



VOICES & CHOICES

For and by people concerned with mental illness and recovery in
Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum Counties.

December 2009

Mental Illness: Coping with the Holidays

Rev. Susan Gregg-Schroeder
Coordinator of Mental Health Ministries

Mental Illness: Coping with the Holidays

The holiday season is supposed to be a time full of joy, parties and gatherings with friends and families. But the holidays can be a difficult time for many persons dealing with

- personal grief,
- loneliness,
- illnesses of all kinds,
- economic concerns,
- separation from family members and
- relationship issues like separation or divorce.

We talk about peace on earth but live with the threat of terrorism and the reality that our country is at war.

The commercialization of the holiday season bombards us with unrealistic expectations. And many of us feel overwhelmed when our “to-do” list goes on forever!

While some people experience temporary periods of depression like the “holiday blues” or Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), many of us live with mental illness every day.

The holidays are especially difficult when our own feelings of sadness, loneliness, depression and anxiety are the opposite of the “Hallmark” images we see all around us.

Tips for Persons Living with a Mental Illness

The holidays can be times of stress for everyone. As a person who lives with a mental illness, I have learned the importance of self-care...especially during times of stress in our lives. Try as much as possible to maintain your routines like sleeping, regular meals, exercising, taking medication, keeping appointments with mental health professionals and attending support groups.

During this time we may find ourselves at extended family gatherings or at parties with people who do not understand about our illness. Some people may be uncomfortable and not know what to say to you. Others may say hurtful things or offer cliché’ advice out of ignorance and the stigma of mental illness. It is helpful to prepare yourself by knowing who may be at a gathering. Large groups can feel overwhelming at any time!

Know that whatever you are feeling, it is right for you. It is all right to excuse yourself for some time away. There may be times when you may want to excuse yourself and go to a quiet place. While continually isolating yourself is not helpful, there are times when solitude can be a time of replenishment, reconnection with your-

self and deeply satisfying. On the other hand, for some people it is hard to feel down when you are helping someone else. There are many opportunities to volunteer during the holiday season. The satisfaction of giving to others can help you put your own problems in perspective.

Live in the now! Try to let go of past regrets and experiences and find joy in the present moment. And remember, laughter is good medicine!

Tips for Family and Friends

Family and friends can include their loved one in holiday activities to the degree that he or she is able to participate. Setting specific times for family traditions like baking special food, decorating the house, wrapping gifts or attending community celebrations, gives the person something to look forward to.

If there is to be a large gathering of family and friends, plan ahead by preparing those persons who may not know the situation. This is a wonderful opportunity to help erase the stigma and shame too often associated with mental illness. You can help them find ways to be relaxed yet respectful of any special needs. Someone living with a mental illness can feel further disconnected from others if people ignore or avoid them.

Set realistic goals and be flexible. The holidays are about love and caring one another. We would all do better to let go of the image of the perfect holiday and focus on accepting ourselves and our loved ones without judging, criticizing or advising.

Tips for Communities of Faith

Many of the holidays are also Holy days. For anyone who is struggling, hearing the familiar stories of our faith, singing familiar hymns and participating in religious rituals can bring comfort. It can be time of re-connecting with our faith and spirituality. Clergy can make a special effort to encourage families to invite their loved one to be part of special services.

The holidays are a time of bringing people together in community. We know that one in four families sitting in the pews is living with someone who has a mental illness. Many are suffering in silence and are afraid to share their pain with others. Incorporating mental illness in sermons, prayers and liturgies is one step in reminding them that they are not alone. The holidays remind us that our God welcomes the stranger and the outcast and loves us just as we are.

Clergy can encourage their congregation to make an intentional outreach to persons outside the faith community. Interfaith groups and many community based mental health programs can provide you with the names of persons who would like to attend a holiday worship service in their faith tradition. Members of your congregation can offer to provide rides to persons who do not regularly attend worship. Encourage individuals and groups to visit persons you know may be struggling with depression or other mood disorder in their home, residential settings or hospital. Bringing a small token from the faith community can help people feel they are not forgotten.

Celebrate the Moment

Despite our good intentions, remember that the holidays rarely turn out as planned. Focus on making them a special time for you and your family, no matter what the circumstances. Celebrate this season of hope and expectation. Celebrate the many blessings in your life.

~

People with mental problems are our neighbors. They are members of our congregations, members of our families; they are everywhere in this country. If we ignore their cries for help, we will be continuing to participate in the anguish from which those cries for help come. A problem of this magnitude will not go away. Because it will not go away, and because of our spiritual commitments, we are compelled to take action. Rosalynn Carter

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This material was reprinted, and is available for download as a brochure, from the Mental Health Ministries website, www.MentalHealthMinistries.net, see "Resources and Links".

Quality Review Team Report

October 2009—November 13, 2009 Meeting
Heather Maxwell, QRT Coordinator

The Quality Review Team is responsible for fairly and independently reviewing the performance of the RSN and its contracted service providers to evaluate for systemic issues as outlined in WAC 388-865-0282 and provide to the TRSN Governing Board recommendations for improvements to the RSN system of care.

The Volunteer Team met once in October for their regular meeting. Meeting has been shortened due to a change in bus schedule and several of the members felt rushed and not able to get all their work done. Highlights of the meetings included:

A discussion about adding questions to the client satisfaction questionnaire and the survey used during outreach (including public forums/speakouts) related to treatment/recovery plan involvement. The survey is revised every year before the mailing begins and the Team will be working on this revision next meeting as well.

Members also updated the speakout/public forum flyer for the upcoming Wahkiakum County event which will be hosted by the Johnson House in Cathlamet on November 13th at 1pm. The flyer and speakout/public forum questions were emailed to the Johnson House and to WCMHS to help with distribution.

Several more adult family homes/boarding homes/assisted living facilities were visited this month in East Lewis County. QRT are scheduled to make site visits to the remainder of the facilities next month. Coordinator will provide a report following the visits.

During the adult family home outreach, QRT continues to work on the distribution of Allied Provider Surveys, in part to utilize the travel more effectively and also to gather more input from our allied service providers. While in east Lewis County, QRT visited Morton General Hospital, Morton Medical Clinic and the White Pass Coalition. QRT outreach materials were also distributed. Since doing the outreach work, QRT Coordinator has received more allied provider surveys and will compile another report following the completion of the outreach.

While in Morton, QRT visited the Cascade Mental Health Care site, checked the suggestion box and left QRT outreach materials.

A QRT volunteer application was received due to outreach that occurred in Pacific County in September. The prospective volunteer will be invited to a QRT meeting at his/her convenience when QRT is able to make a connection. Several calls have been made and at the time of this report, to no avail.

This writer attended the TRSN's Advisory and Governing Board meetings. This writer, as well as Alicia Gillispie and Pam Brown attended the appreciation dinner for QRT/Ombuds hosted by the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery. This writer also connected with the TRSN's Advisory Board Chair and the TRSN's Ombudsman.

This writer submitted the QRT report to the *Voices and Choices* newsletter.

QRT Coordinator may be reached toll free at 1-877-736-3162 or at QRT@localaccess.com or by postal service at PO Box 1435 Centralia, WA 98531 Please feel free to contact with questions, concerns, or comments, or if you are interested in volunteering (from Pacific or Wahkiakum Counties).

NAMI PACIFIC COUNTY

By: Kat Erskine

NAMI welcomes anyone interested in mental health; clients (or not), family, friends, community members, therapists, etc.

Our December meeting will be the 15th, still at the Peninsula Church Center, 5000 'N' Place (Washington Ave.), at 3:00-4:30. Note that the regular meeting date has been changed to the *third* Tuesday of each month.

This would be a great meeting to come to as a nice introduction (as they all are, actually). If you've been thinking about coming, don't put it off any longer. We're a great group of caring folks.

For our December meeting we are inviting people to bring a favorite thing to share: hobby, poetry, pictures, short stories, something we like to do. If you don't feel like actively participating, you're welcome to sit back and enjoy that way. We also have some NAMI business to discuss that's long overdue.

We're hoping everyone will bring a favorite food to share. Let's make it festive! Kick back and have a chance to get to know each other better. We'll be our own guest speakers.

At November's meeting we had Jole Williams talk about nutrition and nutritional supplements. As usual, a great time, with lots of good, sound advice, especially as it relates to the food we now are sold and eat. Very interesting.

We hope to share December 15th afternoon with you!

At Serenity House

By: Jeri Wagner

It's been so busy here. We have started a "Laugh and Snacks" social group. It has been quite successful and people are really using and improving their social skills. With the holidays coming up we will be doing special holiday snacks and music.

Come join us, Thursdays 1-3.

What is NAMI StigmaBusters?

NAMI StigmaBusters is a network of dedicated advocates across the country and around the world who seek to fight inaccurate and hurtful representations of mental illness.

Whether these images are found in TV, film, print, or other media, StigmaBusters speak out and challenge stereotypes. They seek to educate society about the reality of mental illness and the courageous struggles faced by consumers and families every day. StigmaBusters' goal is to break down the barriers of ignorance, prejudice, or unfair discrimination by promoting education, understanding, and respect.

Each month, close to 20,000 advocates receive a NAMI StigmaBusters Alert, and it is read by countless others around the world online. Send it to your own personal and professional networks.

Numbers do count, so let your voice be heard.

Questions? Contact: smarch@nami.org

Necessity is the mother of invention...

and budget cuts at Johnson House and Serenity House have had unanticipated and wonderful outcomes.

Rather than being defeated by problems such as not enough money to keep the building heated, members are responding to the challenges with ingenuity and enthusiasm. They are more active and involved than ever.

At Johnson House a pot luck will be held November 30th and plans are underway for a vegetable garden in the spring.

The folks at Serenity House had a successful garage sale to raise money for Serenity operations and activities.

NAMI LEWIS COUNTY

By: Judy Baskett

NAMI Lewis County is very proud to share the success of our NEWEST Group. The NAMI Connection recovery support group. NAMI Connection is a weekly 90 minute support group for adults with mental illness led by trained individuals who are in recovery themselves. The group is free of charge and offers a casual environment to share the challenges and successes of coping with mental illness. NAMI Connection is a support group that provides a place that offers respect, understanding, encouragement, and hope. All group meetings are confidential-where you can share as much or as little as you wish. No need to register. Just come when you feel you need to talk. The NAMI Connection weekly support group meets every Tuesday evening 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1209 N. Scheuber Road, Centralia WA. (The meeting time coordinates with the bus schedule.) For more information contact Ellalou 623-5619.

ATTENTION!!!

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that there is a team of people who are interested in the quality of public mental health client services, known as the Q.R.T.?

WHAT IS Q.R.T.?

Q.R.T. otherwise known as Quality Review Team, is a group of clients, family members and community volunteers coordinated by a Timberlands Regional Support Network employee. This team functions independently of the TRSN.

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF Q.R.T.?

The function of the Q.R.T. is to survey clients and family members of public mental health services via speakouts, community forums, surveys and other forms of outreach throughout the year bearing several goals in mind all filed under one purpose, **IMPROVING CLIENT SERVICES IN MENTAL HEALTH.**

HOW CAN I VOLUNTEER?

Volunteering for the Q.R.T. is simple. Call the number below.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Quality Review Team serving Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum counties.

Timberlands Q.R.T.

Heather Maxwell, Coordinator

Phone: 1-877-736-3162 (Toll Free)

Email: qrt@localaccess.com

PO Box 1435

Centralia, WA 98531

From: bp Magazine

About 50 percent of people with severe mental disorders are affected by substance abuse, according to reports published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The numbers are even higher for those with bipolar disorder: As many as 60 percent turn to drugs and alcohol, often to try to manage their symptoms, but they only add further pain to their lives.

Nearby People, Places, Groups

Clatsop County (Oregon) NAMI has monthly general meetings, support group sessions 1st and 3rd Sunday afternoons, and education programs. President: Richard Elfering in Astoria, 1-503-325-7430. Education coordinator: Alice Kero Wood, 1-503-717-1835, woodavon@msn.com

Cowlitz County NAMI has regular meetings and speakers. Contact person: Don Roy, dgr55566@msn.com, (360) 577-6581. 2007 president: Paula Grant, pgrant@kalama.net

CHADD is a national organization working with ADD and ADHD issues. It stands for Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, www.chadd.org, 1-800-233-4050.

DBSA, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance is a national organization. www.DBSAAlliance.org, 1-800-826-3632 information. Crisis Line 1-800-442-4673 (HOPE).

Nationwide Suicide Prevention Crisis Line, 24-7, 1-800-442-4673

National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse. Based in Philadelphia PA, Source of information, scholarships, nationwide connections. 1-800-553-4539, www.mhselfhelp.org

Mental Health America (was National Mental Health Association) - offers weekly online news reports, education, etc. mentalhealthamerica.net

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK

*Please feel free to pass along copies
of Voices & Choices
to other interested persons.*

Wahkiakum County Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board

The public is invited to attend these board meetings. They are held the first Thursday of each month at 3:30 pm at River Street Building, Cathlamet. Please note changes.

Please note -

If you have recently changed your address or phone number, please let your local Mental Health agency know, as this will help tremendously in trying to contact you in the event of staff illness, schedule changes, or to cut down mail returned as undeliverable.

If you want to be REMOVED from the *Voices & Choices* mailing list please call 1 800 392-6298 or email everman@trsn.org. If you are no longer receiving mental health services as a consumer at Cascade MHC, Willapa BH or Wahkiakum CMHS but want to continue getting *Voices & Choices* by US mail, call 1 800 392-6298 or email everman@trsn.org. Thank you.

The Editorial Board of *Voices & Choices* invites you to

Share Your Story

We believe everyone has a story to share and ideas to contribute. We invite you to submit a personal story, a tip on staying well, a book or movie review, upcoming MH recovery events, or information on national and regional mental health issues. Submissions may or may not be used in a forthcoming issue, and may be edited for length. The newsletter's basic goal is to inform, encourage, and inspire.

Please send articles to Cereice Cook
Email: ccook@oz.net or mail to: Cereice Cook, PO
Box 486,
Port Orchard, WA 98366-0486 more information:
360-876-1122

LEWIS COUNTY

Useful Numbers & Web Sites

NAMI LEWIS

The Educational Support Meeting (open to everybody) is the *first* Tuesday of each month, 6:00 at **NEW** Timberlands-Chehalis Library
400 N. Market Blvd., Chehalis

Next meeting: December 1, 2009, 6:00 pm

The Family Support Group (open to family members only) is on the *third* Tuesday of each month. Contact numbers are Sherry Palmer 748-4024, Valerie Voght 748-0229, and Judy Baskett baskettcase@myway.com

Next meeting: December 17, 5:30 pm

For more information contact:
Richard Ponder 360 736-5847

CASCADE MENTAL HEALTH CARE

135 West Main, Chehalis, WA 98532 /
2428 Reynolds Street, Centralia, WA 98531
748-6696 Main Street Location /
330-9044 Reynolds Street Location.

Toll Free: 800 559-6696

Email: killillays@casca demental health.org
WEB Site: www.cascademh.org

PACIFIC COUNTY

Useful Numbers

Willapa Behavioral Health

2204 Pacific Ave North, Long Beach, WA. 642-3787
Mail: PO Box 863, Long Beach, WA 98631

300 Ocean Avenue, Raymond 942-2303
Mail: P O Box 65, South Bend, WA 98586

Toll Free (both locations): 800 884-2298

Email: cumminse@willapabh.org

NAMI PACIFIC

35504 "J" Place, Ocean Park, WA 98640

Kat Erskine, President, **Carol Wright**, Vice-President, **Mary Bowers**, Secretary, **Rosi Sartwell**, Treasurer/Membership Coordinator, and **Charlotte Paliani**, Board Member

www.namipacificcounty.org

Meetings are the **third** Tuesday at 3:00 to 4:30 pm at the Peninsula Church Center 5000 N. Place (Washington Ave.) in Seaview.

WAHKIAKUM COUNTY

Useful Numbers & Web Sites

NAMI WAHKIAKUM

PO Box 366, Cathlamet, WA 98612

There are no scheduled meetings at this time for NAMI Wahkiakum.

Interested individuals desiring to participate and set-up a meeting, or anyone interested in more information about NAMI may contact Colleen Bennett, 360-795-8630, or Chris Holmes, 1800-635-5989.

**WAHKIAKUM COUNTY
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

42 Elochoman Valley Road,
Cathlamet, WA 98612

Including: Mental Health, Chemical Dependency,
Community Outreach, Developmental Disabilities
and Employment Center
360 795-8630

Toll Free: 800 635-5989

Email: brightj@co.wahkiakum.wa.us

**Other Useful Numbers
and Web Sites****Ombuds Services**

Theresa Mahar

New toll free number 866 439-3064

Email: maharthe@yahoo.com

For after hours emergencies...

Cascade Mental Health Care:

748-6696/ 800-559-6696

Willapa Behavioral Health:

Long Beach: 642-3787

Raymond: 875-9426

Toll Free: 800-884-2298

NAMI WASHINGTON

President: Barbara Bate

Email: bgofish@wallapabay.org

NAMI

National Office, Arlington VA

1-800-950-6264

www.nami.org