

Mental Health Conditions

Signs, symptoms and crisis planning

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What are mental health disorders?

- When the brain is not functioning properly, the primary systems involved include
 - Thinking difficulties or problems focusing attention
 - Extreme emotional highs and lows
 - Sleeping problems
- When these symptoms significantly disrupt a person's life and daily functioning, we say that the person has a mental health disorder, mental health condition, or mental illness.

Warning Signs in Adults

- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality ("lack of insight" or anosognosia)
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches)
- Thinking/talking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance
- Changes in eating habits (increase or lack)
- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in sex drive

Warning Signs in Children

Most obvious symptoms are behavioral, because developmentally still working to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions.

- Changes in school performance
- Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent nightmares
- Frequent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums

*What causes
Mental Health Disorders/Conditions?*



It's Complicated!

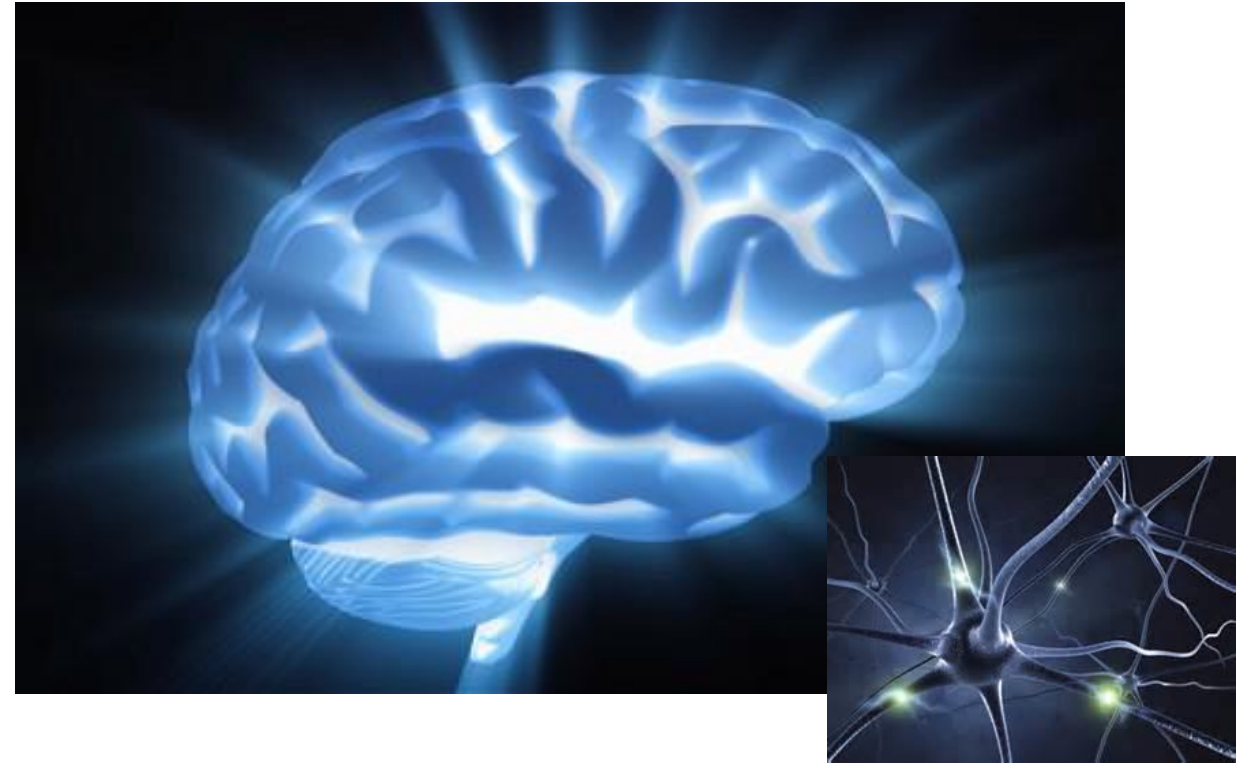
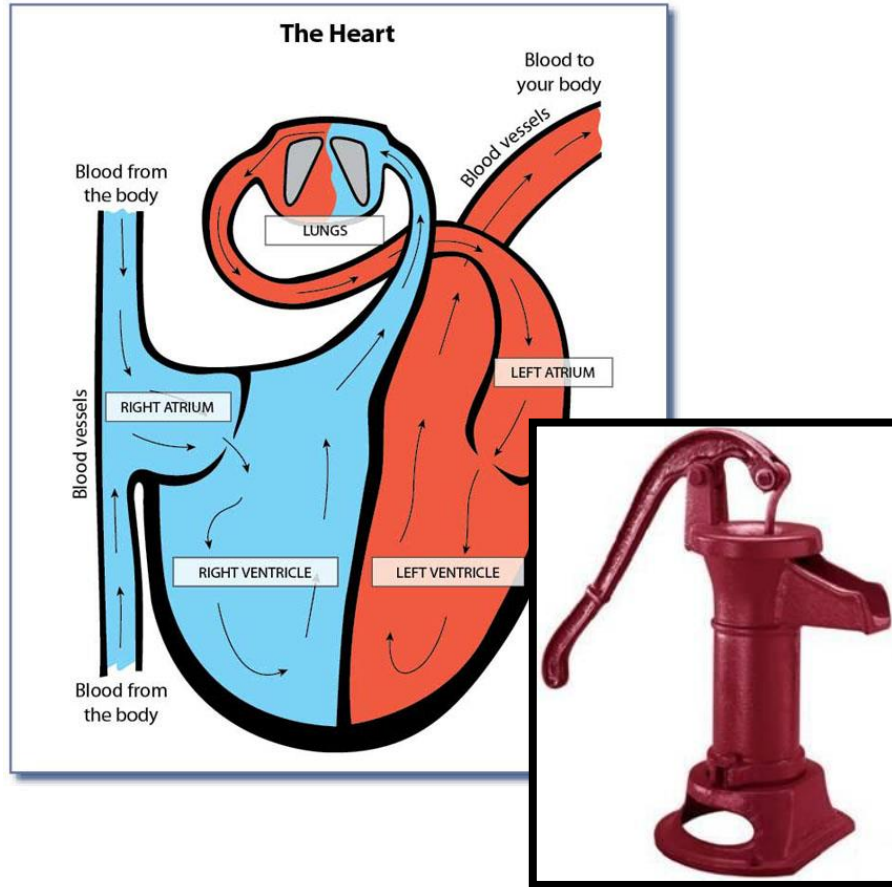


Genetics + Environment + Biochemistry

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'The brain is an organ of surreal complexity'

– Dr Insel, past Director of the National Institute on Mental Health



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Treatment: Individualized Balancing Act

May include an array of elements including:

- Traditional treatment – psychotherapy therapies
- Medication
- Non-traditional therapies – meditation
- Routine and structure
- Health lifestyle – exercise, sleep, nutritional foods
- Informal sources of support – family, friends, support groups
- Hope



Major Dimensions that Support a Life in Recovery:

- **Health** - overcoming or managing one's disease(s) or symptoms.
- **Home** - stable and safe place to live.
- **Purpose** - meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteerism, family caretaking, or creative endeavors, and the independence, income and resources to participate in society.
- **Community** - relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

How do we define a mental health crisis?

- Legal standards:
 - imminent danger of hurting self
 - imminent danger of hurting others
- Other situations may qualify as a mental health crisis based on the individual's (or their loved one's) understanding of how symptoms manifest and in general, it is not advisable to wait until you meet legal standard to take action to remedy
- Solutions – hospitalization, stabilization centers, wellness contract

Better to plan and not need, than to be unprepared

- Crisis situations are stressful and require quick action, by having a plan already in place helps to...
 - Ensure everyone in the support team understands what needs to happen
 - Minimize stress and trauma on the individual and family
 - Minimize the impact or duration of the crisis, may address stressors before full crisis hits

Relapse Prevention/Crisis Management

What do Crisis Services Look like in Virginia?

- Each Community Service Board (CSB) is required by law to provide emergency mental health services for adults and children – clinical evaluations
- Regional crisis response services are available for children - mobile crisis, crisis stabilization, and child psychiatry
- Marcus Alert and 988 – new legislation to ensure there are additional sources of support and service for behavioral health emergencies (adults and children)
- Police Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) – specialized training for officers around mental health crisis
- Emergency rooms, private hospitals, etc. also play a big role in our crisis service system

General Warning Signs of a Mental Health Crisis

- Trouble with daily tasks
- Sudden extreme changes in mood
- Increased agitation
- Abusive behavior
- Isolation
- Paranoia
- Symptoms of psychosis

Keys to your Plan: Learn from the Past

- What are signs a crisis is coming for you?
 - What are the signs for you/your loved one?
 - The stressors that usually trigger you/your loved on?
- What has helped in the past with crisis?
- What wasn't helpful in the past?
- What resources out there might be good tools to help de-escalate the crisis
 - Warmlines/text lines, support groups, etc.



Keys to your Plan: What Needs to Happen?

- If it get's to an emergency point, what then?
 - What hospital will you use for an emergency visit?
 - What transportation will you use?
 - Who can you call to help?
 - What needs to come with the person?
- **It is important to include the individual in making this plan and get the buy in of everyone involved in the plan's execution**



Keys to your Plan: Do the Research



- Contact your health insurer to confirm a particular hospital, crisis stabilization center or provider is in-network
- Contact the additional crisis services available in your community to learn the process. If unsure where to start try your/your loved one's mental health provider, or the CSB.
- Visit the various options ahead of time to familiarize yourself with basics like where to park, where admitting is, what route to use, etc.
- Contact your local police department ahead of time, just to introduce yourself and provide more information on the situation, so that they have it for when there is an emergency. Inquiry about CIT officers.

Keys to your Plan: Organize/Communicate

- Include important names, numbers and details needed during a crisis so you can access easily when the time come
 - Crisis, police, provider, family members
 - Packing list, transportation plan
 - Medications, medical records and insurance info
 - Information police or hospital may need
- Organize plan into steps that need to happen
- It will be important to review and share the final plan with those involved in the plan
 - Loved one, family members, provider, friends



During a Crisis

- Always, try to address before it gets to crisis, however, when crisis can't be avoided, stay calm, activate plan
- Be mindful of your loved ones location and others in the house
- Assess if your transportation plan will work, if not contact the police and request a CIT officer
- Keep good records of who is contacted/what happened
- Be prepared that you may have to wait for a bed if your loved one needs hospitalization
 - If your loved one is not willing to go to the hospital, a Temporary Detaining Order (TDO) may need to be solicited

After the Crisis

- Discuss with your loved one and their support team what, if any steps can be taken to help prevent future incidents or if there tips or techniques that you can do to help de-escalate before a crisis and update the plan
 - What worked? What didn't? What needs to be updated?
- Notify your loved one's mental health providers (psychiatrist, therapist, care coordinator, etc.) of the crisis and if any changes have been made
- Remember to attend to your own stress management.

Final Thoughts on Crisis Planning

- Keep in mind that every individual's situation is different, there is no one perfect plan everyone should follow, treat this like a living document
- Involve you love one in the plan as much as possible. When they are doing well is the perfect time to evaluate what tends to precipitate or lead to crisis, what can help, and what wishes they would like honored during a crisis if they can't speak for themselves.

Challenging Journeys are Hardest Alone



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Why does NAMI exist?

To improve the lives impacted by mental health conditions –

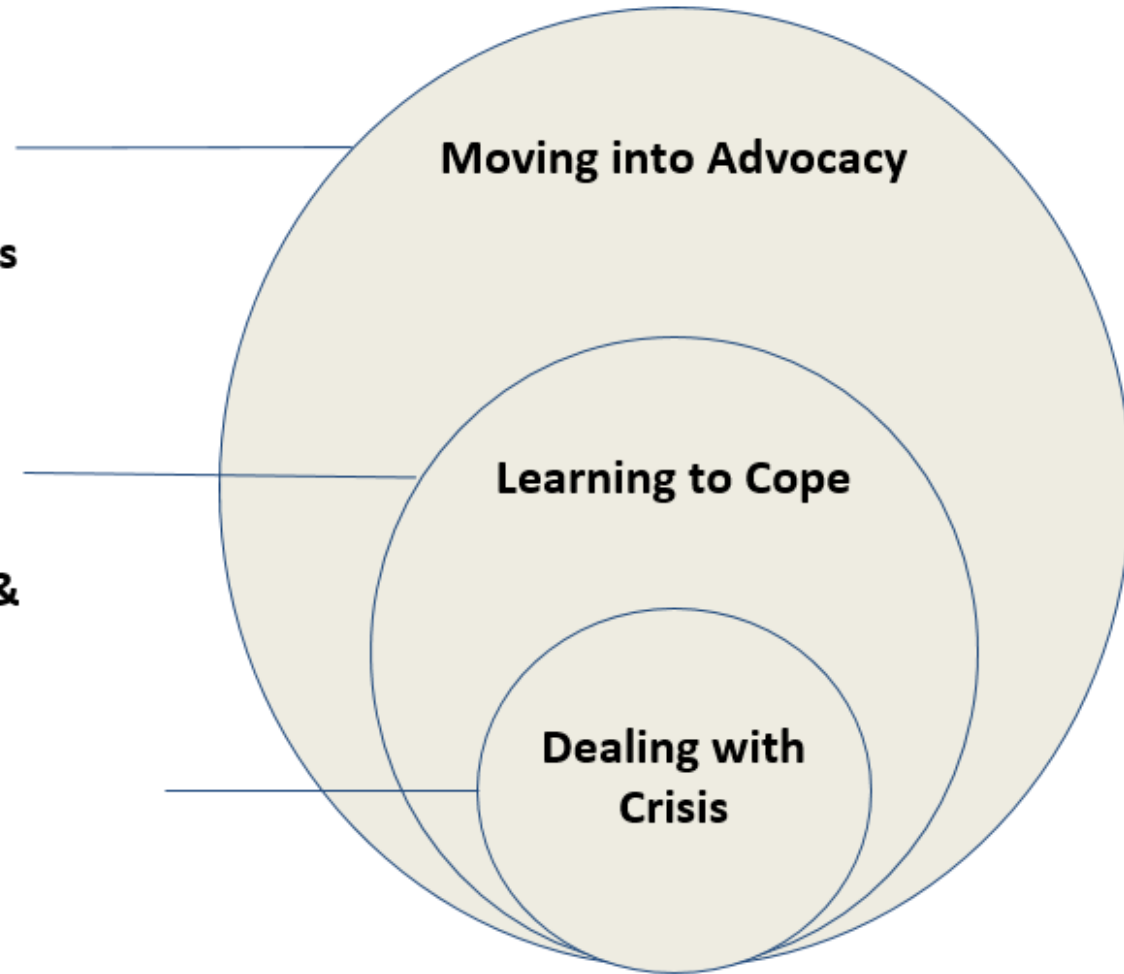
Everyone deserves the opportunity for recovery
(youth, adults and their families/loved ones)

Empowerment Continuum

Connected/Resilient/Informed
Restore balance, system timely
responsive to needs, opportunities
to find meaning, HOPE!

Confusion/grief/overwhelmed
Need self-care, support network
for venting, broader information &
skills, HOPE!

Isolated/scared/helpless
Need support & comfort, targeted
guidance & information, HOPE!



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NAMI Programs in Virginia

For Adults Living With A Mental Illness:

- NAMI Peer to Peer – Free, virtual, 6-week peer-led educational course for individuals living with a mental health and co-occurring diagnosis who wish to improve on their knowledge, tools and skills towards living well.
- NAMI Connections - 90 minute free, virtual, confidential and anonymous peer-led support group for individuals living with a mental health and co-occurring diagnosis.



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NAMI Programs in Virginia

For Families of Adults:

- NAMI Family to Family – Free, virtual 8-week peer-led, educational course for family members of adult individuals living with a mental health diagnosis who wish to learn how to better support and advocate for their loved one.
- NAMI Family Support Groups - 90 minute, free, virtual, peer-led confidential and anonymous support group for family and friends of individuals living with a mental health diagnosis.
- NAMI Family & Friends - a free, virtual, peer-led 4 hour abridged education program for families, caregivers and friends of individuals living with a mental health condition.



NAMI Programs in Virginia

For Families of Youth and Children:

- NAMI Basics - Free 3- or 6-week, virtual, peer-led, educational course focusing on more advanced content and tools for parents and primary caregivers of children and youth experiencing mental health conditions.
- Children's Challenging Behaviors – Free, virtual, introductory, peer-led 6-hour workshop for parents of children and youth with mental health needs.
- NAMI Family Support Group for Caregivers – Free, virtual 90 min, confidential and anonymous, peer-led support group for parents and caregivers of youth living with a mental health diagnosis.



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NAMI Programs in Virginia

For Youth and Young Adults:

- NAMI On Campus – Free, student-run groups geared at promoting support, education and awareness around mental health on university campuses.
- Youth Groups – Activity-based groups for high school youth geared at providing community and resiliency skills. Led by trained young adults with lived experience and an adult ally.
- Meet Ups – Free, virtual, peer-led discussion groups youth and young adults to connect with others in maintaining the health and wellness.



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NAMI Programs in Virginia

For the Community:

- **NAMI In Our Own Voice** - Free 40 or 60 minute virtual presentation for any audience where two individuals share their personal journey living with mental illness from the dark days to their current level of recovery and dreams for tomorrow.
- **NAMI Ending the Silence for Parents and School Professionals** – Free 45 min presentations about youth mental health designed for either middle and high school students, staff/personnel or parents/caregivers.



Get Involved! Stay Informed!

April is Stress Awareness Month Activities

- #Act4YourMentalHealth Campaign
- Join a NAMI program or event
- Visit the Minds Matter Exhibit at the Science Museum

May is Mental Health Awareness Month Activities

- Go green for mental health
- Join a NAMI special event

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Stay connected

- Helpline - 1-888-486-8264
- Website - www.namivirginia.org
- Join our e-newsletter - www.namivirginia.org/newsletter
- Follow us on Social Media –
 FaceBook @NAMIVirginia1
 Instagram @namivirginia

Sarah received her Master's in Social Work-Administration, Planning, and Policy Practice from Virginia Commonwealth University. She has a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from VCU's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, a Certificate in Volunteer Administration from the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration and completed the Emerging Nonprofit Leadership Program through VCU and the Partnership for Nonprofit Excellence. Prior to joining NAMI, Sarah has experience in suicide prevention and crisis intervention work, community organizing, and older adult mental health.

Sarah has worked for NAMI Virginia since 2009 in a variety of roles. Sarah currently serves as the Assistant Director where she provides strategic direction for NAMI Virginia's programs and presence in the state through coalitions, workgroups, partners and 14 statewide local NAMI chapters.



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