

Newsletter

Lackawanna, Susquehanna & Wayne Counties' Voice on Mental Illness
Phone: (570)342-1047 • Fax: (570)969-6922 • www.namipascranton.org

Coping with the Holiday Blues

There are a variety of different coping strategies for dealing with the Holiday Blues. The list here was compiled from a variety of different resources. (If these suggestions don't work, then it is time to consider an assessment for depression)

- ◆ Surround yourself with supportive people.
- ◆ If you are feeling lonely, get out and get around people.
- ◆ Consider volunteering for non-profit organizations or visiting a nursing home as a good way to remember the spirit of giving for the holidays.
- ◆ Avoid being in the presence of negative people (even if these are family members!).
- ◆ Reach out and make new friends, especially if you will be alone during the holidays.
- ◆ Connect with someone you have lost touch with.
- ◆ If you are feeling grief or loss, acknowledge them. Recognize and accept that both positive and negative feelings may be experienced during the holidays, and that this is NORMAL.
- ◆ Try to recognize and reframe unrealistic expectations.
- ◆ Set limits--Try to maintain a balanced diet, eat and drink in moderation.
- ◆ Get plenty of rest.
- ◆ Exercise regularly.
- ◆ Get involved with community service.
- ◆ Go outdoors and get active.
- ◆ Pace yourself. Don't take on more activities, make more commitments, or try and do more than you can reasonably handle during the holidays.
- ◆ Plan ahead. Set priorities and budgets before the holidays. Plan a calendar for shopping, baking, visiting and other events.
- ◆ Give priority to gifts that can't be bought--such as time, support and sharing of memories.

As a general rule of thumb, if the symptoms of hopelessness and depression last for more than two weeks, or if they worsen, see your doctor. Anyone having suicidal thoughts should seek immediate care, either through their own doctor or through the nearest hospital emergency department.

Upcoming Events:



Can you help us with the
Annual
NAMI PA Scranton
Thanksgiving Dinner?

- Prepared food and servers are needed for our annual Thanksgiving Dinner which will be held on Sunday, November 22, 2009 at the Scranton Counseling Center, starting at 3:00 p.m.
- We need enough traditional Thanksgiving food to feed approximately 60 people.
- If you would like to donate prepared food, your time or both, call **Marie Onukiavage at the NAMI PA Scranton office at 342-1047.**



Plan to attend the annual
NAMI PA Scranton
Christmas Party

- Friday, December 2, 2009 at the **Taurus Club**, starting at 6:00 p.m.
- Menu will be available from Marie Onukiavage at the Support Meeting.
- *Social mixer* with beverages and hors d'oeuvres starting at 6:00 p.m. with dinner at 7:00 p.m.
- **Cost is \$20.00 per person. Contact Marie Onukiavage at 342-1047 to make a reservation.**

No Kidding, Me Too!

<http://nkm2.org>

Throughout human history, actors have made their living as entertainers - on stage, the big screen, small screen, even the computer screen. During our journeys, we sometimes encounter roles where the characters exhibit mental issues. Just a quick thought to the most memorable moments in movies and on television over the last century will provide you with many depictions of individuals exhibiting mental illness — almost all encountering seemingly insurmountable barriers.

As artists, what we learn as we become more knowledgeable about mental illness — its symptoms, diagnosis and treatment — is these barriers are not insurmountable and by stigmatizing those with mental illness, we are doing a grave injustice to them, ourselves and all of society.

Our goal is to educate the public about the wonderful possibilities that exist when we break down the societal barriers which hold us all back because we treat those afflicted with mental illness differently — we label them and isolate them. What we passionately want to accomplish is to relieve the weight of millions of people who suffer this isolation.

In our roles as communicators, we have found that by infusing humor into a message — by having a "spoonful of sugar help the medicine go down" — that the message not only grows faster but is retained longer. That is our hope. To use the humor in the name *No Kidding, Me Too!* to lighten the message, to cause people to remember the name, so when they are ready for the message, they will get it. To pay some recognition to the statistic that one in five adults in this country suffers from a mental illness. To allow people to have a conversation that includes, "...and I'm bipolar." *"No Kidding, Me Too!"*

There is an oft-quoted statistic that for every person who is diagnosed with mental illness, eleven loved ones are affected. The immediate short-term result is that the mentally ill person becomes isolated from the outside world because they are deemed unable to "handle" it. And isolation breeds isolation which creates the stigma and discrimination we need to eliminate. The brain is an organ — just like the heart, liver and kidneys — and we need to encourage everyone to treat it as such from both a medical and social perspective.

So we will do what we do best — communicate — in the best way we know how — through humor and direct dialogue — the message that we need to remove the stigma and reap the benefits of a fully integrated society. The message of *No Kidding, Me Too!* is empowerment — empowering those with mental illness to admit their illness, seek treatment, become even greater contributing members of society and obliterate this stigma.

We know this is a tough fight. We know years of ingrained socialization causes people to recoil or isolate anyone with the scarlet letter of mental illness. Just saying the magic words "mental illness" can cause a deep-seated defensive reaction in many people. However, we also know that by releasing the talents of those with mental illness — by giving them the opportunity to use their outstanding artistic and intellectual skills — we will vastly improve the world. And this is a cause worth supporting. We are ready for the fight and we ask you to please join us in the revolution and help us educate souls all over the world to "Remove the Stigma!"

Joe Pantoliano
Founder & President

