



Dear Reader:

I hope that you are doing well yourself. Well, as best as you can be when dealing with something so frustrating, exhausting, ugly and confusing as mental illness can be. I've been in a similar situation as you. My path probably looks different (my love ones living with a diagnosis, what the diagnosis is, when it happened, etc.). I want you to know though, it doesn't matter how bad your story feels, how many people you have in your life struggling with mental illness, you have people that care about you and that are willing to help.

I had known for many years that my one family member struggled with something that I just couldn't put my finger on. When it was suggested for her to go see a psychiatrist, she feared she would be put in a strait jacket and taken to the hospital. My sister and I had to be very supportive in assuring her that this was not the case. I found that while attending family support group at NAMI, others struggled to get their loved one to take that first step for help. I had my own group of cheerleaders in my corner.

Once we had taken the step to get help, I wondered 'what is my role as a family member?' It was a constant struggle to see if what I was doing was helpful or not. Do you find yourself in this struggle? If you are reading this as a family member that their loved one just received a nasty diagnosis, it's okay. This is not a death sentence. Recovery is possible. It happens for many. I've talked to people at NAMI events and programs that are living symptom free.

If you are reading this as a family member that feels you are banging your head on the wall because this has been a struggle for years, it's okay. We have another loved one in my family that was in 'crisis' for decades. Not knowing what the next day would hold (will my safety be threatened? Will my loved one kill or hurt themselves?). It was an emotionally draining process. There are safety nets and options that we found through NAMI. Even if it was support just for myself as a family member, these options are available to you too!

I hope that you will take the time to look through the information provided in this packet. Some of it may be useful for you, some of it may not be. If you would like to meet folks that have similar struggles, fears, hurt feelings, please seek out a support group, class or join an event. Everything is voluntary to participate and sometimes it is helpful to just come and listen to others. I hope to see you soon.

Take care,  
NAMI Family Member

## Benefits of Family Support:

- Understanding that mental illness are traumatic events
- Aim for better coping skills
- Accept that we cannot solve every problem
- Work for a better future in a realistic way
- Continued support through connection and education
- **And much more!**

## Programs:

**Family-to-Family:** an educational course for family, caregivers and friends (18+) of individuals living with a mental illness.

*Free 12 session course.*

**NAMI Basics:** Six week course for those who are caretakers of children affected by mental illness.

*Free.*

*For more information and to check the schedule visit*  
*NAMIWoodCounty.org*

"Recovery is possible. It happens for many. I've talked to many people at NAMI events and programs that are living a symptom free life. ...Please seek out a support group. Everything is voluntary to participate and sometimes it is helpful to just come and listen to others.


-NAMI Family Member

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

@NAMIWoodCounty

# Common **WARNING SIGNS** of Mental Illness

Diagnosing mental illness isn't a straightforward science. We can't test for it the same way we can test blood sugar levels for diabetes. Each condition has its own set of unique symptoms, though symptoms often overlap. Common signs and/or symptoms can include:

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- ! **Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks**
  - ! **Trying to harm or end one's life or making plans to do so**
  - ! **Severe, out-of-control, risk-taking behavior that causes harm to self or others**
  - ! **Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort or difficulty breathing**
  - ! **Significant weight loss or gain**
  - ! **Seeing, hearing or believing things that aren't real\***
  - ! **Excessive use of alcohol or drugs**
  - ! **Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits**
  - ! **Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still**
  - ! **Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities**

\*Various communities and backgrounds might view this sign differently based on their beliefs and experiences. Some people within these communities and cultures may not interpret hearing voices as unusual.

## WORRIED ABOUT YOURSELF OR SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT?



If you notice any of these symptoms, it's important to ask questions



Try to understand what they're experiencing and how their daily life is impacted



Making this connection is often the first step to getting treatment

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER



Talk with a health care professional



Learn more about mental illness



Take a mental health education class



Call the NAMI HelpLine at 800-950-NAMI (6264)

**50%**  
of all lifetime  
mental illness  
begins by age  
**14**

**75%**  
by age  
**24**

Data from CDC, NIMH and other select sources. Find citations for this resource at [nami.org/mhstats](http://nami.org/mhstats)

 NAMI HelpLine  
800-950-NAMI (6264)

 NAMI

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 [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

 **nami**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness

# The RIPPLE EFFECT of Mental Illness

Having a mental illness can make it challenging to live everyday life and maintain recovery. Let's look at some of the ways mental illness can impact lives — and how the impact can ripple out.



People with serious mental illness have an increased risk for chronic disease, like diabetes or cancer

## PERSON



Rates of cardiometabolic disease are twice as high in adults with serious mental illness



19% of U.S. adults with mental illness also have a substance use disorder



At least **8.4 million** Americans provide care to an adult with an emotional or mental illness

## FAMILY



Caregivers spend an average of **32 hours** per week providing unpaid care



**20% of people** experiencing homelessness also have a serious mental illness

## COMMUNITY



**37% of people** incarcerated in state and federal prison have a diagnosed mental condition



**70% of youth** in the juvenile justice system have at least one mental health condition



**1 in 8** of all visits to U.S. emergency departments are related to mental and substance use disorders



## WORLD



Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide



Depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy **\$1 trillion** each year in lost productivity

Data from CDC, NIMH and other select sources. Find citations for this resource at [nami.org/mhstats](http://nami.org/mhstats)

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# Want to Know How to Help a Friend?

## STUDENT GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH

### KNOW THE 10 COMMON WARNING SIGNS

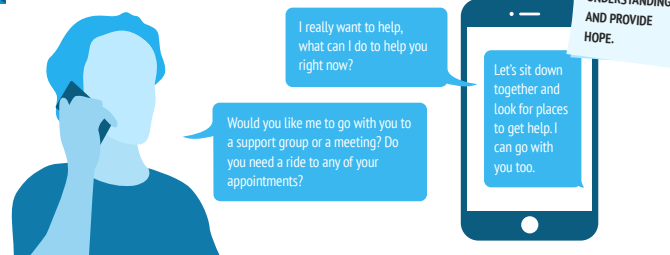
- 1 Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- 2 Seriously trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so
- 3 Severe out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors
- 4 Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason
- 5 Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or weight gain
- 6 Seeing, hearing or believing things that are not real
- 7 Repeatedly using drugs or alcohol
- 8 Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality or sleeping habits
- 9 Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still
- 10 Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities



### START THE CONVERSATION



### OFFER SUPPORT



### BE A FRIEND



Your friend may feel alone; check in regularly and include your friend in your plans



Learn more about mental health conditions



Avoid saying things like "you'll get over it," "toughen up" or "you're fine"



Tell your friend that having a mental health condition does not change the way you feel about them



Tell your friend it gets better; help and support are out there

### GET ADVICE

You may want to reach out to someone to talk to about how you're feeling or to get advice on how to help your friend. Consider talking to a:

FAMILY  
MEMBER



TRUSTED  
FRIEND



SCHOOL  
COUNSELOR  
OR ADVISOR



TEACHER  
OR COACH



FAITH  
LEADER



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