

Tis the Season to be Giving!



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

This holiday season we wish you well!

Recently, I was talking with a few folks about Holiday movies. Anyone besides me notices that several of them have mental health themes? There is "It's a Wonderful life" with the father who is financially poor and stressed or "Do they Know It's Christmas" about people starving in Africa. But the amazing thing about all these movies is that in the end they find hope and gratitude. George Bally saw what his life would have been like had he never existed. Even the Grinch heart's grew two sizes bigger when he repented and returned the Christmas gifts and food. For many people the Holidays are spent dealing with their own depression or the stress of family gatherings. Here are some ideas from Elaina J. Martin blog "Being Beautifully Bipolar" to cope with the Holidays.



1. **Remember that the only thing you can control is the way you react.** When someone makes a comment that is upsetting-remember YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF YOUR REACTION. Take a breath and rethink what you want to say or do. Ask yourself if it is really worth the drama or if you can let it go.
2. **Try to stick to a normal sleep schedule.** For me sleep matters. If you are crossing time zones or staying with someone who has different sleep patters make sure to take care of your self.
3. **Get some air.** Take a break from the activity and spend some time grounding yourself or praying. Mindfulness helps you take some deep breaths before returning to activities.
4. **Keep your expectations low.** I think about how I want the holidays to be and then become disappointed when they don't turn out the way I had hoped. No family is perfect, no person is perfect, children are not perfect. If you have ever planned a wedding you know that not everything will go as planned and that's OK. Accept going into an activity that things may not go exactly as you hoped and try to find the good in each event.
5. **Try to enjoy yourself!** If you are busy focusing on the positive there is less time for you to focus on what is making yourself unhappy. Try counting all the things you have with are blessings! The ham, seeing family that are still with you, a wonderful card that tells you that you are loved. Make the best of the season.

I hope you have found these tips helpful and I want to wish everyone an amazing holiday. On behalf of our staff, Liza, Kima, Verna and our board we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

4 Essential Mental Health Tips for Senior Citizens

Jason Lewis recently contacted NAMI with a request to share an article with NAMI San Antonio members. I hope you enjoy this writing!

Growing older means you have to be more diligent about taking care of your health - both physically and mentally. As we age, we often find that we become ill more frequently with common colds or ailments, we might have more trouble with demanding physical tasks, and we might become fatigued more easily. These physical challenges can lead to feeling mentally worn-down, increase stress, or even lead to anxiety or depression, but these essential mental health tips will help you stay in tip-top emotional (and physical) shape.

1. Get a Service Dog

If you suffer from depression or another mental health condition, a service dog can give you a sense of purpose and provide constant companionship. The benefits of service dogs are many; in fact, service dogs have even been credited with saving lives.

Even if you don't have clinical depression or a diagnosed mental health condition, adopting a four-legged friend can dramatically improve your mental health. Having a friend to accompany you on walks, cuddle with, and listen to your problems (even if they can't talk back) offers many emotional benefits. If you would like to experience such companionship on a more limited basis, consider walking other people's dogs (which can even get you a little extra income).

2. Stay Socially Engaged

One of the main contributors to depression in older adults is social isolation. Often seniors become isolated when mobility challenges make it increasingly difficult to leave the home or navigate sidewalks and parking lots to access the local senior center or other venues. Technology helps to bridge these gaps, but beyond staying socially connected online, you should make an effort to remain socially engaged in your community through regular, in-person interactions with friends and family.

Senior transportation can ease some challenges, helping you to get safely to community centers and other places in the community. Ask friends or family members to help you, and look into home modifications that reduce physical challenges. Volunteer for a local cause and join groups that interest you to meet other seniors with similar interests.

3. Seek Treatment for Addiction

Ongoing stress and depression can lead to addiction among older adults. Addiction is much more common than most people realized among the aging population, but there is help available. Your Medicare benefits may cover all or part of the cost of inpatient or outpatient rehabilitation for addiction.

If you're taking more than your prescribed dosage of prescription medications, are drinking more than three or four drinks per day, are

mixing your prescription medications with alcohol, are having trouble sleeping, are experiencing memory loss or other effects, it might be time to consider addiction treatment.

4. Learn Something New

You're never too old to learn a new skill or craft. If you've always wanted to play the piano, why not start taking classes? Lifelong learning is one of the most effective ways to reduce cognitive decline and keep your mind sharp. In doing so, you'll have a greater sense of achievement and confidence, which can improve your health and well-being.

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health to your overall well-being. Poor mental health contributes to stress, which can have a detrimental effect on physiological processes - making you more susceptible to colds and illnesses, as well as chronic disease. These tips will help you maintain strong emotional health as you age.

NAMI Holiday Party

We had our Holiday Party on December 13th is our annual holiday party. Over 75 people joined us for a wonderful evening! We were blessed to have our board serve dinner and decorations were provided by Dr. Sally Taylor. We honored a retiring board member, Mr. Keith McCulloch, who has been on our board for a year. We also awarded Jeanne Pierce our Jerry Fulenwider Volunteer of the Year Award. Many of you may remember Jerry who was one of our most dedicated members. He served on our board, led support groups and was one of the most successful team captains for our NAMIWalks.

**For more
information
about
NAMI
Please call
(210)
734-3349**

General Meeting Reminder!

Join us for a new year of speakers and presentations at our monthly general meetings. Our first meeting will be January 10th at 6:30 at Christ Episcopal Church. Our address is 510 Belknap Place. Call for more information.

On line registration for 2017 Classes

The new year brings new opportunities to take one of our NAMI classes. We offer FREE quality mental health education for individuals living with a mental health diagnosis, family members who support them and for parents with kids under the age of 18. We will also be offering a new program called NAMI Homefront this year. Homefront is a free 6 week class for veterans and their family members. A

special focus is placed on PTSD and includes many of the Family to Family curriculum. Register on line is easy and you can call our office if you have questions.

NAMI San Antonio | (210) 734-3349 | fax: 8442724482

STAY CONNECTED:



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