



National Alliance on Mental Illness

Southwest Ohio

NAMI Southwest Ohio's Peer Partners is a one-on-one support system for individuals experiencing situational mental health concerns as well as individuals experiencing heightened symptoms of mental health conditions as a result of the pandemic. This program has been created as a means of support during these unprecedented times. We know that the mental health ramifications of this crisis can be as tough as the physical health challenges and may persist in the aftermath.

Why now?

- One in five adults experience mental illness in a given year, and these numbers are expected to increase significantly during these unprecedented times.
- Prevention and early intervention are key to helping people avoid serious mental illness.
- Isolation, loss of routine, financial hardship, discomfort with telehealth visits, and fear all add to existing challenges for those already living with mental illness.

How is This Program Unique?

- As with all NAMI SWOH's programs, *Peer Partners* is offered at no cost.
- Our trained peers are well acquainted with the struggle, fear, and hopelessness that those experiencing mental health concerns share. Because of this commonality, they are in a unique position to relate to their partner's experience. They have walked this walk and faced similar challenges!

How Does the Program Work?

- Email support@namiswoh.org or call (513) 351-3500 to let our referral specialist know that you are looking for one-on-one support.
- Our specialist will talk with you briefly in order to match you with the peer most appropriately suited to your experience.
- Your designated peer is available to call you two times per week, for one month.
- Calls are limited to 30 minutes each, to respect both parties' time.

Who Can Request Peer Support?

- Participants must be 18 years of age.
- Anyone experiencing situational anxiety or depression, perhaps for the first time, precipitated by the pandemic.
- Anyone with a mental health diagnosis experiencing additional difficulties due to the pandemic.

Who is a Peer Support Partner?

- An adult who lives well with a mental health diagnosis.
- A peer who understands what you are dealing with and wants to help your journey of wellness and recovery by lending an ear.
- Our trained peers are *not mental health professionals* but can relate to your experiences. They DO NOT “fix,” save, give advice, or treat participants in this program. Instead, NAMI peers share their journey of coping with anxiety or depression. NAMI peers may share their own personal coping strategies and what works for them.

Testimonial

- *"Cheryl* has been a true lifeline to me. About two months ago, things seemed to quickly spiral out of control, beginning with anxiety about the COVID 19 crisis. I called the NAMI office and was treated with such compassion and kindness. Just her voice was so calming. She reassured me that things would get better. She told me about other resources and most importantly continues to reach out to me. I have had occasion to call her when I'm uncertain what to do and she continues to offer me constructive help. Cheryl's focus is on me and my challenges, but at the end of our first conversation, she let me know of her own experience with mental illness. This was an added layer of helpfulness because I know she truly understands. I'm very grateful for the support of NAMI."* - Peer Partner Participant

*names changed for anonymity

Peer Partner's Perspective

- *"As a NAMI volunteer, it is my passion to help those living with mental illness.. Sometimes the way I can do this is by simply being a listener. I have had the pleasure of talking over the phone with those who call the NAMI support line and it's a great way to connect, have conversation, and find light in these uncertain times. Everyone who is connected with NAMI knows that no precursors or explanations are needed... let's just talk! We are all in this together."* - NAMI SWOH Peer Partner