



Brevard County

In this issue:

- Writing as Therapy
- Tips for Mental Health during the Summer
- Membership Page

Update: New Family Support Meeting: starting JULY 25th New Life Church 6755 S Washington Ave, Titusville FL 6:30-7pm



.NAMI Family Support Groups are for any adult with a loved one who has experienced symptoms of a mental health condition. Gain insight from the challenges and successes of others facing similar experiences.

- Free of cost to participants
- Designed for adult loved ones of people with mental health conditions
- Led by family members of people with mental health conditions
- 90 minutes long and currently meeting in person two times a month in Brevard County (see below)
- No specific medical therapy or treatment is endorsed
- Confidential

Date	Location	Address	Time
2nd Tuesday	Circles of Care ALC Follow signs from parking lot	2000 Commerce Drive Melbourne, FL	6 - 7:30 pm
3rd Tuesday	Central Brevard Library	308 Forrest Avenue Cocoa, FL	6 - 7:30 pm



NAMI Connections is a recovery Support group program that offers respect, understanding, encouragement, and hope. NAMI Connection groups are for Peers with Mental Illness.

Peer Support Group Meets every Tuesday at 6– 7:30 pm via Zoom ID 464 710 7237 Passcode 456654

**For more Information about NAMI
Phone: 321-345-6365 Website: www.namibrevard.org
Email: namibrevard@gmail.com**

Writing as Therapy

The next wave of writing therapy is a throwback to expressive journaling that attempts to make sense of past stress.

Article by: Katie Hurley, LCSW

A few years ago, a study came out claiming that reading books could make you live longer. Other studies confirmed the benefits of a good book: reading could reduce cognitive decline, encourage empathy, decrease stress, stave off dementia, boost happiness, and reduce some of the symptoms of depression.

For decades mountains of research have shown the benefits of writing too: It helps you work through your thoughts and emotions, regulates your feelings, and teaches you to express what you're going through.

The Mental Benefits to Writing

In a classic experiment, James Pennebaker, PhD., University of Texas, assigned healthy undergraduates to one of four groups. All were asked to write for 15 minutes for four consecutive nights. Three of the groups were asked to write about some traumatic event in their lives; the fourth group wrote about some other trivial topic. All four groups were then tracked for the next six months and researchers found that the three groups who wrote about traumatic events had fewer visits to the health center.

Since that seminal work by Pennebaker and his colleagues, many more studies replicated similar findings showing a connection between expressing emotions and enjoying good health. Pennebaker has also written several books, *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions*, *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering From Trauma and Emotional Upheaval*, and *Opening up By Writing Down: How Expressive Writing Improves Health and Eases Emotional Pain*.

His work is often the basis for writing therapy workshops and interventions. They typically start with the same fundamentals of his early experiments and go something like this:

For the next 3 days, I would like for you to write about your very deepest thoughts and feelings about the most traumatic experience of your entire life. In your writing, I'd like you to really let go and explore your very deepest emotions and thoughts. You might tie this trauma to your childhood, your relationships with others, including parents, lovers, friends or relatives. You may also link this event to your past, your present or your future, or to who you have been, who you would like to be, or who you are now. You may write about the same general issues or experiences on all days of writing or about different topics each day. Not everyone has had a single trauma but all of us have had major conflicts or stressors—and you can write about these as well. All of your writing will be completely confidential" (Pennebaker & Chung, 2011, p. 419).

In the past couple of years we've heard a lot about gratitude journaling, but this more focused, expressive writing might be the next wave of writing therapy. Whether you use journal prompts created by a therapist or written in a book designed to help people work through emotions (like Pennebaker's) or simply put pen to paper and write freeform based on the instructions from Pennebaker's original research, writing can provide a healthy outlet to work through ups and downs.

The one caveat: If you're suffering from moderate to severe depression or PTSD writing can open raw emotions without proper closure. And therapeutic writing isn't recommended immediately following a traumatic event since you might not yet be prepared to face the flood of emotions writing can stir.

The Physical Benefits to Writing

In addition to the mental benefits, writing can even improve physical wellbeing. Research by Dr. Pennebaker and Joshua Smyth PhD., Syracuse University, suggests that writing about emotions and stress can boost immune functioning in patients with HIV/AIDS, asthma, and arthritis. There has even been research showing the biopsy wounds heal more quickly in patients who journal.

While scientists can't say exactly how therapeutic writing benefits work, the consensus is that the writing shouldn't just be a replaying of the events but should make attempts to understand and contextualize them. Susan Lutgendorf, PhD., of the University of Iowa did an extensive journaling study where she found that the writer needs to "find meaning in a traumatic memory as well as to feel the related emotions to reap the benefits."

Pennebaker agrees with the assessment saying people who write words that indicate growth or change from the experience like "because," "realize", "understand" tend to have better outcomes.

How to Start Therapeutic Writing

Try these five steps to get started:

Carve out time. You don't have to do it every day, but aim for 15 minutes three to four days a week.

Experiment with your method: There's nothing magic about writing by hand, you could try typing or doing voice memos. The point is to be thoughtful about the experience.

Find the right place: Where you write can affect how you feel about it and whether or not it "works." The most important thing is having a quiet place.

Don't edit yourself: Part of the exercise is to access your feelings and you can't do that if you're constantly redirecting yourself.

Reread...just not right away: It's a good idea to go back and see what you've written, but don't get carried away with it. If you read your previous entries before you start, it might influence what you end up writing.



Five Self-Care Tips to Maintain Mental Health During the Summer

The warmth, relaxation and flexibility that the summer months bring can be exciting for vacations and sunshine, but for some, summer months can have the potential to trigger feelings of being overwhelmed and losing control. Expectations of being carefree can put a lot of pressure on those who are struggling with depression or anxiety. Below are self-care tips and tricks that can be used to maintain your mental health during the summer months.

1. Take care of your mental health this summer by getting outside.

Exposure to natural sunlight increases levels of vitamin D and serotonin, which are known to boost your mood. Taking a moment to step outdoors, smell the roses, feel the sand under your toes or watch a sunset can provide a sense of calming and well being. Pick up a new outdoor hobby where you can spend 30 minutes in the sunshine. Whether it is gardening, hiking or paddle boarding, spending time outdoors is an essential element of self-care.

2. Take time to unwind by using your vacation time.

Many of us use paid vacation time to accomplish tasks around the house that we neglect during our busy workweeks. Instead of cleaning out the closet, organizing the garage and attending long-overdue appointments, use your vacation to enjoy yourself. Such activities can include reading a book at home or traveling to a new place for the day. Your vacation time should be spent unwinding and enjoying time away from your to-do lists.

3. Re-focus your energy by planning a getaway.

Getting out of town and experiencing a change in scenery is a great way to unwind and re-focus your energy on the present. Whether it is an overnight getaway or a multi-week international trip, escaping the business from the daily grind can help clear your mind and boost your mood. This can help you immensely on your return home back to your everyday routine.

4. Maintain a healthy sleep schedule for mental health.

Just because school is out for summer and your kids can stay up late and sleep in does not mean they should. If you are a parent, try to maintain a healthy and steady sleep schedule for yourself and your kids, regardless of work and school schedules. It is recommended that we obtain 8-10 uninterrupted hours of sleep, as sleep hygiene is an essential component of our mental health.

5. Stay physically active.

Whether it is going to the gym, signing up for a yoga class or taking a walk outside, physical activity is known to boost your mood. During the summer months, it is easy to stay on the couch and binge-watch the latest television series, but an idle activity can promote negative consequences on our physical and mental health. Try to maintain 20-30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise each day. You may be surprised how good you feel.



Attention all Peers

We are looking to start a Peer Council, in order to get local peers together for activities. We are trying to find the best time to Zoom in order to start this process.

For more information please call 321-345-6365 or Email at namibrevard@gmail.com

Membership Form

You can Join NAMI by going online to www.nami.org and click on JOIN or you may fill out the form below and write a check or money order made out to NAMI Brevard County and send to:: NAMI Brevard PO Box 840 Cape Canaveral, FL 32920 One Year Membership includes NAMI Brevard, NAMI Florida, and NAMI National, as well as NAMI Brevard voting privileges. You will also receive the magazine, NAMI Advocate and as a member attend our special events designated for members.

NAME _____

ADRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

ZIPCODE _____

EMAIL _____

Household \$60 _____ Regular\$40 _____ Open Door \$5 (Limited resources) _____

Donations are welcome:

Memorial Gifts/ Honorary Gifts/ Employee Matching

Contact Your Legislative Representatives

flsenate.gov or myfloridahouse.gov

Keep the lines of communication open with your state Senators and Representatives. Let them know how you want to support the 988 Number beeing rolled out in July!.

SENATOR Debbie Mayfield (District17)
900 E. Strawbridge Ave.
Melbourne, FL 32901
(321) 409-2025

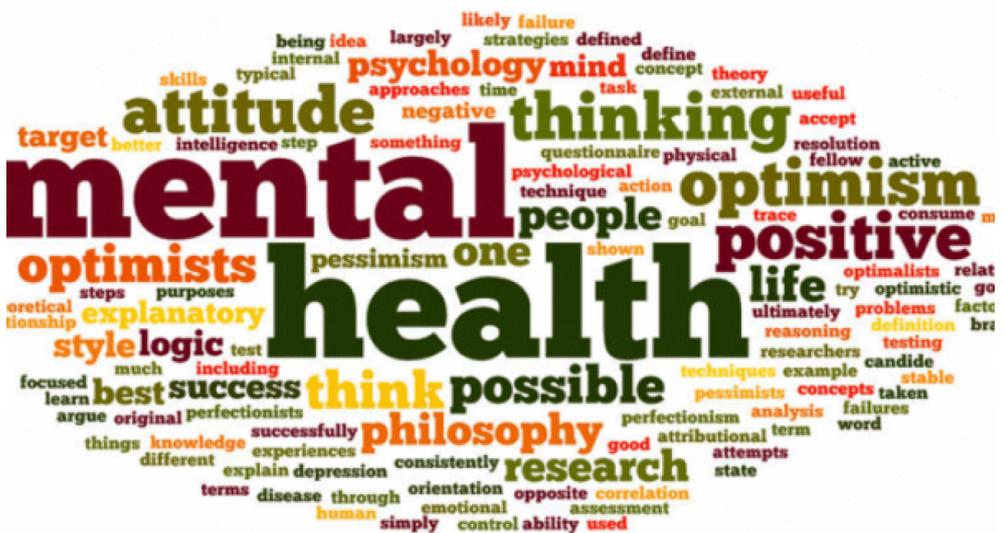
SENATOR Tom A. Wright(District 14)
1311 N US 1
Titusville, FL 32796
(386) 304-7630

REPRESENTATIVE Randy Fine (District 53)
2539 Palm Bay Road NE, Suite 5
Palm Bay, FL 32905
(321) 409-2017

REPRESENTATIVE Renee Plasencia (District 50)
Suite 1C Brevard County
Government Center North 400 South Street
Titusville, FL 32780
(321) 383-5151

REPRESENTATIVE Tyler I. Sirois (District 51)
260 North Tropical Trail
Merritt Island, FL 32953
(321) 449-5711

REPRESENTATIVE Thad Altman (District 52)
1895 South Patrick Drive
Indian Harbor Beach, FL 32937
(321) 425-6179



Get Excited

Contest

NAMI Brevard will put your name into a contest to

WIN

a \$20.00 gift certificate of your choosing 30 days from the distribution of this newsletter.

To register email to namibrevard@gmail.com or call or text 321-345-6365

JULY 1st you can be a Winner!!!



Mental Health Matters