

Myths vs. Facts

MYTH	FACT
<p><i>Anyone can overcome their mental illness without medication if they just try hard enough.</i></p>	<p><i>Consider how judgmental this statement is, and the shame it causes for people who must take medication to manage their symptoms. This is a decision between a patient and their doctor. Regardless of what we think personally about medication, it's not our place to give opinions, advice or criticism. We must honor the person's personal decisions and stay out of it.</i></p>
<p><i>People need to leave their personal stuff at home and just do their job.</i></p>	<p><i>This is impossible. We all have personal lives that get in the way of work sometimes. It's more productive to address problems and come up with solutions than to pretend all is well until it's a crisis.</i></p>
<p><i>People with mental illness are unreliable.</i></p>	<p><i>Some mental illnesses can impact a person's cognitive abilities, but with treatment most people are able to function very well. As with physical disabilities, we should look for ways to help others with tools and techniques to improve their abilities, rather than write them off.</i></p>
<p><i>Mental illnesses aren't real illnesses.</i></p>	<p><i>Mental illnesses are not the regular ups and downs of life. They don't go away on their own and are actual, physical health problems with effective treatments. When someone breaks their arm, we wouldn't expect them to just "get over it." Nor would we blame them if they needed a cast, sling, or other help in their daily life while they recovered.</i></p>
<p><i>Mental illnesses are just an excuse for poor behavior.</i></p>	<p><i>It's true that some people who experience mental illnesses may act in ways that are unexpected or seem strange to others. We need to remember that the illness, not the person, is behind these behaviors. No one chooses to experience a mental illness. People who experience a change in their behavior due to a mental illness may feel extremely embarrassed or ashamed around others. It's also true that people with a history of a mental illness are like anyone else: they may make poor choices or do something unexpected for reasons unrelated to symptoms of their illness.</i></p>

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<p><i>People use their mental illness to excuse their bad behavior.</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, some people will use any excuse to condone their bad behavior, but applying that to a whole group of people is unfair. It also gives us a ready excuse to dismiss a person and not try to understand what's going on.</i></p>
<p><i>Bad parenting causes mental illnesses.</i></p>	<p><i>No one factor can cause mental illness. Mental illnesses are complicated conditions that arise from a combination of genetics, biology, environment, and life experiences. Family members and loved ones do have a big role in support and recovery.</i></p>
<p><i>People with mental illnesses are violent and dangerous.</i></p>	<p><i>The causes of violence are complicated. Researchers agree that mental illnesses are not a good predictor of violence. In fact, if we look at mental illness on their own, people who experience a mental illness are no more violent than people without a mental illness. Additionally, people with mental illnesses are much more likely to be victims of violence than to be violent.</i></p> <p><i>While mental illnesses are not linked to violence, excluding people from communities are. Consider that people with mental illness are often among those who are excluded.</i></p>
<p><i>People who experience mental illness are weak and can't handle stress.</i></p>	<p><i>Stress impacts well-being, but this is true for everyone. People who experience mental illness may actually be better at managing stress than people who haven't.</i></p> <p><i>Many people with mental illness must learn skills like stress management and coping skills so they can take care of stress before it affects their well-being.</i></p> <p><i>Taking care of yourself and asking for help when you need it are signs of strength, not weakness.</i></p>

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<p><i>People who experience mental illnesses are poor workers.</i></p>	<p><i>1 in 4 people have experienced a mental illness.</i></p> <p><i>Whether you realize it or not, workplaces are filled with people who have experienced mental illnesses. Some have received support at work to support their recovery, but many others continue to work in silence.</i></p> <p><i>Many people who have serious mental illness really want to work but face systemic barriers to finding and keeping meaningful employment. We need to look beyond snap judgements about people and understand the root cause to be able to advocate for better mental health.</i></p>
<p><i>Psychiatric medications are bad.</i></p> <p><i>“happy pills”</i></p> <p><i>“the easy way out”</i></p> <p><i>“way to avoid dealing with problems”</i></p>	<p><i>Like other health conditions, mental illness is a disease that requires treatment. We need to consider why we view psychiatric medications differently. We don’t shame people with diabetes for taking their insulin or people suffering from epilepsy for taking anti-seizure medication.</i></p> <p><i>For some, medication literally means survival by quieting suicidal thoughts. For others, medication helps ease symptoms so they can function. It can be helpful for those in talk therapy by helping reduce psychiatric symptoms so the patient can focus better.</i></p>
<p><i>If I use my company mental health benefits, my boss will find out.</i></p>	<p><i>Programs like health insurance coverage and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are offered by many employers. These programs are provided by mental health professionals who are employed by outside parties. This creates two layers of confidentiality between you, your provider, and your employer.</i></p> <p><i>By law, mental health professionals are <u>not</u> allowed to share your health records with anyone without your consent. Your insurance company, EAP or mental health provider will <u>not</u> release information to your employer.</i></p> <p><i>In short, your boss will not know unless you tell them. Also, know that it is a violation of the federal law American Disabilities Act (ADA) for your boss to discriminate against you due to a disability, which includes any diagnosed mental health condition.</i></p>

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<p><i>People who die by suicide are selfish and take the easy way out.</i></p> <p><i>Or</i></p> <p><i>“people who really want to die will always find a way”</i></p>	<p><i>Often, people do not die by suicide because they do not want to live—people die by suicide because they want to end their suffering. These individuals are suffering so deeply that they feel helpless and hopeless.</i></p> <p><i>Individuals who experience suicidal ideations do not do so by choice. They are not simply, “thinking of themselves,” but rather they are experiencing a very serious mental health symptom due to either mental illness or a difficult life situation.</i></p>
<p><i>Talking about suicide will lead to and encourage suicide.</i></p>	<p><i>Suicidal thoughts are frightening and many people are understandably afraid to talk about it. But talking about it not only reduces the stigma, but also allows individuals to know that they are cared for, rethink their opinions, share their story with others, and ultimately open the door to find the help they need. Having the conversation can help save lives.</i></p> <p><i>Eliminating the stigma starts by understanding why suicide occurs and advocating for mental health awareness within our communities. There are suicide hotlines, support groups, online community resources and many mental health professionals who can help someone who is struggling with unhealthy thoughts and emotions. We want to get them in touch with that help and talking about it is the first step.</i></p>

About National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

NAMI was founded in 1979 and has become the nation's voice on mental health. We are an association of hundreds of local affiliates, state organizations and tens of thousands of volunteers who work together to raise awareness and to provide support and education.

In Florida, our state NAMI office is located in Tallahassee. NAMI Florida and NAMI Jacksonville join together to offer NAMI programs in your area free of charge to all participants. If you would like to learn more about NAMI, go to our website (Jacksonville: www.namijax.org, National: www.nami.org).

NAMI Programs

All NAMI programs are free to the public. More programs are available. For Jacksonville-based programs go to: <https://namijax.org/programs/>. Outside of Jacksonville locate your local NAMI: <https://nami.org/Find-Your-Local-NAMI/Affiliate?state=FL>

NAMI Peer-to-Peer

8-week class led by trained peers to help individuals with mental illness better understand their condition and build a journey toward recovery. Registration required.

- Jacksonville: <https://namijax.org/peer-to-peer-class/>

NAMI Family-to-Family

8-week class led by trained family members who have been there to help families understand their loved one's mental illness, strategies for handling crises, and gain empathy and coping skills. Registration required.

- Jacksonville: <https://namijax.org/family-to-family-class/>

NAMI In Our Own Voice

40/60/90-minute presentations from people with lived experience who talk openly about what it's like to live with a mental health condition. These presentations change attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs. Any organization can request the presentation be held at their organization.

- <https://namijax.org/in-our-own-voice/>

NAMI Basics

6 session online education program for parents, caregivers and other family who provider care for youth (ages 22 and younger) who are experiencing mental health symptoms. Self-paced and available 24/7.

- <https://namijax.org/basics-on-demand/>

NAMI Homefront

6 session educational program for families, caregivers and friends of military service members and veterans with mental health conditions. Taught by trained family members of service members/veterans.

- <https://namijax.org/homefront-on-demand/>

NAMI Ending the Silence

50-minute presentation designed for middle and high school students that include warning signs, facts, and statistics, and how to get help for themselves or a friend. Conducted upon request.

- <https://namijax.org/ending-the-silence/>