A Message from the Board President During COVID-19

I want to remind you that during difficult times it is natural to seek support from one another. We come together to talk, clear our minds, laugh, cry, drink coffee, or just be present. Again, this is a natural response for us. With recent events affecting our nation, this has added a barrier for many of us to meet our natural human need to connect.

NAMI SD strives to connect individuals to resources, education, and other people who live with or are impacted by mental health conditions. In these trying, uncertain times, this has not changed. NAMI SD is committed to be that support for our communities, affiliates, partners, members, and friends.

We are the helpers. NAMI is here.

We are here to help meet your need to connect in new and creative ways. We recognize that this uncertain time is a challenge, but it is temporary. NAMI’s commitment to you is not. We will get through this, together.

Please join us to connect with others in a deep and meaningful way through phone calls, letters, online resources, or social media. Reach out and remember that you are not alone. NAMI is here, now.

#NAMINOW

Respectfully, Christie Lueth, CSW-PIP, QMHP

NAMI SD Board Chair

Please check this link to NAMI for important COVID-19 resources:
https://www.nami.org/Press-Media/Press-Releases/2020/COVID-19-and-Mental-Illness-NAMI-Releases-Important-Information?fbclid=IwAR0WCzujiGg4KWySC94QljXvLCudEI1AzoF4TLCREzZmHhTmJmGNQDNcws
Dear Friends of NAMI,

This newsletter is different from all others. Today, we as world citizens are facing a health crisis that has never happened in our lifetimes. The COVID-19 pandemic is unfolding every day, and we have all been forced to make changes in our daily lives. We live with the uncertainty of tomorrow. And some of us have already been personally and profoundly affected. We would also like to acknowledge that while the virus itself does not discriminate, we know that marginalized and minoritized communities experience crises like this far differently than communities that are affluent and have access to resources.

I want to start by saying that we are with you, in whatever ways we can be, for as long as you need us. NAMI has never been more relevant or important. While we don’t know what the future will bring, we are dedicated to our mission, and we will find new and creative ways to support you and all the citizens of South Dakota and the Native Nations in the region. You have our word on that.

Several of our NAMI South Dakota staff members and our board president have contributed important things to this newsletter. This is intentional. We want you to hear from us as people, speaking to you from our hearts. We want you to know that, now more than ever before, “You are not alone.”

Whoever you are, wherever you live, we are thinking of you. We see you. We are here for you. Please let us know how we can help.

-- Wendy Giebink, Executive Director of NAMI South Dakota

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NAMI SD Hires Rapid City Project AWARE Coordinator

Born to Iranian parents in Arlington, Golnesa AsheghAli spent the majority of her life in Northern Virginia. A dedicated practitioner of Shotokan karate for the past 25 years, Golnesa followed her beloved master, Sensei Ahmad Ali Mazhari, and moved to occupied Oceti Sakowin Territory in 2014. Golnesa received a Bachelor of Arts in History from George Mason University (GMU) in 2007 and received a BA in Religious Studies in 2008. In 2015, she received her Master of Arts (GMU) in the field of Islamic Studies. Golnesa completed her second Masters degree in the field of secondary education from Black Hills State University in 2016, and after two wonderfully successful years in the classroom, made the very difficult decision to leave to push for equitable learning and growth opportunities for young people outside of the colonial schooling system. Golnesa is firmly committed to youth and community work that focuses on collective care and establishing justice and equity for all. An important part of this work is awareness and access to mental health care. Golnesa is committed to doing her part in de-stigmatizing mental health realities and encouraging open conversation about our individual and collective needs. She is thrilled to be a part of the NAMI South Dakota team and eager to build community and relationships around the topic of mental health in Rapid City. In addition to her work for NAMI SD, Golnesa works for Racing Magpie as their lead facilitator and curriculum developer for the Creative Community Leadership Institute. As with all of her passions and commitments, Golnesa actively explores places where there is overlap and opportunity for learning and collaboration.

Taking Care of Your Mental Health
(Revised from recommendations from the American Society for Suicide Prevention)

It’s important to note that we are not helpless in light of current news events. We can always choose our response. If you are struggling, here are some things you can do to take care of your mental health in the face of uncertainty:

- **Separate what is in your control from what is not.** There are things you can do, and it’s helpful to focus on those. Wash your hands. Remind others to wash theirs. Take your vitamins. Limit your consumption of news.
- **Do what helps YOU feel a sense of safety.** This will be different for everyone. Try not to compare yourself to others. Follow official guidelines and know that they are there for a reason.
- **Get outside in nature, even if it’s just in your backyard.** Standing outside on your deck, or even by an open window, will help you feel connected to the world and give you a breath of fresh air. If you can safely walk in your community, remember to keep distance between yourself and others.
- **Challenge yourself to remain in the present.** When you find yourself worrying about something that hasn’t happened, gently bring yourself back to the present moment. Engaging in mindfulness activities is one way to help stay grounded when things feel beyond your control.
- **Stay connected and reach out if you need more support.** Talk to trusted friends about what you are feeling. If you are particularly anxious or if you are struggling with your mental health, it’s ok to reach out to a mental health professional for support. You don’t have to be alone with your worry and it can be comforting to share what you are experiencing with those trained to help.

We are in this together, and help is always available. If you’re feeling alone and struggling, you can also reach out to The Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741 or National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK.

In South Dakota, call the Helpline Center at 211, and you can be connected to a mental health professional at Avera for immediate support.

Check [https://dss.sd.gov/keyresources/recentnews.aspx](https://dss.sd.gov/keyresources/recentnews.aspx) for help near you.
Thoughts from a Quarantined Mom     By Alicia Andal

I find myself thinking a lot about what was. My day to day life before... before I was nervous to go out, before turning on the TV became a thing that added to my anxiety, before, before, before. I’m sure that most of you can relate to what I am feeling.

My name is Alicia and I work at NAMI SD. Going from working outside the home and having my son in daycare as well as therapies each week for his special needs to being home 24/7 with just the two of us has been more than an adjustment. It has brought the pain of isolation with it. My son thrived on his schedule as well as the resources he was getting. Not having that has made life feel unmanageable at times.

However, as days continue to pass and become weeks I find a new sense of normalcy, a new way of how life must be for the moment. We may not necessarily want or like it but cope with it we must. Here are a few of the things that I am learning daily working from home and being home with my son full time now.

Remember that isolation does not mean the need to lose connection. Social distancing is not the same as emotional distancing! In the world today, there are so many ways we can do this. For instance, I am reaching out to all of you now. Writing letters, cards or pictures for little ones is a great one to show love. Facetiming/Zoom/Skype/etc with a loved one or friends is a beautiful way to keep in touch during this time of physical distance. A phone call to check in on someone can change your day as much as theirs. Check out virtual classes, book readings, museum tours, zoos, etc. Many of these are free during this time of quarantine. Kids and adults will find hours of entertainment as well as learn many new things.

Focus on what you can control: What I do, What I say, My Social Media Use, What I Watch, What I Read and Listen to, How I Care for Myself. How we feel is reflected and imitated by our children. We may not be positive a lot of the time, and that is ok, but taking care of what we surround ourselves with is important. This is a hard one--knowing when to accept good enough. A lot of us want things to be done right, perfect even. That may not be the way it is during this time. Accept that being together is enough. Are everyone’s emotional needs being met and regulated? That is an accomplishment to celebrate. I am finding that for us, I need to let go of the toys being out and a mess. My son is helping me in tasks and it’s OK that it’s not being done perfectly. I need to remember we are healthy and safe.

We have found that going for a mindfulness walk (weather cooperating), spending time together with no agenda set and listening to one another has made a big difference in our attitude. My son may be young and although he may not be exhibiting happiness or sadness at the moment, he is lost. He misses his friends and routine as much as I do. Remember to validate one another.

Finally, I encourage you to find time for yourself. Journal, meditate, workout, read, try something new, talk.....do what works for you! This time will end, and we will find ourselves out and about again. May this time prove to be one where you found strength within yourself you didn’t know you had. Thinking of each and everyone one of you.

NAMI SD Plans New Programs

This spring, NAMI SD will be launching online programs, groups and activities that will be accessible to all South Dakotans for remote participation. Look for exciting new opportunities on Facebook, YouTube, and Zoom. If you have an idea for a way we can support mental health via distance learning, please email us at namisd@midconetwork.com.
NAMIWalks 2020 Updates  By John Williams

We have been working with our NAMI National Walk Team on how best to celebrate NAMIWalks in these uncertain times. They have come up with a fabulous idea:

NAMIWalks Your Way South Dakota: A Virtual Event!

What is a virtual walk?
A virtual walk is an online experience, on a specific day, when walk participants use social and digital platforms to raise awareness and funds by sharing stories and doing an activity of their choice.

What is the specific day?
Join NAMIWalks Your Way South Dakota on Saturday, May 30, 2020, along with other NAMI affiliates across the country as we live stream and share mission content and resources throughout the day while helping to create the sense of community we all need now more than ever.

What is NAMIWalks Your Way South Dakota?
NAMIWalks Your Way South Dakota means what it sounds like: with so many of our lives compromised and constrained, you get to make NAMIWalks your own. You can walk around your block, you can walk around your garden, you can walk with a wok in your kitchen. If you work from home, now you can walk at home. You can stand on your head. You can form a team and see who is the funniest, fastest or most artistic. You can “Hula hoop for hope.” You can self-fundraise while you self-quarantine — or do it as part of a team. Whatever way you do it, it is NAMIWalks Your Way!

The need to fund our vital programs and services remains as urgent as ever. During times of crisis -- such as what we’re all going through right now -- even more people rely on NAMI South Dakota for support and assistance.

Stay tuned as we will be sharing more information on how you can take part in our virtual event in the upcoming weeks. Together we will continue to work toward our goal of Mental Health for All!

Everyone can register for the Walk at www.namiwalks.org/southdakota.

NAMI SD Program and Wellness Event Survey 2020

Our staff at NAMI South Dakota understands that many of our members are wondering when we will be able to meet face-to-face and continue our support groups, educational programs and wellness events. These are trying times and we want to assure you that we are exploring how we can best serve our NAMI Affiliate leaders, volunteers, families and individuals. We would like to invite your input by asking you to complete this short survey that will assist us in continuation of our current programs and wellness events. You may complete the survey online at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5MKYJW2.
Yes, It is Grief  By Jim Kellar

My feelings about Covid-19, and how/why to isolate are really complicated. Feelings change, and we face an ever-evolving challenge that’s a long way from resolved. We’re all alone, isolated with our family and all of our feelings. Grief lurks behind the scenery. Feelings of sadness and fear jump into my head at will, and they become part of all I do.

We’re all grieving losses we can’t fully comprehend. Before it’s over, this will engulf every aspect of life. Many fear that nothing will ever be the same. Stress, fear of the future and grief will be our companions for a while.

Kids are obviously hurting! School, the central core of many of their lives, is gone for them. They fear change is so drastic that many things won’t return. They mourn the loss of school; the expected life has been taken.

There’s no right or wrong way to grieve. Grief is expressed in ways that are unique to each of us. How we grieve depends on our personality, coping skills, life experiences, faith, and the personal significance we find with the loss. There are healthy ways to cope. When we can accept life’s reality and come to terms with what is happening, we can find meaning in today’s situation and seek ways to move on with life.

Healing happens gradually, in its own time, with no “normal” timetable. Some of us will feel better in a few weeks. For others, it will be measured in years. Being kind to others and patient with ourselves will be the best strategy. We can be healers of ourselves.

In the sidebar are some ideas to think about as you manage your feelings of grief, and as you allow others to manage theirs.

At NAMI, we’re dedicated to a helpful mission. We’ll understand this phenomenon by talking and listening to very knowledgeable people who have much to offer on these challenges, and we’ll share what we learn with you. We know the importance of exploring and learning to deal with our feelings of loss and the alienation many of us feel during times like these. We will use this forum to bring resources with helpful information into our conversation.

We welcome any and all questions, and we love to hear your inspiring stories of how you are dealing with stress and grief. We will continue to bring you helpful information and resources. Contact us at www.namisouthdakota.org.

THOUGHTS ON HEALING

1. Ignoring your feelings of pain and sadness can potentially make them worse, and it could take longer to resolve these feelings within yourself.

2. We think we should be strong and perfect, but sadness is normal, and crying doesn’t mean a person is weak. Trying to show your feelings can help you to cope.

3. “Moving on” means accepting our losses, but it doesn’t mean forgetting those losses. We’ve all moved on while holding precious memories of someone we love.

4. It is possible to suppress our grief, but we can’t do it forever. We cannot heal until we deal with the pain and loss; avoiding dealing with them only prolongs our own grieving process and encourages others to do the same.

5. Taking care of yourself, emotionally and physically, is essential if you expect that you can take care of anyone else. Find ways to reach out to others and to accept help.
In the uncertain times our nation and world are facing, we know that the mission of NAMI South Dakota is even more important. We carry out our work with the help of volunteers, and through the generosity of our donors and sponsors. With your donation, you become a partner in the mission. Thank you for your kind gifts, especially now. We appreciate you.

Every effort has been made to recognize recent donors. If you think there has been an error, please contact our office.

Donations 2/01/2020 through 3/27/2020

IN MEMORY OF SVEN GODWIN

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Our deepest condolences to Sven’s family and friends. His was a bright light, and he will be missed. NAMI has special plans for honoring Sven with your generous memorials.

HOW TO BECOME A DONOR: Visit our donation page at www.namisouthdakota.org/donate to make a gift by Pay Pal or credit card. If you would rather donate by check, please make out your check to NAMI South Dakota and mail it to: NAMI South Dakota, P.O. Box 88808, Sioux Falls, SD  57109.

Ask us how you can join our Circle of Friends!

NAMI South Dakota is a 501c3 organization. Donations are tax-deductible. THANK YOU!
OUR LOCAL AFFILIATES:

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Huron 605-350-9516            Pierre 605-280-2882
Brookings 605-692-8948        Watertown 605-886-7799
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