



## COVID-19 UPDATE:

*As of August, 2020, NAMI Amador's meetings continue to be held via Zoom.*

*Please check our website for updates:*

*[www.namiamador.org](http://www.namiamador.org). We look forward to seeing you soon.*

## JOIN US ON ZOOM!

9/22/2020

### GENERAL MEETING:

For Members and  
Friends

5:30 PM

9/22/2020

### FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP:

For Family and  
Caregivers

7:00 PM

9/17/2020

### OPEN BOARD MEETING:

Everyone Welcome

6:30 PM.

### FREE COVID-19 Testing Available!

*\*By Appointment Only*

St. Katharine Drexel  
Catholic Church is offering  
free coronavirus testing.

Please visit:

<https://www.projectbaselene.com/study/covid-19> to  
schedule!

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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2. SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE: WHAT TO DO
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It is wildfire season in California. And for some, it is a season of heightened anxiety and panic attacks. Being fearful about a fire can have negative effects on one's mental illness. Feelings such as overwhelming anxiety, constant worrying, trouble sleeping, and other depression-like symptoms are common responses before, during, and after wildfires.

“Who is at risk?”

**Children and teens:** After a wildfire, young people may worry that another one will happen again, especially if they witnessed the fire and the loss of their home. Some children may become withdrawn, while others may become agitated and irritable and display outbursts of anger.

**Older adults:** Older adults are more likely to need social support to reduce the effects of stress and move forward on the path of recovery. They also may have limited physical mobility and lack independence.

**First responders and recovery workers:** These individuals may experience prolonged separation from loved ones (depending on the severity of the wildfire) and show signs of mental fatigue.

*If you or anyone you know is experiencing anxiety due to the wildfires, you are not alone. Call the Disaster Distress Hotline 1-800-985-5990 or text **TalkWithUs** to 66746 for support and counseling.”*

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/disaster->



### A STORY FROM THE HEART...



I am Shilpa Rasmusson. I grew up in a lower middle-income family of six, in a small town in eastern India. My father, mother, older brother and eldest sister, my grandfather and I, all shared a small two-bedroom apartment. As far back as I can remember, my mother used to suffer from "depression" for several months in the year. (I later realized, after I got my own diagnosis, that she actually must have had Bipolar Disorder 2, most commonly misdiagnosed as depression even today). By the age of 12, I had learnt how to cook a whole meal for our family of six, and by age 15, when my sister got married and moved out, I knew how to shop for groceries for the whole month for our family and how to run our home. I had stopped inviting any of my friends over, because I was too ashamed of what they would think of my mother. When in one of her depressive episodes, she would walk around the house muttering to herself, ignoring everyone around her, or just lie in bed all day, and I would have to help get her out of bed, get dressed and eat her meals. By age 18 I had learnt how to recognize when she was going into one of her depressions, what some of her triggers were, and how to switch her medications so she would come out of the depression quicker. I hated her when she was in her depressions, because I was too young to understand, and too afraid and ashamed to talk to anyone about it. The subject was never discussed in my family; we just lived "around" it, talking only about the practicalities of making sure she was fed and her medications were being taken (she also had diabetes). I had to grow up too fast.

When I completed my graduation, the first thing I did was move out to another city. I started working and was lucky enough to get very good jobs. I finally stayed put for 16 years at a very high-stress job, which, combined with stress

from my marriage, and having to nurse my father through cancer and my mother-in-law through an emergency triple by-pass followed by a stroke, led to my having a sort of burnout. I'd been diagnosed with depression at age 33 and been receiving medication and counseling for it for 8 years, but knew it was something more than that. At age 44 (when I suffered the burnout) I spent a whole year travelling the country, consulting various specialists (endocrinologists, gynecologists, psychiatrists, psychologists....). I finally went to NIMHANS, the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences in Bangalore out of desperation. There the senior consultant prescribed a series of tests and asked me to have them done through a private practitioner of psychiatry of my choice. I went to one in Bombay and got the tests done, and they finally arrived at my diagnosis - Mild Bipolar Disorder 2.

The diagnosis came as a relief, because I finally was able to understand why I had been compelled to act in ways that went against my intrinsic nature during certain (high-stress) periods of my life (I went through several episodes of kleptomania through my late teens, and was unfaithful once to my husband; both behaviors that go completely against my inherent nature, and that left me feeling even worse because even though I hated myself for doing those things, I couldn't stop myself). I also never got to say to my mother that I now understood what she had been going through, that I understood it wasn't something she chose to do nothing about... she died fairly suddenly at age 57, before I could get back to my hometown to see her.

When I got my diagnosis, I was put on medication and counseling for about 18 months, and then in consultation with my psychiatrist, I was weaned off the medications over the next 6-8 months. I know I'm one of the lucky ones - mine is mild enough that I can manage it with the major changes I made in my lifestyle. I have been medication-free for the last 5 years and have been living a productive life since then. Two years ago my psychiatrist told me that he didn't

need to monitor me anymore. If I felt the need, I was welcome to take an appointment and go see him, but he was confident that I had learned how to manage my bipolar disorder and live with it. That is one of the proudest moments in my life.

I now talk to people openly about living with bipolar disorder, because if my openness about it prompts even one person to ask for help instead of feeling ashamed about it, everything that I've been through will be worth it.

Living with a mental illness is not anything to be ashamed of. And living with bipolar disorder and yet being productive is possible; it may not be easy, but it is definitely possible. For some it may take longer to find the correct medications that work for them, others may be able to find the right combination sooner. Some may find a good therapist quickly, others maybe not... But never give up hope, and never give up on yourself. You are worth it, and in the end, you **will** be able to find your balance, and the right support, and the right kind of lifestyle that allows you to be happy, at peace, and productive. And once you are there, then maybe, like me, you can tell your story too, and help someone else out.

-Shilpa Rasmusson: NAMI Member

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE YOUR STORY?

Sharing your personal experience with mental illness can greatly help someone struggling with theirs. If you would like to be featured in next month's newsletter, please email:

[ENEWELL1204@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ENEWELL1204@GMAIL.COM).



## Coronavirus and Mandated Reporting

AUGUST 2020

Due to the stay at home orders in place across the Country and especially in Amador, reports of suspected child abuse have gotten lower, and lower. However, that does not mean there are any less children suffering in their own homes. Here is some information on what you can do if you suspect child abuse:

# COVID-19

## Keeping an Eye on Our Kids

*Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, reports of suspected child abuse have decreased. With schools closed and other activities cancelled, children have less contact with mandated reporters, like teachers or coaches, who are required to call in suspected child abuse.*



As families struggle to navigate these challenging times, many factors such as health concerns, lack of control, and the fear of the unknown are leading to increased stress, anxiety, and sometimes an increase in the use of alcohol and drugs as coping strategies, but children could face neglect and abuse made worse by these difficult situations.

### How can I help?

Most reports of abuse involve neglect, so finding ways to support families who are stretched too thin - emotionally and/or financially - is critical. Local groups are stepping up to make resources available during this uncertain time, but neighbors and friends can help too:

- Purchase gift cards to local businesses for families to take out meals, groceries, or gas
- Share information about community resources and organizations that help families
- Offer to be phone support while someone is trying to navigate finding the help they need
- If someone is an essential worker, make them a meal or offer child care
- Lend a listening ear, having someone to turn to during stressful times eases the sense of isolation and hopelessness



### What if I suspect something?



Most indicators of abuse are relatively easy to spot in person, from unexplained injuries to drastic mood changes. If you suspect abuse, try to "get some eyes on the kids" to determine if a child is safe.

Try to get a child on a video call or face-time to see if they seem to be eating enough, what their mood is like, or if they show obvious signs of physical trauma.

*Remember, it's not up to you to PROVE the abuse or neglect is happening, it's simply enough to have reasonable suspicion and to be concerned about that child's safety.*

**To report suspected child abuse or neglect in Amador County  
call toll free 1-844-835-3685 or (209) 223-6550.**



**Child Abuse Prevention Council of Amador**  
PO Box 815, Jackson, CA 95642  
(209) 223-5921  
[www.amadorcapc.org](http://www.amadorcapc.org)  
[info@amadorcapc.org](mailto:info@amadorcapc.org)

**Helping families through  
these difficult times will  
help keep children safe.**



## Resources For You

### Phone Numbers:

NAMI Amador: 209-256-1293

Amador County Behavioral Health: 209-223-6412

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Sierra Wind and Recovery Center: 209-223-1956

Victory Village Veterans Center: 209-223-2286

Senior Center: 209-223-0442S

### Helpful Articles:

911 Tips and Guidelines: <https://www.nena.org/page/911TipsGuidelines>

NAMI Help Online: [info@nami.org](mailto:info@nami.org)

- For information about our *weekly Connection Support Group* call contact group facilitator Joelle Miller: 209-256-1293.
- For information on our *Family Support Group* please contact group facilitators Terri: 209-418-5615; & Stacey: 209-304-0868.



**NAMI CA'S Annual Conference is Approaching Fast!** Although it will be virtual this year, the two-day conference presents a continuity of Meaningful discussions and connections with statewide peers and stakeholders.

**PLEASE REGISTER HERE:**

<https://41339.thankyou4caring.org/nami-ca-annual-conference-2020>



Check out our website, [www.namiamador.org](http://www.namiamador.org), for updates and more information.