

Musings on Recovery

By Wendy McNeill
Media Coordinator

Lately, I've been priding myself on recovery, stroke-stroke, pat-pat, stroke-stroke. In fact, I celebrated my two year anniversary out of the hospital about a month ago.

But now, as they say, the demons have come back to roost. Or as my psychiatrist would say, "you have the aroma of mania." Which means, in laymen's terms, "You're not completely gone yet, but you're getting there."

I'm glad I have a certain degree of lucidity still at my disposal to be able to reflect on the nature of my illness and what recovery really means.

I do believe that my bipolar disorder is directly related to a genetic predisposition. The illness runs in my family in clearly definable branches, and therefore, it is no mystery to me why I have suffered at the hands of the illness for so many years.

That for me, strangely enough, is the easy part, knowing that in some way I was biologically destined to be different than 99% of the people out there. What was much more difficult was coming to terms with the fact that I had the option of playing my cards well, or poorly.

For a long time, it didn't seem to matter what I did. I was very fatalistic, and I just assumed that I was going to crash and burn no matter what, so why bother?

However, after landing myself in the "Roach Motel," i.e. a board and care in El Cajon, I got motivated to do some serious soul searching for the first time, and I decided I was going to lock my illness down.

Cont. on right...

Reminder: No Meeting Month of August!

Education and Advocacy Meetings offer a great opportunity every month to meet new people, get support from others who know what you are going through, and benefit from the education provided by some of the top mental health experts in San Diego. In order to make the best possible use of the meetings, we have decided to make a few changes to our schedule.

Take Note: New Schedule for the Education & Advocacy Meetings!

- ▷ 6:30 p.m.: "Ask the Doctor" Session
- ▷ 6:55 p.m.: Announcements
- ▷ 7:00 p.m.: Speaker Presentation
- ▷ 8:00 p.m.: Refreshments, Mingling, and Sharing
- ▷ 9:00 p.m.: Closing

Recovery, cont from left...

I became proactive. I started taking medication like clockwork. I ate at regular intervals. I started to chill out more. I started to work on my sharp tongue. I joined a support group.

When I got out of the board and care, I found NAMI and started doing volunteer work. I became the editor of this very newsletter, joined the Board, took Peer-to-Peer (hugely educational for me), started giving "In Our Own Voice" presentations to the SDPD, and lately, became the Media Coordinator.

I seem pretty recovered. What I have come to learn lately, however, is that no matter how well you think you are, you are still at the mercy of the illness. You can never deceive yourself into believing that you're "done." I am working so hard right now to not "fight" the illness, but cooperate with it. Or, to put it another way, "make friends with it."

I truly believe at this point that I have a chronic disorder which will always exert its influence, and it is my job to be alert, conscientious, and determined to keep things flowing smoothly.

Even if it means that I don't get this newsletter done.

Sally's Update

By Sally Shepherd
NAMI San Diego Board President

Governor Schwarzenegger Appoints Twelve to the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

Governor Schwarzenegger has appointed a new Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission.

"Today, we are here to announce a significant first step in the transformation of the way that mental health care is conceptualized and delivered in California," said California Health & Human Services Agency Secretary Belshé. "The 16 members of this Commission truly represent a cross-section of California. These individuals were chosen because of their experiences and the unique perspectives they bring to the Commission. With a diverse Commission, we hope to ensure that the delivery of mental health services in the state will not be 'business as usual.'" Commission members include current and past NAMI California Board Members, Karen Henry and Darlene Prettyman. Two other members of the Commission are from San Diego – County Sheriff Bill Kolender and Andrew Poat, Director of Government Relations for the City of San Diego. Henry, 61, of Granite Bay, retired in 2001 after 25 years of experience in the field of labor and employment law. She was most recently in private practice as a sole-practitioner and was previously a partner in the law firms Weissberg & Aronson and Littler, Mendelson, Fastiff & Tichey.

Henry was also a labor relations coordinator with Affiliated Hospitals of San Francisco and the director of research programs for the California Nurses Association. She is a member of the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) and is a member of the board of directors for NAMI, California. Henry is a Republican.

Kolender, 70, of San Diego, has been San Diego County Sheriff since 1995

and is currently serving his third term. He was previously director of the Department of Youth Authority and chief of the San Diego Police Department. Kolender is a member of the Board of Corrections, president of the California State Sheriffs Association, is the California representative on the board of the Western States Information Network and is a former president of the Community College Board of Governors. Kolender is a Republican.

**"We need a
few good men and women who
CAN
put in a few hours at home to help
with the Membership Drive."**

Mental Health Services Act Update

Meetings of
the Child, Adult
and Older Adult

workgroups continue here in San Diego. Participants are currently studying the feedback received from clients, families, providers and the public at large about community mental health needs. Recurring items have been prioritized. Reaching the unserved and underserved populations with new and better programs are key goals in the effort to improve mental health care throughout the county.

Many of us were dismayed last month to find that we were being dismissed from the workgroups. Members of organizations who have or will potentially have any kind of fiscal relationship with the County are considered to have a potential conflict of interest. According to legal counsel for the County, this makes them ineligible to actively participate in the proceedings. In NAMI San Diego's case, our operation of the Payee program is the problem. In spite of repeated requests to reconsider the issue, the County is standing firm. All other counties in California have remained true to the spirit of the Act which encourages the participation of the community at large, including advocacy organizations. I am truly heartbroken to no longer be a part of the official process, especially since I myself am a client and family member. I feel that as advocates, we have a great deal of passion and experience to contribute, and it is sad that a bureaucratic decision is attempting to keep us from doing so. Many of us put in hundreds of hours and

miles to contribute to the implementation of the Act we worked so hard on to get passed. However, we will find other ways to make our voices heard. We will keep you posted on the latest developments.

Membership Drive

We are putting the final touches on our membership campaign!

First, NAMI San Diego has finally moved into the 21st Century – we accept credit card payments on-line! Check out the new on-line membership application at www.namisandiego.org

In addition to membership options, we have finalized our Supporting Donor levels.

Annual sustaining donors
(includes membership):

- Bronze Donor – up to \$99.00
- Silver donor - \$100 - \$249.00
- Gold donor - \$500 - \$999.00
- Platinum donor - \$1000.00
- Patron - \$10,000 +

We hope that all of our members will follow the motto "each one teach one." We can help with sample letters if you need to reach someone you don't see very often – contact the office or e-mail me at sbshepherd@cox.net. As part of our professional membership drive, we have asked local professionals in the mental health field to lend their support by sending out letters to their colleagues.

Keep a supply of NAMI brochures in your pocket or purse – use every opportunity to get the word out. Members who recruit 4 or more new members will be recognized at our Annual Autumn Dinner on November 3, 2005.

Volunteers needed: We need a few good men and women who can put in a few hours at home to help with the Membership Drive. Let anyone at the office know if you can help – otherwise I will start making phone calls!

The Advocate

NAMI San Diego, a non-profit organization, provides education, support services, and advocacy to improve the quality of life of everyone affected by mental illnesses.

NAMI San Diego is an affiliate of NAMI and NAMI California

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exudir@namisandiego.org

The NAMI San Diego Advocate is a monthly publication of

NAMI San Diego
4480 30th Street
San Diego, CA 92116
Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 710761
San Diego, CA 92171-0761

Phone: (619) 543-1434 (Albright Center)
(619) 584-5564 (administration)
800 523-5933 (peer support)
Fax: (619) 584-5569

E-mail: namisd@sbcglobal.net
Web Site: www.namisandiego.org

The NAMI San Diego Advocate:

Editor: Wendy McNeill
Staff: Patrick Cremeens
James Starek

E-mail: wendymcneill@sbcglobal.net
Fax: (619) 584-5569

Articles received by the 15th will be considered for publication in the following month's newsletter.

The opinions expressed in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of NAMI San Diego.

To register your opinion, call Bettie Reinhardt at 619 584-5564 or write to P.O. Box 710761, San Diego, 92171 or fax to (619)584-5569 or email at exudir@namisandiego.org or contact any of the people mentioned in the articles.

Cruise Blues

NAMI's Sally & Wendy Weigh In On Tom Cruise

Commentary

Tom Cruise's Irresponsible Remarks

By Sally Shepherd
NAMI San Diego Board President

The following article was printed in the Opinion section of the San Diego Union Tribune on July 6, 2005.

Navarrette suggests in his column that Tom Cruise raised a serious issue regarding psychiatry and treatment of depression with medication. The following serious response has been compiled by the National Mental Health Association, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and the American Psychiatric Association.

"While we respect the right of individuals to express their own points of view, they are not entitled to their own facts. Mental illnesses are real medical conditions that affect millions of Americans.

FACT: Over the past five years, the nation has more than doubled its investment in the study of the human brain and behavior, leading to a vastly expanded understanding of postpartum depression, bipolar disorder and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Much of this research has been conducted by the National Institutes of Health and the nation's leading academic institutions.

FACT: Safe and effective treatments are available and may include talk therapy, medication or a combination of the two. Rigorous, published, peer-reviewed research clearly demonstrates that treatment works.

FACT: Medications can be an important and even life-saving part of a comprehensive and individualized treatment plan. As in other areas of medicine, medications are a safe and effective way to improve the quality of life for millions of Americans

who have mental health concerns.

FACT: Mental health is a critical ingredient of overall health. It is unfortunate that in the face of this remarkable scientific and clinical progress a small number of individuals and groups persist in questioning its legitimacy.

FACT: Mental illnesses are highly

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treatable and seeking help is a sign of strength. "

I myself suffer from chronic depression and use every possible tactic for dealing with it. However, I doubt very much if I would still be alive if it were not for the help of my psychiatrist and medications.

Sigh. I Loved Jerry McGuire...

By Wendy McNeill
Media Coordinator

I've come to the sad determination that Tom Cruise is only worth listening to when someone else is writing his lines. Tom's recent departure into the realm of medical commentary could not possibly make me any more miffed.

No, no, no, I'm not talking about putting a muzzle on the guy. He can keep his first amendment rights. But this is good reason to put mine in practice, too.

Now, I am not such a purist that I will promise you that I will never watch *Jerry McGuire* or *Top Gun* again, but I will say this: I've lost that lovin' feelin'. Boo hoo!

The Advocate

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1st Thursday!!!

*Reminder:
No Meeting in
August*

Return Service Requested

Save the Date!

NAMI San Diego cordially invites you
To Join the Community
In a Celebration of Recovery...

*The Annual Autumn Dinner
Thursday, November 3, 2005*

*Tom Kam's Lighthouse
2150 Harbor Island Drive
(619) 291-9110*

*Festive Attire
Arrive 6:00 p.m. ¥ No host bar*