



**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

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](http://www.namibrevard.org)    Email: [namibrevard@gmail.com](mailto:namibrevard@gmail.com)**



## **Proven Ways to Develop A Positive Mindset—and Why It Matters**

**Thinking good thoughts can do more than just boost your mood.**

**Article by: Lauren Greene**

**First, a bit of not-so-positive news.** The human brain is hardwired to focus on the negative. Has your boss ever praised you multiple times on a project, but suggested one or two areas of improvement? You clearly did a top-notch job, but it's likely all your brain can do is zero in on the bad news. Known as the negativity bias, this innate human reaction is an evolutionary holdover that kept our ancestors safe in a threat-filled world. Those who expected the worst were more likely to survive—and therefore pass those crucial pessimistic genes down.

Unfortunately, that primitive proclivity can hold us back in many aspects of modern-day life. “What happens in our highly developed brains is that we tend to focus on something we perceive to be a threat, but that’s not actually one,” explains Dr. Carla Marie Manly, a Santa Rosa, California-based clinical psychologist who specializes in the neurobiology of positivity. You might worry about future ‘what-ifs’, like not making enough money or breaking up with a spouse, going over and over the thoughts like a broken record, until they are burned into your brain. “In neurobiology, there’s something called Hebb’s rule which basically boils down to this: neurons that fire together, wire together,” says Manly. “The more we do something the more it’s going to become hardwired into the brain.”

**So now for the good news:** With patience and practice Hebb’s rule can work in the opposite direction. We can train our brains to start ‘firing and wiring’ together more positive thoughts, and in doing so actually create new neural pathways. Even better and perhaps surprising news, it doesn’t just create a mental shift. A recent body of research is finding that our mindset can actually affect our physical realities. “Our mindsets are not inconsequential, but instead play a dramatic role in determining our health and well-being,” explained Alia Crum, Ph.D. in a TED x Traverse City Talk.

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The head of the Mind & Body Lab at Stanford University, Crum has been developing some pioneering research that looks at how changes in subjective mindsets can alter objective reality through behavioral, psychological, and physiological mechanisms. Here are just some fascinating examples of her work:

### **Mindset Can Boost The Benefit Of Exercise**

In one study Crum and her colleagues looked at a group of 84 hotel housekeepers who were on their feet all day long, burning a substantial amount of calories. Two-thirds of them believed that physical labor was just part of the job and they weren't actually exercising enough. Crum split the group in two and informed one group that the work they do is not only good exercise, but it meets the Surgeon General's requirements for an active lifestyle. Over the course of four weeks that group showed improvements in weight, blood pressure, body mass index, and body fat; while the control group had no changes. This small shift in mindset actually altered their physiological health.

### **It Can Favorably Affect Our Body's Stress Response**

Most people think of stress as something negative and debilitating. Even though there is plenty of evidence that it can actually benefit our bodies and minds. So, what if we were able to shift our mindset about it? Crum tested her theory on a group of overworked employees at a large financial institution. She showed them a series of short videos illustrating how the effects of stress could be either enhancing or debilitating. The participants in the stress-is-enhancing group reported significantly higher levels of well-being, optimism, and work performance.

### **Mindset Can Also Help Encourage Healthier Eating Habits**

Could thinking positively also impact the results of a diet? Crum tested this theory with her milkshake study. Participants all drank a 380-calorie milkshake but were told it was either a healthy 140-calorie shake or a 620-calorie decadent drink. They did this on two separate occasions and both times mentally indulging in a higher caloric treat created a considerably steeper decline in ghrelin, a hunger-inducing hormone that regulates metabolism, than when drinking the 'sensible' shake. When their brains thought they were consuming more calories, their bodies responded accordingly.

But it's not just diet, stress, or exercise where mindset appears to matter. Crum has also discovered similar results in the arena of medicine and placebo effects; while other researchers are making strides in the field of aging and talent and intelligence.

## Three Ways to Flex your Mindset Muscles

So how can you start training your brain to focus on the brighter side of life—and start reaping some of these benefits? Like any new habit, it takes time and practice, as you’ve probably heard before—research shows up to 66 days on average for new patterns to take hold. Here are a few steps to get started with:

**Create a positivity stockpile** When we’re in a mental downward spiral it can be hard to recall happy thoughts in the moment. Manly suggests filling up an empty glass jar with feel-good mantras, positive words, poems, or memories on little slips of paper or writing down things you feel grateful for as they come to you, whether it’s your friends, your musical abilities, or your favorite coffee shop. Rereading and remembering these uplifting messages can trigger feel-good neurochemicals in the brain like serotonin, says Manly. Plus, research shows there are health benefits to writing about deeply positive experiences on a consistent basis.

**Meditate for mindfulness** Meditating is really about learning to stop your mind from constantly harassing you. As negative thoughts begin to arise, you’ll learn to let them go and the more you do it the more mindful you’ll become. “It’s like learning to eat more of the foods that are good for us and bypassing the not so healthy ones,” says Manly. “Meditation can help train your brain to engage in thoughts that feel good and not engage with those that don’t.” A number of studies show that a type of meditation known as metta, or loving-kindness meditation, can be particularly effective when it comes to boosting positive feelings.

**Reframe your thoughts** If you find yourself stuck with a stream of negative thoughts try a helpful technique used in cognitive behavioral therapy. Jot down the thoughts you are having and then begin asking yourself questions about each one to determine how valid it really is. Is the thought fact or more of an opinion? How likely is it to really come true? How will you feel about it in a week? Or a month? What would you tell a close friend if they had that feeling? Then come up with an alternative statement that repositions your thought in a more positive way. For example, rather than thinking you’re a failure because you made one mistake, reframe it as you learned a good lesson that will help you grow and become even better, smarter, or stronger. The more you practice this technique the easier it becomes to find the positive in day to day life.





## **From Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by Jenni Schaefer**

PTSD is an invisible monster. It disguises reality. When I was sucked into what I learned to call the trauma vortex, I often couldn't distinguish between what was real and what wasn't. I thought I was going crazy.

PTSD told me this over and over again: You're not safe. You never will be. Being dead would be better than living one more day like this. The message from my illness was clear: Give up.

Fortunately, thanks to my prior, hard-fought—and victorious—recovery from an eating disorder, I knew that feelings of hopelessness and helplessness are just a part of mental illness. At one point or another, most of us who struggle believe that we are too far gone to ever get better.

While I have written about my eating disorder recovery in several books, my battle against PTSD and its accompanying and unrelenting depression are lesser known. I haven't spoken much about this experience yet, because for so long, I didn't even know that I suffered from trauma, much less PTSD.

Even though I had sought help from well-meaning doctors and therapists for years, my PTSD and trauma were continually missed and dismissed. It wasn't until I visited “Dr. Google” with the words “exaggerated startle response,” that I came to learn the truth: I wasn't losing my mind. I was struggling with a real problem that had an actual name. Indeed, in light of the fact that PTSD is a brain injury, the flashbacks, nightmares, rage, and utter despair actually made sense.

### **Heading in the Right Direction**

The best thing about the diagnosis of PTSD is that it pointed me in the direction of help. Posttraumatic stress disorder is very treatable. A good first step in healing is to pursue evidence-based treatments, which are backed by rigorous scientific research. In my recovery, prolonged exposure therapy, commonly referred to as PE, was one key. I even found an excellent PE therapist on this very website. (Thanks, ADAA!)

After lots of falling down and getting back up again in the process of recovery, I now know that PTSD is not a life sentence. Today my nightmares are gone, I rarely startle, and incredibly I have fallen in love with life. The world isn't out to get me after all, and I feel safe. Finally, I am living in real time and not trapped in the past. While the fact that I experienced trauma will never go away, PTSD itself is fading.

I am not just speaking from my own experience but rather from the perspectives of women and men who struggled—and got better—before me, those who shared their hope with me when I had none for myself. In my PTSD therapy group, all of our trauma experiences were different, but the symptoms of suffering we shared. During group sessions, my friends and I never talked about our specific traumas because what mattered most was our getting better. Slowly, step-by-step, we did.

And you can, too. Yes, PTSD is a monster that absolutely wants to destroy your life; it almost took mine. But I have learned—and you will, too—that we are more powerful than PTSD. After all, we survived. Out of unbearable pain and suffering, an authentic, enriching, and meaningful life can emerge.

When I searched the ADAA website for help years ago, I never would have believed that my words would appear in “Personal Stories of Triumph.” Impossible. But here you are, reading my story. Like my friends before me, my life has come full circle in the most amazing ways. Now it’s your turn: Do the impossible. Get help, trust yourself, and never, never, never give up.

Jenni Schaefer is a bestselling author and is a Senior Fellow with The Meadows. To learn more, visit her website.

## **Contact Your Legislative Representatives**

**[flsenate.gov](http://flsenate.gov)**

**or**

**[myfloridahouse.gov](http://myfloridahouse.gov)**

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**Sometimes, life  
will kick you around, but  
sooner or later you realize  
you're not just a survivor.  
You're a warrior and you're  
stronger than anything life  
throws your way.**

Brooke Davis





### Membership Form

You can Join NAMI by going online to [www.nami.org](http://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 \_\_\_\_\_

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CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIPCODE \_\_\_\_\_

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

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