

Dear Reader:

If you are reading this letter you have been handed some life altering information...maybe you have received a diagnosis of a mental illness and finally have a name for all that you have been dealing with. I was you. Maybe you recently left the psychiatric unit at a hospital, whether for the first time or not...I understand, I was there too. We aren't the only ones. One in five Americans have a mental illness. You may be asking yourself how can I move forward now? How am I going to explain this to people in my life? Will I end up back in the hospital? How might this diagnosis or hospitalization impact my life? Will I be able to take care of myself properly? Will I still be me? These may be some of the questions going through your mind and if not that is okay. Everyone experiences things differently. Some people react to these situations with anxiety, anger, relief or hope. Regardless of which situation you are in the know that how you are feeling or responding in this moment is OKAY. You have every right to feel and think how you want to about what is happening in your life. I want to encourage you to seek out how to handle what is happening in your own way. This could be reaching out to friends, family, getting professional help or something else. What is happening to you right now may seem overwhelming or confusing, but know there is hope.

Having a mental illness diagnosis can be a challenge. I myself have a diagnosis and remember feeling confused about what was next for me when I was diagnosed. I also felt liberated to know there is a way to put words to what I was experiencing in a structured way. What helped me was working with a counselor discussing my questions and concerns. I tried different things they recommend for me to manage my diagnosis. One thing that did work for me and still does is journaling each day for three minutes. What also has worked for me is relying on my support system. One part of my support system is my family. Even though they sometimes don't fully understand what I am experiencing they help merely by being there for me. After I got out of the hospital they were a strong support for me by making sure I was safe and assisted me in getting the help I needed. To this day I know if I'm in a mental health pickle I can rely on them. One tool which hasn't worked for me is keeping a "negative" thought journal for a day to see what "negative" thought patterns I have so I can counter them with more positive ones. I encourage you to find different tools that help you manage your diagnosis.

The road to recovery is a process. It takes time to know how your diagnosis impacts you and how to manage it. You don't have to have all the answers right now. I encourage you to be patient with yourself. Today I am still in recovery, but I am able to thrive in my life how I want to in my relationships, career and more. Know there are resources for you to utilize on your journey to recovery. In the Road to Recovery Packet you will find more information on what programs NAMI Wood County offers. There is also information on the different Wood County Agencies which might be useful to you. I hope these resources are beneficial to you.

Take Care,
NAMI Advocate

Benefits of Peer 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!**

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-NAMI Advocate

Programs:

Peer to Peer: a recovery-focused educational program for adults who wish to establish and maintain wellness in response to mental health challenges. The course provides critical information and strategies related to living with mental illness. *Free and offered twice a year: Spring and Fall.*

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP): Your WRAP program is designed by you in a practical, day-to-day terms, and holds the key to getting and staying well. It does not necessarily replace traditional treatments, but can be used as a compliment to any other treatment options you have chosen. *Free two day workshop offered twice a year.*

Nite Out with NAMI: A gathering opportunity for food and fellowship for people that seek mental health services in the Wood County Community. *Free and offered six times a year.*

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

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:

- ! 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

NAMI HelpLine
800-950-NAMI (6264)



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www.nami.org

 **nami**
National Alliance on Mental Illness

It's Okay to Talk About **SUICIDE**

Thoughts of giving up and suicide can be frightening. Not taking these kinds of thoughts seriously can have devastating outcomes.

Suicide is **NOT** the answer.

2nd Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for people ages 10-34



The overall suicide rate has increased 31% since 2001



Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.

46% of people who die by suicide have a diagnosed mental health condition

90% of people who die by suicide have experienced symptoms of a mental health condition

If you start thinking about suicide, seek help. Call or text a crisis line or a trusted friend.



Make an appointment with a health care professional to talk about what you're thinking or how you're feeling.



Suicidal thoughts are a symptom, just like any other — they can be treated, and they can improve over time.



HIGH RISK POPULATIONS


75% of all people who die by suicide are male



4x Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth

Transgender people are 12 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population

12x

 If you are concerned about suicide and don't know what to do, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

Data from CDC, NIMH and other select sources. Find citations for this resource at nami.org/mhstats

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National Alliance on Mental Illness

Taking Charge of Your Mental Health

FIND THE RIGHT SPECIALIST

-  Ask your doctor or nurse to help you find a specialist and make your first appointment
-  There may be a long wait for your first visit, so speak up if you need to see someone right away
-  If the first mental health specialist you see isn't a good fit, keep looking for one who works for you



DON'T FORGET!

- > Surround yourself with family and friends
- > Talk to a counselor, social worker, nurse or trusted adult
- > Continue doing what you love: reading, sports, writing, nature walks, creating art

MAKE YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT COUNT




-  Be ready to talk about your health history and what you're experiencing
-  Be clear about what you want and need to get better

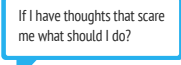
-  You may be asked to fill out a questionnaire describing your mental health experience
-  Ask the mental health specialist to explain treatment options so you understand the plan and what you need to do


NAVIGATING YOUR INSURANCE

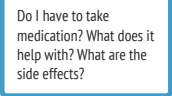
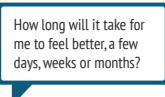
-  Involve someone with experience to help you
-  Call your insurance company to ask what mental health benefits are covered
-  To find a provider, visit your insurer's website or call the number on your insurance card

ASK QUESTIONS



-  If I have thoughts that scare me what should I do?
-  How often should we meet? What can I do between appointments if I need help?



-  Do I have to take medication? What does it help with? What are the side effects?
-  How long will it take for me to feel better, a few days, weeks or months?

STAY INVOLVED



Keep a wellness log and monitor your progress



Ask for changes if your treatment plan is not working for you







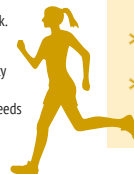
Stick with it; most therapies and medications take time to work



Your treatment plan may change, so be an active partner in this process

LIVE WELL

-  Remember that you have control over living well
-  Find a routine that works for you that includes a healthy diet, exercise and regular sleep patterns
-  Stay close to your support network. Engage family, friends, teammates and your faith community. Think about joining an online community
-  Be realistic and mindful of your needs and know your limits



GETTING THROUGH IT

- > Try staying away from drugs and alcohol. This is not always easy, so find strategies that work. Using drugs or alcohol to feel better is harmful to you.
- > If you use alcohol or drugs, be honest and tell your therapist or doctor because it affects your care plan.
- > Stay positive. Surround yourself with positive messages, people and activities. This will help you to feel better.

Follow Us!

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 **NAMI**
National Alliance on Mental Illness