
SUMMER 2014



NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, supports and research and is steadfast in its commitment to raising awareness and building a community of hope.

NAMI – BEAVER COUNTY is an educational, advocacy and support group for families, consumers, and professionals dealing with serious mental illnesses or brain disorders. We support each other by educating ourselves through research, attending conferences, and sharing this information with others. NAMI-BC members also offer support through our years of experience n dealing with these illnesses on a personal level.

**In this issue: ... VICTORY OVER DEPRESSION AND SELF-HARM,
GETTING THINGS DONE WHEN YOU'RE ANXIOUS, BOOK
REVIEW, CRACKED, NOT BROKEN**

*Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars.
You have to let go at some point in order to move forward.*

C. S. Lewis

**Meetings are held at
NAMI BEAVER COUNTY OFFICE- 1229 3RD ST., BEAVER, PA. 15009
7:00pm on the 3rd Thursday of each month**

*****SEPTEMBER MEETING, SEPTEMBER 18,2014 – REVIEW NAMI NATIONAL CONFERENCE***
*** OCTOBER MEETING, OCTOBER 16,2014 - SPEAKER FROM GENEVA COLLEGE***
NOVEMBER MEETING, NOVEMBER 20, 2014 - SPEAKER FROM GENEVA COLLEGE**

The Battle for a Better Self

An Individual's Victory over Depression and Self-Harm
by Elaine Smith

Depression is a battle fought by a vast number of individuals every single day. It is generally known as the common cold of mental illness. Yet, the prevalence of the illness does not diminish the very real pain it causes to its victims. How does one cope with such pain? Certain unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as self-harm, have been used by victims in their desperation to minimize the pain. However, after an interview with one such sufferer, it became clear that there is hope for those with depression. Molly (whose name has been changed for privacy) graciously agreed to tell her story of healing from depression and of escape from the habit of cutting.

When asked how it all began for her, the depression and cutting, Molly explained that there were multiple factors. For one thing, she has a genetic history of depression. She could name two other family members who struggle with the illness. She eventually began to seek a way to deal with it. Molly explained that before she actually started to self-harm, she did not understand the concept at all. “How does that help? You are just hurting yourself,” she recalled asking herself. She explained that the internet also played a role in her choices. There are a lot of websites these days that promote unhealthy habits such as cutting. “They kind of glamorize it...being a cutter, you can find your identity in being depressed.” These websites led her to the belief that reveling in her illness was beautiful when in reality, it worsened her struggle.

Molly also expressed her belief that some aspects of her personality may have exacerbated the problem. Her exceptionally loud conscience and tendency to over analyze combined with her birth order led her to false beliefs about herself. “I’m a middle child. Being a middle child, I was always the kid that was independent and kind of slipped through the cracks.” Molly put a great deal of pressure on herself to be like her other, successful siblings. She compared herself to her older, skinner, seemingly-perfect sister. While others around her were able to see good things about her, all she could see were her faults. “I believed for a long time that I was a mess-up. I felt like I needed to punish myself.” She explained that cutting soon became her form of penance. This form of coping only complicated the issue. “I felt guilty about cutting.” This guilt simply caused her to feel worse. This in turn caused her to go right back to cutting. “I was generating my own guilt.”

In spite of this dangerous cycle, Molly continued to self-harm. She started to define herself by her depression and habits of self-harm. It was hard for her, during this time, to recognize that cutting was not truly helping. It was only a false solution. “Cutting was the biggest lie I ever believed.” she said confidently and explained:

You think it relieves your pain. You think it’s dealing with your issues...it traps you into thinking that this is who you are...I felt like I was being honest and being real. When I had scars on my arm, I was almost proud of them. But that was the biggest lie ever. Because when you cut you aren’t dealing with it. It takes a lot more strength to sit down...and think “what is actually making me feel this way?”

Molly was eventually able to find the strength to face her depression head-on in a healthy way. This healing did not happen overnight. It was a process of change that happened not only to her body but also to her heart. One of the beginning steps on the road to recovery was medication. When she found the proper medication, Molly discovered that she was able to stop cutting:

For people like me, I needed a little bit of help dealing with stuff [...] it was a humbling process to take medication. It was letting go of my pride, saying ‘I need help.’ If you have depression and you can deal with it, good for you. But if you can’t, don’t wallow in it [...] You need to talk to your doctor about it. It’s a real, medical issue.

Molly also had a wonderful support system. She had caring friends and family members that wanted her to succeed. She also began to receive counseling. In spite of the medication, support, and counseling, something was still missing. “I got counseling...I was told to talk about all my problems, and it didn’t help. I felt like I already knew what was wrong...I knew all the right answers in my brain but I couldn’t get [them] 7 inches down into my heart.” After taking all the necessary external healing steps that ended the cutting, Molly began to realize that she needed to work on her internal healing as well.

Molly began talking to one of her professors. This man also became her true friend. Through their conversations, she realized that it was time to start finding her identity in greater things. She knew that accepting and coping with her mental illness is important, but illness is not what defines her. "I had all these different voices in my head saying who I was and what I had to be." Molly realized that healing, for her, meant once more finding her identity in her faith.

My identity is found in being a child of God. The freedom that came with knowing that the maker of heaven and earth loved me and cared about my struggles with depression was like [...] a slap in the face [...] a hug. Because you can know something in your head for the longest time but not understand it in your heart.

So does this mean that Molly is cured and will never again face pain due to her mental illness? No, Molly acknowledged that the battle against mental illness is ongoing. Sometimes people use it as an excuse and a crutch. While she knows that mental illness is a valid hardship, she believes that it is better to choose to fight. "I have to choose not to give into my depression. I have to choose my medication." Molly is not distraught over this struggle. It has clearly made her a stronger person. She is a fighter whose story proclaims hope. In her determination, Molly said, "It's not over. It's a battle, and that's a good thing."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE HAVE A NEW OFFICE AND MEETING PLACE, 1229 3RD ST, BEAVER, PA. 15009. MEETING IS AT, 7:00 PM.

NEWSLETTER WILL BE QUARTERLY. With new office and new responsibilities it was voted by the board to publish the newsletter quarterly.

SUSCRIBE TO NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL email carlabraund@namibeavercounty.com

VIEW MENTAL HEALTH VIDEOS AT NAMI OFFICE. Call number below for dates and times.

NEW PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL FOR NAMI BEAVER COUNTY OFFICE. 724-888-6877 and carlabraund@namibeavercounty.com

NAMI SOUTHWEST WALK Oct. 5, 2014, Waterfront, Homestead. Contact Darcey Garda 412-366-3788, dgarda@namiswpa.org. JOIN namibeavercounty TEAM, contact below.

NAMI PA CONFERENCE Oct 30 –Nov 2, Harrisburg, PA. 1-800-223-0500.www.nami-pa.org

FAMILY TO FAMILY CLASS Sept 10, NAMI BC office. Contact below to register

PEER TO PEER CLASS Starting September 28, NAMI BC Office. Contact below to register

FACEBOOK look for NAMI BEAVER COUNTY.....

CONFERENCE ON SUICIDE Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2014. Details coming. www.namiswpa.org

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID Training for public. Date to be announced. Contact office.

Please contact Carla Braund at (724)888-6877 or carlabraund@namibeavercounty.com questions or concerns regarding any of the events listed above.

*The flower that blooms in adversity is the
rarest and most beautiful of all.*
the Walt Disney Company

MEET ELAINE SMITH

Hello, readers! My name is Elaine Smith, and I am very excited to introduce myself to you as the NAMI Beaver County summer intern. I am an undergraduate student from Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. After one more year of school, I will graduate with my bachelor's degree in psychology. After a few more years of work and schooling, I hope to receive my master's degree in either art therapy or non-profit management. Whatever the future holds, I plan to remain in this general field. I never questioned my decision to pursue this major. I figured out early where my passions lie. As I move forward in this educational process, my satisfaction with these life decisions is frequently confirmed. Nothing has captured my heart and intrigued my mind as much as psychology has done. Serving our community through NAMI is a wonderful experience in the world of psychology of which I am thankful to be a part. Working with this organization is teaching me a lot about both non-profit work and myself. I hope to continue to make connections with local mental health consumers, family members, and professionals through my internship here at NAMI Beaver County. I look forward to serving you in the days ahead.

I am a work in progress.
Violet Yates

Honoring – Being Depressed

From Safdar Chaudhary (from Facebook S'eclairer August 17, 2014)

Once upon a time..... It was late night and Mullah Nasruddin was crawling on his hands and knees under a corner streetlight. A close friend discovered him and , thinking that Mullah may be drunk, tried to help.

"Mullah ! Do you need help to find your way home ?"

"No,no, my Friend..... I have lost the key to my house. Here.... get down on your hands and knees and help me look."

Groaning, Mullah's friend lowered himself onto the hard street and began to crawl around. he made a thorough search, peering into all the crevices in the cobblestones, gradually widening his search.

After what seemed like hours, his knees were aching. No luck.

"Mullah, I have looked everywhere within thirty feet. Are you sure you lost your keys here ? "

"Noo... actually I think I lost them about a block away, over there."

"Mullah, Mullah --- you idiot ! Why are we wasting time here, then?"

"Well, the light was better here.... "

Sometime we are afraid to honor our depressions and pain and look for answers in our life elsewhere. Looking in the dark means journey into our depths. Where is place that we find least lovable within us? It may prove to be the key to our greatest power and joy.

**Anxiety Quote: " Ask your anxiety this question:
'Why don't you just leave me alone?'"**

By Jodi Aman (www.HealthyPlace.com)

HEALTHY LIVING HINTS

Getting Things Done When You're Anxious

Posted on July 16, 2014 by Greg Weber

<http://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/treatinganxiety/2014/07/getting-things-done-when-youre-anxious>

When you're anxious, getting things done can feel like a Herculean effort. How do you make sense of the tangle of your to-do list items and actually *do* them? In this post, I'll explore some strategies for listing, prioritizing, and executing tasks.

Why is this the case? For me, it's because my list (and when I say "list," I'm being generous) of undone, half done, and need to *get done* tasks merge into an amorphous blob in my mind. If you're like me, you need a way to make all that stuff in your head stop moving. Here's some things that help:

1. **Write everything down** — If you don't know where to start, start with this. Take 20 minutes and write down everything you need to get done that you can remember. It doesn't matter whether it's something that needs to get done today or three months from now. Get it all down in one big list. Get as much written down as you can in 20 minutes, then stop. This is a time management skill. Good job! Now go reward yourself for completing this step. This is where I usually go get more coffee.
2. **Make a "short" list** — From your master list, transfer everything that can be done in two minutes or less to a separate list titled "Shortlist." That doesn't necessarily mean the list itself is short; it means the items on the list are short tasks you can do in two minutes or less. Examples of this are calling the bank, opening today's mail, starting the washing machine, and checking your email.
3. **Consolidate similar task** — From your shortlist, group tasks together that naturally lend themselves to being done in a block. This is great for running errands. You can go to the hardware store, pick up your dry cleaning (because the cleaners is next to the hardware store), return the video you rented yesterday, and stop by the ATM at your bank. Chain as many short list items together as you'd like. It's amazing how much you can accomplish simply by grouping related tasks.

You'll probably have some things on your master list that don't need to be done immediately. Put a star next to them and leave them. We'll talk about planning for the future in a future post.

Getting Things Done Despite Being Anxious

Okay, enough with the list making. I have limited patience with it. Actually, I have limited patience, period. It's time to move into the execution phase. Here's some things to help you move into doing:

1. **Match tasks to your energy level** — Don't know what to do first? Take a moment to check in with yourself. How's your energy level? Do you feel exhausted? Are you brimming with creativity and mental stamina? Start with the tasks that most closely match your current energy levels. When I'm tired, I like to make phone calls. It doesn't require much thought. When I'm "okay" but not great, I like to run errands. It's harder than making phone calls but still fairly easy. And on those rare occasions when I feel loads of mental energy, I like to hole up and work on tasks that require stretches of undivided attention. So, what should you start with right now?
2. **Get more "granular"** — *Granularity* is term that describes how many little chunks a big project is broken into, kind of like sand. You may find yourself getting overwhelmed as you execute a task on your list. This often indicates the task is really several smaller tasks that didn't get listed properly. When you feel overwhelmed, take a moment to examine the task at hand. Can it be broken into smaller pieces?
3. **Don't try to do it perfectly** — Getting things done when you're anxious also includes coping with perfectionism. This is especially difficult for people with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). I'll talk more about perfectionism later. For now, all I will say is, it's better to do an average job than to do nothing. Focus on the task at hand and just get it completed, even if it feels unsatisfying. The idea is to create forward momentum.

Anxious people still have to live in the real world, the world of doing. The foundation of getting things done when you're anxious is good organization. Get to-do items out of your head and into logical lists. Then think of the nice reward you'll give yourself when you're finished. Now go.

NONE OF THESE COMMENTS PLEASE! *Excerpts from "29 Phrases People With Anxiety Are Tired of Hearing", posted on BringChange2Mind, July 25, 2014*

"Stop being so negative...At least it's not cancer...Just think about something else... What do you have to worry about?...You don't try hard enough to get better...I can't see why you can't just ignore it...Oh, so you haven't really got anything physically wrong with you?...Just take some more tablets...Don't be so dramatic!...You're just lazy!"

Summary: These comments show a lack of empathy. We need to help people understand that anxiety is an illness. Anxiety is a normal part of being human and nothing to be ashamed of.

Reviewing Cracked, Not Broken

In his book *Cracked, not broken: Surviving and thriving after a suicide attempt* (2013), Kevin Hines shares with his readers the dynamic battle he has fought with mental illness—a battle that he still fights every day. He explains the condition, bipolar disorder, which led him to attempt suicide by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. After a miraculous survival from the 220-foot-fall, the crushing pressure at point of contact, and the icy waters, Hines realized that he now had a 2nd chance. As Hines's story unfolds, readers will witness Hines experience the full range of human emotion. He articulates his experiences with an openness that is truly remarkable. Each thought and motive behind the author's actions is laid bare, helping readers to grasp the complexity of his form of mental illness. Hines's book can assist mental health professionals and family members to understand and empathize with those that struggle with mental illness. Hines's experiences and those of his family, friends, and doctors are undoubtedly mirrored by those of countless readers. His book provides encouragement to those fighting the same or similar battles with mental illness. In spite of Hines's honesty about his emotional and psychological pain, his life story is one of obvious hope and perseverance. He has realistic but optimistic goals for his own future and even provides some tools at the end of his book for readers to be better prepared to deal with their own illnesses. Aside from the editing errors, *Cracked, not broken* (2013) is a good read for those seeking insights, encouragements, and tools for coping with mental illness in the modern world.

Reference

Hines, K. (2013). *Cracked, not broken: Surviving and thriving after a suicide attempt*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.



Dated Material: Please deliver by September 10, 2014

NAMI – THE NATION’S VOICE ON MENTAL ILLNESS

Carla Braund, Editor
NAMI BEAVER COUNTY
1229 3rd Street
Beaver, PA 15009

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 9
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

MEMBERSHIP FORM 2014 please renew early in year

*Several changes have happened with memberships and renewal. The \$25 level of membership has been dropped. In order to keep the membership process streamlined, we **prefer** renewals to be processed early in the year. It is also possible to renew your membership online at www.nami.org. At this time over half of our memberships are due for renewal. A BIG THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE RENEWED THEIR MEMBERSHIP. Any questions or concerns please direct them to Carla Braund, 724-688-6877 or carlabraund@namibeavercounty.com All NAMI – Beaver County memberships include subscriptions to all four newsletters.*

_____ Enclosed is my check for \$35 for 2014 memberships in NAMI – Beaver County, NAMI, NAMI – PA, and NAMI – SW PA

_____ I am on a limited income. Dues are \$3 for full membership.

_____ I wish to make a tax deductible donation of \$ _____ to NAMI – Beaver County.

NAME(S) _____

Please check one: Family member Consumer Mental health professional

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE NO. _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Make checks payable to: **NAMI – Beaver County**
Send to: NAMI – Beaver County
1229 3rd Street -- Beaver, PA 15009

