyone who took the time to apply and shared their deep commitment to NAMI Seattle's mission and values with us. Please join us at the annual meeting and cast your vote for these important leadership roles which shape our organization!

SUNNY CHENG, Ph.D.

Sunny has a Ph.D in nursing from the University of Washington and is currently employed as an assistant professor at the University of Washington Tacoma. Sunny has been in nursing field for over fourteen years including clinical experience serving diverse population, grant writing and successfully securing funding for her program of research, disseminating the research findings in peer-reviewed journals and international conferences to influence services and policy, plus leadership skills in organizing advocacy events. Sunny recently works with NAMI Seattle and MOMI (Mothers of Mentally Ill) in organizing a community forum to advocate for children struggling with life-threatening psychosis and their families. She has been working with NAMI since 2014 and is excited about the opportunity for serving on the NAMI Seattle Board of Directors.

ELI LIEBERMAN

Chasing bigger mountains and more powder for skiing, Eli has slowly been moving west from his home town in Massachusetts. He received his undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Colorado and his master’s degree in environmental public policy from the University of Washington. Eli currently serves as the Senior Sustainable Energy Coordinator for the Washington State Housing Finance Commission, where he helps to increase the energy efficiency of affordable housing units and nonprofit facilities across Washington State. He brings to NAMI Seattle a strong background in public policy and a desire to use his public speaking skills to advocate for NAMI near and far.

“For ten years I had been struggling with mental health issues, but it was not until recently that I was diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Even with excellent health insurance and a family of physicians, navigating America’s mental health system in a time of crisis was a challenging and scary experience. I am now committed to doing everything possible to help those less fortunate than myself receive the treatment they deserve.”
Glenn McMahon holds a B.A. in Government from Lawrence University and works in Wealth Management at Verity Credit Union here in Seattle where he also sits on the Governmental Affairs Committee. Glenn spent his college career on boards of various programs, including spending multiple years serving as treasurer for two organizations. He volunteered through college with NAMI’s Fox Valley chapter, serving as an Ending the Silence Testimonial Presenter. He is continuing that work here in Seattle. Glenn is passionate about creating socially and financially sustainable mechanisms for the empowerment of those living with mental illness.

“I want to bring my skills and passion to bear for NAMI. Having suffered from anxiety and depression due to a traumatic childhood environment, I know firsthand the depths people can be thrown into. With a background in Government and a career in Finance, I hope to help lay the groundwork for a stable future for NAMI to ensure the staff can get to work healing our communities.”

Jenny has a Masters in Public Administration and Juris Doctorate from Syracuse University and is currently a practicing attorney in Seattle. In graduate school her focus was health care policy, particularly mental health parity and the success of the Mental Health Parity Addiction and Equality Act. She brings a legal and policy analysis background to as well as enthusiasm for event planning and lending an extra hand wherever and whenever one is needed.

“There is something wrong with mental health policy in our country. Our policies grossly under-serve and under-represent those who suffer from illnesses that should be taken as seriously as those that physically manifest themselves. The continuing stigma attached to mental health prevents many from seeking the help they need. I am unable to help the cause through clinical support but am committed to using my legal and administrative skills to foster a sense of community, program access, and outreach.”

Mental Health Roundtable Discussions & NAMI Seattle Annual Member Meeting

Tuesday, December 11
6:00 pm – 8:30 pm
Nalanda West, 3902 Woodland Park Ave N., Seattle WA 98103
Join us on New Year's Eve to celebrate NAMI Seattle's 40th Anniversary!

Spend the night in your festive best, cheering NAMI's champions and ringing in the New Year with a community that shares your passion for shining a light on mental health. We'll have a live band, a great DJ, magician, tarot card reader, and childcare on site!

Details:
Sodo Park
12.31.18
6:00pm to Midnight

Learn more and get your tickets at www.namiseattle.org/gala