

Board of Directors

Gwen Lewis
President

Rosemarie Thorne
1st Vice President

Marsha McInnis
2nd Vice President

Armine Matentsian
Treasurer

Cyndi Hackett
Secretary

Julie Testa
Member-at-Large

Joyce Lombardo
Member-at-Large

Kelly Miller
Member-at-Large

Programs

Family-to-Family Education
Joyce Lombardo

Family Support Groups

Parent Resource & Support Group
Marsha McInnis

NAMI Connections Recovery Support Group
Gwen Lewis

Committees

Newsletter
Lois Lindahl, Editor
Grants
Rosemarie Thorne

Mental Health First Aid Trainings
Julie Testa

Advisory Committee

Art Tenbrink, MS, LMFT

NAMI Tri-Valley During COVID-19

COVID-19 has completely turned our lives upside down, and to accommodate for these changes, NAMI Tri-Valley is providing Zoom video conferencing meetings. In this issue, we are focused on COVID-19 and the adjustments that NAMI Tri-Valley has made to continue providing our services to you. All groups and presentations have moved to Zoom video conferencing, although for many, this format is not the same as meeting together in a room. Those who are uncomfortable with attending a meeting virtually may call, email, and/or text at 925-980-5331 instead.

NAMI Tri-Valley General Meeting presentations,

Connections Recovery Support Group, Family Support Groups, Parent Resource and Support Group and are on Zoom until it is safe to meet face-to-face again.

General Meeting Presentations

To receive a Zoom invitation link, please send an email to: marsha@nami-trivalley.org

Support Groups

To receive a Zoom invitation link, please send an email to:

- Connections Recovery Support Group: balllewis@comcast.net or namitrivalleyconnections@gmail.com
- Family/Caregiver Support Groups: marsha@nami-trivalley.org
- Parent Resource and Support Group: marsha@nami-trivalley.org

Besides continuing with our support groups, we will be keeping our website, our Facebook page, and our Twitter feeds updated with information about services available in Alameda County.

Continue on Page 2

Inside this Issue

NAMI Tri-Valley During COVID-19..... 1 & 2
 President’s Corner.....2
 COVID-19 Isolation: Tips To Keep You Mentally Healthy3
 Ways to Stay Connected During the COVID-19 Crisis
 33
 Collecting Yourself.....4
 Helping Children Cope5
 Children & Teen Crisis Mental Health Information5
 Calendar6

Continue from Page 1

We also want to share information provided by NAMI on Health and Wellness Tips and links to NAMI's Resource and Information Guide, a 24-page booklet with practical information.

Health and Wellness Tips

The following are tips NAMI is offering:

- For anyone who is unsure about attending therapy sessions outside the home, especially those who the CDC has described as being at higher risk, you can ask your health-care provider about teletherapy or mental health services online.
- For anyone who is worried about access to prescribed medications, you can ask your health care provider about getting 90-day supplies vs. a 60-day or 30-day supply. If this is not possible, we encourage you to refill your medications as soon as they are allowed.

Note: If healthcare providers deny/decline making accommodations, challenge the decisions at least three times. Decision-makers on making health plan adjustments may change if/as conditions worsen.

- Listen to and follow your local public health care provider expectations.
- Provide self-care, especially if in the higher risk population as defined by the CDC. Pay attention to emerging symptoms. Reach out to family and friends.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Virtual NAMI Connections Recovery Support Group

By Gwen Lewis
President, NAMI Tri-Valley

NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group is a free, weekly, recovery support group for adults living with mental illness in which people learn from each other's experiences, share coping strategies, and offer each other encouragement and understanding. What is discussed at the support group meetings is confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside the group.

Due to Bay Area's Shelter-in-Place order, and in accordance with our organizational policy, in-person support groups are temporarily suspended.

NAMI Tri-Valleys' Connections Recovery Group is offering a virtual support group instead, using Zoom for video conferencing.

The meetings are every Wednesday at 7:00 PM and will continue virtually until further notice.

To participate, email to one of the following addresses, and you will be sent an invitation link:

<mailto:ballewis@comcast.net> or

<mailto:namitrivalleyconnections@gmail.com>

RESOURCE AND INFORMATION GUIDE

NAMI (National) released the [NAMI COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide](#) to answer frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the intersection between Coronavirus, or COVID-19, and people affected by mental illness, their caregivers and loved ones. The guide features FAQs on a variety of topics, from managing anxiety and social isolation to accessing health care and medications.

[La Guía COVID-19](#) de información y recursos también está disponible en español. Tiene información sobre preguntas frecuentes y recursos para que encuentres apoyo para ti y tus seres queridos. Incluye temas relacionados a la salud mental, como encontrar comunidades de apoyo en línea, ayuda financiera, y más.

COVID-19 Isolation: Tips to Keep You Mentally Healthy

By Tanya J. Peterson

HealthyPlace.com

Isolation is stressful and can hurt your mental health. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, many of us are isolated and alone. That's in addition to dealing with anxiety about your health and the health of your loved ones.

These tips can help you maintain and even enhance your mental health when you are isolated because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

How to Stay Mentally Healthy If You're Isolated

Here are three helpful tips to deal with COVID-19 isolation.

- **Create new routines.** Routines are key for mental health and wellbeing, yet this coronavirus disruption has thrown off so many of our ordinary, predictable routines. Stay balanced by creating new routines for you and your family. Set and keep a regular sleep/wake schedule. Establish times for

work and schoolwork as well as for downtime.

- **...But avoid being rigid.** Now, more than ever, the ability to be flexible is important as rules and regulations change almost daily. Be willing to adjust your routine as you go.
- **Establish new healthy habits.** Regular physical exercise and healthy eating are crucial. If you can't continue your ordinary activities, create new ones at home. YouTube is a great source for free exercise videos. Also, it's still okay to step outside for a walk. Getting out of the house for a 30-minute walk provides a great mental health boost.

Use these tips to keep your days—and your mood—balanced for optimum mental health during the COVID-19 isolation.

Ways To Stay Connected During The COVID-19 Crisis

Social distancing and being confined to home are challenging for many, especially those with mental health conditions. Many community members are expressing unease or anxiety about spending more time alone at home and away from others.

It's important that we do our best to take care of ourselves and check in on loved ones who might face mental health challenges during this time.

To help you remain connected to your social network, here are some ideas:

- Schedule regular calls with friends like you would schedule a work meeting. If you can, make them video calls, using FaceTime or Skype, Zoom, or other video-calling options.
- Start a text or email chain with friends about good articles to read, videos to watch, podcasts to listen to, songs to listen to, etc.
- Catch up with old friends by email, phone, or on social media platforms.
- Play online games with friends using apps, such as Words with Friends.
- Start up an impromptu virtual book club with a friend or group of friends, by starting to read the same book together, then check in to discuss it.
- Start watching TV shows or movies at the same time with friends, then check in to discuss them.
- Call or video-chat with friends while taking virtual tours together of [museums](#), [national parks](#), and more from [Google Arts & Culture](#).
- Tune in to [live-streamed concerts](#) and other events.
- Have neighbors you know? Plan to meet up outside at a safe distance for daily check-ins.

Source: NAMI California-<https://namica.org/blog/ways-to-stay-connected-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>

Collecting Yourself

By Mark Voegele

You're trapped. You can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. If you do see light, you fear it is not the end of the tunnel but rather an oncoming train. Your short-term and long-term plans are on hold. You feel anger, frustration, guilt, and hopelessness.

Welcome to a common experience shared by those of us who care for a loved one that has a brain disorder. It does not matter if it is depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar, PTSD, or any other mental illness. We all feel this at some time or another. In those times we are tempted to believe this is as good as it gets and then we start down into the slough of despond (to plagiarize Pilgrim's Progress).

I recall a time when my mother hit a patch of misfortune and financial hardship. She was very distraught and troubled about making rent and keeping food on the table. I was in my 20's, working on my Ministerial degree, and 500 miles away. I could not help her financially, so, of course, I turned to a passage of scripture to strengthen her.

I loosely paraphrased 1st Corinthians 10:13. "Mom, the Bible tells us that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability and will make a way of escape."

"That may be true son. I only wish God did not have such a high opinion of me."

I'm here to tell you that there are steps you can take to help you in those times when it seems hopeless and overwhelming. These steps don't address the cause. These are steps, exercises if you please, that may help you collect yourself to get back to what you need to do—advocate and nurture.

No. 1: Breathe.

I mean in a particular way. My wife is a Physical Therapist and teaches her patients this phrase, "Smell the roses. Blow out the candle." Breathe in through you nose. Exhale through pursed lips. Do it slowly. Count the seconds you inhale. Twice that time is how long you should take to exhale. I have used the method successfully to lower my pulse during panic attacks from 100 bpm to 65 bpm in 2 or 3 minutes.

No. 2: Relaxation Exercise.

This is a process and requires a few uninterrupted minutes. Sit upright with both feet flat on the ground. Your hands should be palms down on thighs. Close your eyes and concentrate on relaxing your muscles for 30 seconds or so. Then you tense your feet into fist holding that state for 5-10 seconds. Then completely relax them. Ponder the difference between tense and relaxed. Learn what the two states feel like. Then do the same for your calves, then your thighs, your trunk, your shoulders, your neck, your arms, and finally your hands. After you've relaxed your hands, stay in this position for a minute focusing on keeping all these muscle groups relaxed. Throw in a minute of the breathing in No. 1.

"...purpose is to help you collect yourself, so you can refocus on the things that matter."

No. 3: The Mantra.

I crafted this "mantra" that I use for myself, for my spouse, and teach to my Family-to-Family class.

It's not my fault

It's not their fault

It's the illness

This is a biological, pathological brain disorder showing its effects on an individual's ability to exercise self-control. Repeating this mantra in those moments when a behavior makes you forget that it is a biological illness genuinely helps to walk you back to the right perspective.

As promised, none of these addresses the cause. Their purpose is to help you collect yourself, so you can refocus on the things that matter. I will leave you with something I learned from listening to Wayne Dyer. He told the audience they could be rid of all worry by doing the following:

Ask yourself, "Can I do anything about it [the cause of the worry]?" If the answer is yes, then stop worrying and take action. If the answer is no, stop worrying, because you can't do anything about it. What's the point in worrying?

Helping Children Cope

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Watch for behavior changes in your child

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include:

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children.
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting).
- Excessive worry or sadness.
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits.
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens.
- Poor school performance or avoiding school.
- Difficulty with attention and concentration.
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past.

- Unexplained headaches or body pain.
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Ways to support your child

- [Talk with your child or teen](#) about the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Answer questions** and [share facts about COVID-19](#) in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- **Reassure your child or teen** that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- **Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage** of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- **Try to keep up with regular routines.** If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- **Be a role model.** Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

Source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Children and Teen Mental Health Crisis Information in Alameda County

Crisis Support Services/Suicide Prevention is a 24-hour hotline. Call 1-800-SUICIDE or 510-849-2212.

[Willow Rock Center Crisis Response Service](#)

(510) 483-3030

Voluntary crisis services for teens ages 12 to 17 who do not meet criteria for inpatient hospitalization.

[Children's Hospital Behavioral Emergency Response Team](#)

(510) 428-3240

Crisis services for children 0 to 11 years old.

Support Groups Calendar

Family/Caregiver Support Group - Livermore

Meets every **2nd Monday** of each month:

Monday, June 8, 2020

Monday, July 13, 2020

Monday, August 10, 2020

7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

We will use Zoom until it is safe to meet at a physical location. **Contact:** Marsha McInnis 925.980.5331
marsha@nami-trivalley.org

Parent Resource & Support Group - Pleasanton

Meets every **3rd Tuesday** of each month:

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

Tuesday, August 18, 2020

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

We will use Zoom until it is safe to meet at a physical location. **Contact:** Marsha McInnis 925.980.5331
marsha@nami-trivalley.org

Family/Caregiver Support Group - Pleasanton

Meets every **4th Monday** of each month

Monday, June 22, 2020

Monday, July 27, 2020

Monday, August 24, 2020

7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

We will use Zoom until it is safe to meet at a physical location. **Contact:** Marsha McInnis 925.980.5331
marsha@nami-trivalley.org

NAMI Connections Recovery Support Group

Meets every **Wednesday** of each week

Wednesday, June 3, 10, 17, 24, 2020

Wednesday, July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 2020

Wednesday, August 5, 12, 19, 26, 2020

7:15 p.m. - 8:45 p.m.

We will use Zoom until it is safe to meet at a physical location.

Contact: balllewis@comcast.net or
namitrivalleyconnections@gmail.com

NAMI is a non-profit, grassroots, self-help, support and advocacy organization of consumers, families, and friends of people with severe mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic and other severe anxiety disorders, autism and pervasive developmental disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and other severe and persistent mental illnesses that affect the brain.

Brainstorm is published by NAMI Tri-Valley, an affiliate of NAMI National and NAMI California.



Annual Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

NEW **RENEWAL**

REGULAR (PER PERSON): \$40

HOUSEHOLD: \$60

OPEN DOOR: \$5

The Open Door rate is available to those whose economic circumstances require it, and entitles you to the full rights and privileges of NAMI membership.

Donation

\$ _____ In Memory Of: _____

\$ _____ In Honor Of: _____

Your dues include membership in NAMI Tri-Valley, NAMI California, and NAMI National.

Membership dues are tax-deductible renewable 12 months from initial application. Membership also entitles you to receive NAMI Tri-Valley Newsletter *Brainstorm* and NAMI National *The Advocate*. Tax I.D.# 72-1610675.

Volunteer and make a major difference in the lives of those affected by mental illnesses.

Please send this application form with your check payable to **NAMI Tri-Valley, P. O. Box 5563, Pleasanton, CA 94566**