

General Meeting

**100 S. San Mateo Drive
San Mateo**

Hendrickson Aud. / Mills Health Center
Free evening parking in front

Wednesday, January 25

6:30pm Reception
7-8:30pm Program

7 Qualities Most Desired in a Therapist

Nancy Morgan, PhD.

Dr. Morgan has been capturing client responses to the 7 Qualities Most Desired in a Therapist for over 10 years, and has used clients' responses to train young therapists how to cultivate those qualities within themselves. She has presented locally and in Oregon at conferences for therapists and psychologists, and this summer conducted further research on the subject. She states, "Our clients are our best teachers."

Dr. Morgan is the Director of Behavioral Health at LifeMoves (formerly InnVision Shelter Network).

NAMI San Mateo County General Meetings are free and open to the public. We welcome all who support our mission to improve the quality of life for people with mental illnesses and their families.

Thanksgiving General Meeting

On November 16, NAMI members, friends and family gathered to celebrate Thanksgiving the NAMI SMC way, with music and inspirational stories—and lots of pie! Setting the tone was Frances Ancheta-Becker, a singer/songwriter and acoustic guitar player who performed a variety of musical styles. Frances is the Recreational Therapist at the in-patient unit at the San Mateo Medical Center. Her playing got the crowd singing along with her!

First to speak was Joni Marshburn Jamin, living well in recovery. She is a frequent speaker for NAMI's In Our Own Voice program. She told of how much she had managed to accomplish despite a serious case of Bipolar 1. Though she has been hospitalized over 15 times in 25 years, she has achieved everything she set her mind to, including two college degrees. **The trick is to go slow and keep plugging away.** She thanked her family for sticking by her no matter what, always believing that she would come back stronger from every episode, and giving her the help and freedom to achieve a life worth living. She was also thankful to NAMI SMC for the opportunity to become an advocate: it has changed something that might cause embarrassment into a source of pride. She has dreamed of traveling, and she has!—with her parents' blessing. A world tour went well, until it did not. Joni tells a poignant life story, with humor and lessons for us all.

Detective Jim Coffman told three stories of families struggling with mental illness and the help and interaction provided by our public servants. One story was that of a sister who worked for four months with local police to help her bipolar brother get treatment. She went right to the top—Steve Kaplan (San Mateo County Behavioral Health Chief)—and enlisted his help. It worked, leading to the point: keep trying and go to the top for help! Most helpful is to have a written history on hand to provide to law enforcement (see namisanmateo.org/support/legal-resources/...AB 1424). Jim reminded the group that law enforcement officers are also a family facing danger and trauma daily. Ongoing trainings (CIT training) are designed to help officers better handle sensitive situations that arise when dealing with mentally ill persons. We are in this together and interacting all the better.

Reverend Ben Meyers, Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, gave a very moving presentation. He led the group in an exercise of knowing and forgiving ourselves: we wrote a list of personal limitations, and on the reverse side, a list of what we want to give to the world. Then held the limitations list against our heart, and forgave these in ourselves and realized we can live well despite these perceptions. Next we held the list of what we want to give to the world over our hearts, and to feel this generous awareness. Powerful emotions arose. Rev. Meyers' message was much-needed and well delivered—a great experience!

The meeting closed with the audience taking turns saying what they were thankful for. May we all continue to be grateful for each other throughout this holiday season and in the new year.



Rev. Ben Meyers; Frances Ancheta-Becker, R.N.; Joni Marshburn Jamin; & Det. Jim Coffman

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<https://www.facebook.com/namismc/>

and

follow us on Twitter



<https://twitter.com/NAMISmc>

Take time to visit our NEW website! namisanmateo.org



Happy Holidays. This season, may you be blessed with laughter, peace, and love.



Holiday Gatherings

28th Annual VRS Client Holiday Luncheon
Wednesday, December 7 • 12pm
VRS, 550 Quarry Road, San Carlos

All Clients are invited!
Delicious food, Santa Claus and lots of FUN!!!

42nd Annual Holiday Party
MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
Friday, December 16 • 11am-2pm
Community United Church
1336 Arroyo Ave, San Carlos

Please RSVP by December 12th to Angela Bruno-Castro,
650 257-8823 or angbc@mhasmc.org.



Museum Studios Gallery
at the Peninsula Museum of Art
(650) 692-2101 • www.peninsulamuseum.org
1777 California Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010
November 17 - December 25, 2016
Open Wednesday through Sunday 11am to 5pm

Babbitt is a portrait artist and illustrator who works exclusively in watercolor. She tends to work quickly and enjoys learning about her subjects.

Her comic strip, "Melanfolly," is inspired by her daily life, her dog and a bit of the blues. The strip is currently published in the NAMI newsletter.



Lisa Babbitt: Art, humor and the blues.

Watered Down

2017 "Directing Change" Program & Film Contest

If you're in to making films and making a difference, then this opportunity is for you:

Students throughout California are invited to Direct Change by submitting 60 second films in three categories: Suicide Prevention / Mental Health Matters / Through the Lens of Culture. The winning teams and their associated high schools will win prizes, receive mental health or suicide prevention programs for their schools, participate in a meeting with state legislators on these topics and attend an awards ceremony.

Visit www.directingchange.org for all the information including contest rules.

Two important dates to remember:

- Sunday, Jan. 15, 2017 - Intent to Direct
- Wednesday, Mar. 1, 2017 - Film is due

Make a statement through your film, make a difference!



To all our volunteers,
THANK YOU.
We couldn't do it without you!

Family to Family co-Teachers:
Vivien During, Jane Marshburn, Tad Randall

Newsletter Mailing: Edna & Ryan Daga, Natalie Pitre, Clancy Stein

November General Meeting: Alan Cochran, Silvana Garetz, Bill Nash, Sharon & Ron Roth, Kathy Stern, Jerry Thompson

As always the delicious pies were a huge success! A Special Thank You to: Heidi's Pies, Carol Gosho, Mark Hanson, Bill Kerns, Pat Way

Office Support: Eveline Coffman, Helen Greggans, Mike Rodrigues

Peer to Peer co-Teachers: Dana Foley, Wanda Thompson

Resource Fairs/Outreach: Christie Clark

All of our **Support Group Leaders!**

Balancing the Books: Eveline Coffman

To volunteer contact Debi at
nami@namisanmateo.org or 650-638-0800

NARSAD Artworks

Our office carries a supply of cards for birthdays, holidays and all occasions – stop by and pick up a pack - and another for a friend!

Visit NARSAD Artworks for their beautiful holiday cards, notecards, calendars and gifts online at www.narsadartworks.org or call 800-607-2599 or 714-529-5571.

NARSAD Artworks showcases museum-quality art products by and on behalf of mentally ill persons. All proceeds support the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation and NAMI SMC.

Visit www.namicalifornia.org/ to get the latest on legislative activity.
We appreciate your participation in advocacy!



San Mateo Editorial: Yes on Measure K

Extending local funding for critical services & improving the quality of life in SMC—passed by voters on Nov. 8

When San Mateo County voters passed Measure A in 2012, it was sold as a way to help bridge a funding gap and to ensure that county services such as health care, human services, parks, public safety and other initiatives would not be cut. It was to also provide money to make sure that Seton Medical Center would stay afloat by allocating seismic upgrade money since it provides essential health care services to North County residents.

It was originally estimated to raise about \$60 million a year through an increase of the local sales tax of half of 1 percent, though it now generates about \$80 million a year. We opposed the measure at the time because it was too soon after the Great Recession and many San Mateo County residents were still feeling the economic effects. This was the same year that saw the state pass Proposition 30, a quarter-cent sales tax increase to raise \$6 billion a year for schools. There were many needs across the state and its citizens were still getting their economic bearings while the local measure had a number of loosely defined beneficiaries.

So now four years later, county voters are being asked to extend what was to be a temporary tax set to expire in 2023 for another 20 years. One might think that our reaction would be more along the lines of what we said four years ago. Many of the same issues still hold true. Yet there are very important differences with this proposal, now known as Measure K. The county has had four years to prove it could spend Measure A money wisely. That money has gone to a host of worthwhile programs such as the Big Lift, which provides resources for early education, and also homeless and drug rehabilitation programs along with other basic necessities in the county. And while the economy has definitely turned around, it has left many struggling. The booming nature of this recent cycle has meant there is an exponentially growing need for housing assistance programs.

This county has a long history of planning for affordable housing developments but the recent need has outgrown the effort considerably. And that is where Measure K comes in. The 20-year extension assists the county in its borrowing capability of up to about \$200 million to be used for a number of affordable housing developments. That money could be combined with other money from cities, the Housing Endowment and Regional Trust and nonprofits to provide new opportunities for housing at levels that can be afforded by average San Mateo County residents. The money can also be used to expand code enforcement efforts to ensure aging buildings won't need all tenants evicted for massive upgrades and even assistance for property owners looking to make upgrades without needing to vacate much-needed units and disrupting communities. Older buildings could also be purchased through additional partnerships as a way to keep tenants in place rather than being sold to those looking to rehabilitate and flip swaths of units. The county is also considering an

ordinance Oct. 4 that would create a relocation assistance program for tenants evicted from illegal or substandard units. There is much promise in these proposals and it has taken an acute crisis to put nearly every elected official in this county on point when it comes to finding palatable solutions. Even if rents stabilize or go down, the expense of housing will still be high in this area and will likely grow in the future as it has in the recent past.

This crisis is not just born of new jobs. It also comes at the edge of the dissolution of redevelopment agencies which had allowed for partnerships to create affordable housing developments sprinkled throughout the Peninsula. Federal funding that had often allowed city governments to create programs for people to buy homes and stay in them has all but dried up. Low interest rates means new offices and high-rent housing pencil out but developments with an affordable component don't as easily. And legal questions about inclusionary zoning, which set aside a percentage of new housing developments for below-market rate units, remain.

It is a perfect storm, and out of it comes ideas that can be part of a solution.

Latching affordable housing onto an existing sales tax and providing an extension is not a perfect vehicle, as opponents to this measure rightly point out. County officials had entertained the idea of floating a bond to voters but there wasn't enough time for polling and outreach, and this situation needs attention sooner rather than later.

Measure K provides an opportunity for county residents to redirect county revenue into affordable housing while allowing county officials more flexibility in financing needed projects sooner rather than later. It is unfortunate we are in this situation in which government money — our money — is needed to ensure our county stays economically diverse and livable. But we are. Measure K will help provide housing to those who need it. It will help alleviate traffic because workers can remain here rather than commuting. But most importantly, it provides hope for many who are being priced out of this area and will help retain our community as it is — with room for all income levels.

—See more at: www.smdailyjournal.com/articles/opinions/2016-09-30/editorial-yes-on-measure-k/1776425169088.html#sthash.ovfqGfV0.dpuf

Membership Time!



Please renew your membership with NAMI San Mateo County - we value your support! If you haven't yet joined the 2017 membership, please use the request for membership renewal you receive in the mail, or there's a form on the back page of this newsletter. Or check our website! www.namisanmateo.org.

By joining *at this local affiliate level (preferred)* you will receive the local San Mateo County monthly newsletter, the NAMI California web newsletter, and the NAMI National full-color magazine, each offering their respective level of coverage and commentary. Thank you for continuing to support NAMI-SMC!

Brain & Behavior Research Foundation: Meet the Scientist Webinar Series

Dec. 13 Neuroinflammatory Hypotheses of Depression

Please join by phone or on the web on 2nd Tuesdays for BBR (Brain & Behavior Research) Foundation's **Meet the Scientist Webinar Series**. Hear leading mental health researchers present the latest in new technologies, diagnostic tools, early intervention strategies and next-generation therapies for mental illness.

Visit <https://bbrfoundation.org/meet-the-scientist-webinar-series> - very interesting!



New Additions to the Library

Please visit the library at the NAMI San Mateo County office - we have books and videos available to check out! Watch for our latest additions below. If you have read a book related to Mental Health issues that you believe would benefit others, please email the office with the title and author.

Lily and Dunkin by Donna Gephart

A dual narrative of a big-hearted, nature-loving transgender girl and a thirteen-year-old boy with bipolar disorder, who is spiraling toward psychosis. Donna Gephart's award winning novels are packed with humor and heart! This wonderful book about friendship will melt your heart. Especially written for middle school kids!

NAMI Connection



2nd & 4th Mondays of each month • 7:00-8:30pm
NAMI office, 1650 Borel Place, #130, San Mateo

People with mental health conditions are WELCOME to this recovery support group. Connection provides a place that offers respect, understanding, encouragement and hope. The group is led by trained individuals who are experienced at living well with mental illness. **No registration is required.** Just drop by; we look forward to meeting you. Call 650-638-0800 or email us at education@namisanmateo.org with any questions.

Social Security Benefits or
Vocational Rehab Questions?

Call Wendy Jordan at 650-802-6482

Check out *Wellness Matters*, the SMC BHRS newsletter
<http://smchealth.org/wm>



We are grateful for donations...

... in memory of

Joshua Daniel Stang from Dianne Gonzalez

Nicholas McWherter from

Jan & Tom Dennison Nate Gustavson

Nicole Kaesler Andrea Markey

Lisa Mann Rick Mustille

David and Carolyn Macy & Family

Snezana Nena Vejzagic

Alyce Hanley Orrock

from Kathleen & Dave McCann

...in honor of

Kevin Christian from Michael Christian

NAMI San Mateo County appreciates those who send donations that honor loved ones. *Our sincere gratitude!*

Will Section 529A ABLER Accounts Replace The Need For Disabled Beneficiary Special Needs Trusts?

Planning for special needs beneficiaries is highly complex, a mixture of making challenging care decisions and managing limited resources. Many families will try to save assets on behalf of a special needs beneficiary to provide further support, but if not coordinated properly, can actually disqualify the beneficiary from Federal and state aid programs, including SSI and Medicaid.

The primary solution—establishing a (3rd-party) supplemental special needs trust—can help preserve the beneficiary's eligibility for aid programs, but itself has a non-trivial cost to create and maintain, in terms of both legal fees, administrative expenses, and potentially unfavorable tax treatment.

To help ease the challenge for families with special needs children, the recently passed "tax extenders" legislation at the end of 2014 created a new type of account for the supplemental needs of special needs (disabled) beneficiaries. Under the new IRC Section 529A, Qualified ABLER programs will allow families to accumulate funds for such beneficiaries, enjoy tax-free growth, and allow the assets to (mostly) avoid disqualifying the beneficiary from any state or Federal aid, but without the cost and hassle of creating a special needs trust.

Given the limitations of these new 529 ABLER accounts – from restrictions on the size of contributions, to a rather "unfavorable" Medicaid payback provision after the death of the disabled beneficiary – the new Section 529A plans will not likely replace all special needs trusts, but could be used effectively as a supplement to them, and may be an especially appealing alternative to trusts for "smaller" account balances under \$100,000.

More information at <https://www.kitces.com/blog/will-section-529a-able-accounts-replace-the-need-for-disabled-beneficiary-special-needs-trusts/>.

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS (for information on NAMI Support Groups call 650-638-0800)

- **NAMI Cordilleras MHR Center Family Group**, 1ST Mondays (2ND Monday if 1st is a holiday), 6:30-8pm, 200 Edmonds Road, Redwood City, 650-367-1890. Penney Mitchell & Julie Curry, NAMI SMC co-facilitators
- **NAMI Parents of Youth & Young Adults** (ages 6–26), 2ND Mondays, 7-8:30pm. 222 W. 39th Ave. & Edison, Board Room, San Mateo. Park in the large lot on west side of building, off 37th Ave. Enter building through the “Hospital & Clinic West Entrance” and follow the NAMI signs to the 2nd floor Board Room W-225. Info: 638-0800. Kristy Manuel and Ginny Traub, facilitators.
- **NAMI Connection** for persons with mental illness who are working on their wellness & recovery. 2ND & 4TH Mondays, 7-8:30pm. 1650 Borel Place #130, San Mateo. Call NAMI SMC 650-638-0800 for information.

MONDAY

- **NAMI Spanish-Speaking Support Group** for family members, 2ND Tuesdays, 6-7:30pm, 802 Brewster, RWC. 650-573-2189
- **NAMI Coastside Support Meeting** for family members, 2ND Mondays, 6:30-8pm. Coastside MH Cntr, 225 S. Cabrillo Hwy, #200A, Half Moon Bay, 650-726-6369. Karina Marwan, NAMI facilitator
- **NAMI Jewish Family & Children’s Services**, family and friends are welcome. 4TH Tuesdays, 7:00pm. 200 Channing Ave., Palo Alto, 650-688-3097. Sharon & Ron Roth, NAMI SMC facilitators; John Bisenivs, LCSW.
- **NAMI San Mateo Medical Center** for family members. 1st and 3RD Tuesdays, 6:30-8pm. 222 W. 39th Ave. & Edison, San Mateo. Board Room (main entrance elevator to 2nd floor, left to the end of the hall). Terry & Polly Flinn, Carol Metzler & Judy Singer, NAMI facilitators.
- **NAMI South County Support Meeting** for family members, 2ND Tuesdays, 6-7:30pm. Mental Health Clinic, 802 Brewster, Redwood City, 650-363-4111. Pat Way, NAMI SMC facilitator; Liz Downard RN, MSN. **Park behind building and knock loudly on door.**
- **DBSA Mood Disorder Support Group** for persons with uni- and bi-polar disorders, mania, depression, or anxiety; family members welcome. Tuesdays, 7-9pm, College Heights Church, 1150 W. Hillsdale Blvd, San Mateo. Contact at DBSASanMateo@um.att.com or 650-299-8880; leave a message.
- **Korean Support Group**, a family/consumer group. 4TH Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30pm. Full Gospel Mission Church, 20920 McClellan Rd. (opp. De Anza College), Cupertino. Info: Kyo, 408-253-9733.
- **Individuals Living With Their Own Mental Illness**, Tuesdays, 1-2:30pm. Redwood City - Sequoia Counseling Services, sliding scale fees apply. Contact Deborah at 650-363-0249, x111.
- **Parent Chat**, for parent/caregivers of kids aged 14-24 with mental health challenges. 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 7-8:30pm. Orchard Room, Los Altos Library, 13 San Antonio Road. Info: Trudy Palmer 650-208-9116 or Donna Soo at 650-823-0997.

NEW DAY & TIME!

TUESDAY

- **NAMI Stanford** for family & friends. 2nd Wednesdays, 7-8:30pm. 401 Quarry Road #1206, Stanford. Dept. of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences (parking is between Vineyard & Quarry). Info: 650-862-2886 or pamelapolos@comcast.net
- **Jewish Support Group** (open to all denominations), for those with mental illness and families and friends. 2nd Wednesdays, 6:15-8:30pm. For info, call Carol Irwin 408-858-1372. Beit Kehillah, 26790 Arastradero Rd., Los Altos

WEDNESDAY

- **Coastside Dual Diagnosis Group**, development for clients in all stages of recovery. Thursdays at 4-5pm. 225 S. Cabrillo Hwy #200A, Half Moon Bay. 726-6369 for information.
- **Body Image & Eating Disorders**, Thursdays, 6:30-8pm, 1225 Crane St, Ste 205, Menlo Park. Open to family and friends. *RSVP required: emlycaruthersmft@gmail.com*. More info: 408-356-1212 or e-mail: info@edrcsv.org.
- **Dual Diagnosis Group for Consumers**, Thurs, 12 noon. 210 Industrial Rd. Bldg. 210, Room 205, San Carlos. 650-232-7426.
- **H.E.L.P. for those with a mental illness and/or in a supporting role**, Thursdays, 6:00pm optional dinner; 6:30-7:30 program, 7:30-8:30 prayer. Menlo Church, Garden Court, 950 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park Contact Jane Clark 650-464-9033
- **North County Support Group** for clients, family and friends. 2ND and 4TH Thursdays, 5:45-7pm, 375 89th Street, Community Room, Daly City. Co-facilitators: Linda Hildreth and Adam Harrison LCSW More info: 650-301-8650.

THURSDAY

- **Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation of SF Bay Area**, 3RD Saturdays, 1:30-3:30pm, Seton Medical Center, 1900 Sullivan Ave., 2nd Fl. Conf room near cafeteria, Daly City. For more information: 415-273-7273; www.ocd-bayarea.com.

SAT.

- **Chinese Language Family Support Group** Cantonese/Mandarin. Call Alice at 650-573-3571 for more information.
- **Japanese Education & Support Group**, call (415) 474-7310 for information.
- **Consumer Support Groups**, Heart and Soul, call 650-232-7426 for days & addresses, or visit www.heartandsoulinc.org.
- **Cluttering & Hoarding** Support Groups, Workshops, and Private Consultations - Groups/programs change, contact Emily Farber, MSW, 650-289-5417, efarber@avenidas.org.

NAMI Education Programs

To be added to the Wait List, call 650-638-0800 or email us at education@namisanmateo.org

Sign up for the evidence-based education class that fits your need. (Support Groups on page 5) Courses are FREE, comprehensive, and popular. Gain skills and understanding in an interactive, supportive environment. PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.

- **Basics**—For parents and caregivers of children and adolescents with mental illness.
- **Family to Family**—For relatives of an adult family member with mental illness. Class meets once a week for 12 weeks.
- **Peer to Peer**—Better living skills for people with mental health issues taught by people with mental health issues.
- **Provider**—for Mental Health and AOD professionals, para-professionals and all others serving individuals with serious mental illnesses and their families. CMEs pending approval for qualified attendees.
Please contact us to set up an in-house program for your organization.

BHRS Family Contacts

Suzanne Aubry
Dir. Family Service
650-573-2673

Claudia Saggese
Family Liaison (habla Español)
650-573-2189

Situational/Stress-Related Symptoms or Serious Depression: What's the Difference?

Life can often be unpredictable and stressful. Whether it's divorce, job loss, relocation, death of a loved one or even a flat tire, life's stressors can trigger many emotional states, including anxiety and depression. Anxiety is a normal reaction to life's stressors and to a point can be helpful and even controlled with some easily learned tools. But what is the difference between symptoms that may arise in response to situational stress compared to signs of serious depression? How do you know if what you feel is normal and will pass, or needs further attention?

Clinical Depression

"Clinical depression" is a term often used to refer to one or more types of serious depressive disorders that may occur with or without the presence of a specific stressor. Generally speaking, the symptoms associated with depressive disorders are more severe in comparison to situational (reactive) symptoms, and they are more likely to be associated with problems functioning with work, school, etc. They can also have an increased risk of suicide. Common examples of depressive disorders include the following:

- Major depressive disorder;
- Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)—a low-grade depression lasting two or more years;
- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)—depression onset in the winter when sunlight is reduced;
- Postpartum depression, which affects some women upon giving birth; and
- Bipolar disorder, with the current mood depressed (as opposed to manic or hypomanic).

(Continued on page 7)

San Mateo County Mental Health Emergency Numbers

Police: 911

Tell the dispatcher you are calling regarding a person who has a mental illness. Request a CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) trained officer and/or someone who has experience in dealing with the mentally ill. For non-emergency situations, call your local police department.

HELPFUL: Tips to prepare yourself for a 911 call are available on the BHRS website. Download "Mental Health Emergency" at www.smchealth.org/MH911 or visit the blog: <http://smcbhrrsblog.org/2015/03/30/mental-health-emergency-materials-aka-family-script/>.

24 Hour Crisis Line & Support Help: 650-579-0350 / 800-784-2433

Calling the local number will get you someone in San Mateo County. Calling the 800 number will get you the first person available. This person may not be in San Mateo County.

Psych Emergency: San Mateo Medical Center: 650-573-2662
Mills Peninsula Hospital: 650-696-5915

Kaiser South San Francisco: 650-742-2511
Kaiser Permanente SMC: 650-991-6455

FAST: 650-368-3178 | 650-371-7416 (pager)

Family Assertive Support Team - When your loved one is in emotional distress.

For additional non-emergency numbers relating to Mental Health issues, access www.namisanmateo.org.

(From page 6)

An individual who is experiencing a major depressive disorder will experience five or more of the below symptoms for at least two weeks:

- Sleep pattern changes, including early morning waking;
- Marked diminished pleasure in all, or nearly all, activities every day;
- Observable agitation or slowed movements;
- Feelings of worthlessness, self loathing or self-hatred;
- Excessive feelings of guilt;
- Suicidal ideation;
- Significant weight loss or gain in a month of 5% or more of body weight; and
- In children, increased irritability.

If you are worried you or a loved one might be clinically depressed, schedule an appointment with your primary care physician or a licensed mental health professional to talk about your concerns.

Situational/Stress-Related Symptoms

Situational stress can generate emotional or behavioral symptoms that look and feel very much like clinical depression. Depending on the degree of symptomatic discomfort, the treatment plan for situational or stress-related symptoms may be supportive or psychoeducational in nature and often includes the teaching of simple coping tools (find some below) that can help combat the impact of everyday stress. Remember that certain types of anxiety and sadness are often a normal response to difficult or overwhelming circumstances. Here are some symptoms shared by situational stress and clinical depression:

- Feeling sad or hopeless;
- Tearfulness, frequent crying;
- Changes in appetite;
- Trouble sleeping;
- Increased worry and anxiety;
- Headaches and stomachaches;
- Low energy or fatigue;
- Withdrawal from loved ones or social activities previously enjoyed;
- Increased absence from work or school; and
- Trouble concentrating and making decisions.

Stress Management Toolkit

Long, slow, deep breathing is your first defense.

Anxiety can quickly build up into a fight-or-flight reaction, panic attack, hysterical crying or other uncomfortable feelings and symptoms. Long, slow, deep breathing can stop anxiety in its tracks because the body cannot be in danger—real or imagined—at the same time it performs this type of breathing. Long, slow, deep breathing signals to the brain that the danger has passed. Start by doing three or more long, slow, deep breaths. Put your shoulders back and try for full lung capacity. The inhale should be 3–4 seconds, while the exhale should be 6–8 seconds. Most people do this by breathing in through the nose, pausing, then slowly blowing out through the mouth, as if they had a tiny straw between their lips. Many people feel calmer after using this technique.

Progressive muscle relaxation works.

Although many people feel calmer after breathing this way, some do not. Fortunately, we have a technique to help 100% of people relax (including resistant teenagers). It's progressive muscle relaxation (PMR). With this technique, you tighten various muscle groups, hold the tension for 3–5 seconds, then relax. I usually have people do each muscle group three times as they work their way around the body.

An online search will bring up many PMR scripts and videos. I have a video of me teaching PMR on my website called "How to Interrupt a Fight/Flight Reaction." I always teach it to children; in fact, I encourage adults to teach it to the children in their lives:

- Pick up two lemons and squeeze them, tightening your biceps, triceps and pectoral chest muscles.
- Bring your shoulders up to your ears, pause, then drop them down.
- Pretend there's a fly on your nose and that you can only get it off by squinting your face.
- Suck in your stomach as hard as you can, hold it, then let it go.
- Tighten up your buttocks and the backs of your thighs so that you're sitting up higher in your seat, wait, then relax.
- Lift up your legs and tighten your quads and calves. Hold them up, then drop them down.
- Sit in a chair that comes to your mid-back. Hold your arms straight out in front of you. Now raise them up and lean backward as far as your chair can comfortably allow. Just hang there for a few seconds, looking at the wall behind you, upside down. Then come up.

Foster resilience with meditation to positively rewire your brain.

Short, simple mindfulness meditation techniques can rewire the brain to experience deeper feelings of happiness and peace. Rick Hanson, Ph.D. is a neuropsychologist and author of *Hardwiring Happiness and Buddha's Brain*. He teaches about the neuroplasticity of the brain and the benefits of spending a few seconds to enjoy good experiences in our imagination, which he calls "taking in the good." Adopting these practices over time can actually change your brain's wiring in positive ways and help you to achieve a more balanced, relaxed outlook. (I also highly recommend taking a class such as yoga, tai chi or qi-gong to help ease stress, tension and negative emotions.)

There is no magic pill, and no single technique cures situational stress or clinical depression. When life gets stressful, you can achieve a more peaceful state of mind and experience a greater sense of calm with these techniques, which experts have successfully used for decades. You can also always take the first step and contact your doctor or licensed mental health professional today.

—From *NAMI Advocate*, Fall 2016. *Laura C. Strom is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT 49174) with a private practice in Santa Rosa, Calif., specializing in trauma and disabilities. She is the president of the board of directors of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT.org). To learn more about Laura, visit www.LauraCStrom.com.*

Local Holiday Gatherings

Dec 7th and 16th - see page 2

General Meeting

January 25 - see page 1

NAMI San Mateo County
1650 Borel Place, Suite 130
San Mateo, CA 94402

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**Great articles in the
Fall 2016 NAMI Advocate -
Join NAMI SMC to access
this remarkable issue!**

This is a **combined issue** - See you in February!

Please Become a Member of NAMI San Mateo County

1650 Borel Place, Suite 130, San Mateo, CA 94402

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Your membership in NAMI San Mateo County is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Our Tax ID number is 94-2650681. *Thank you for your support!*

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