

NAMI Basics Education Program

The fundamentals of caring for you, your family and your child with mental illness

What is NAMI Basics?

NAMI Basics is the new signature education program for parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents living with mental illnesses. The program was developed around elements that have been extensively tested and found to be highly effective in the field, including:

- Recognition of mental illness as a continuing traumatic event for the child and the family
- Sensitivity to the subjective emotional issues faced by family caregivers and well children in the family
- Recognition of the need to help ameliorate the day-to-day objective burdens of care and management
- Gaining confidence and stamina for what can be a lifelong role of family understanding and support
- Empowerment of family caregivers as effective advocates for their children

The NAMI Basics course is taught by trained teachers who are the parent or other caregivers of individuals who developed the symptoms of mental illness prior to the age of 13 years. All instruction and course materials are free to class participants.

What are the goals of the NAMI Basics program?

1. To give the parent/caregiver the fundamental information necessary to be an effective caregiver.
2. To help the parent/caregiver cope with the traumatic impact that mental illness has on the child living with the illness and the entire family.
3. To provide tools for the parent/caregiver to use even after completing the program that will assist in making the best decisions possible for the care of the child.
4. To help the parent/caregiver take the best care possible of the entire family – especially themselves.

What does the course include?

- Introduction to the normative stages of emotional reactions of the family to the trauma of mental illness
- Insights into an empathic understanding of the subjective, lived experience of the child living with the mental illness
- Current information about Attention Deficit Disorder, Major Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Childhood Schizophrenia and Substance Abuse Disorders
- Current research related to the biology of mental illness and the evidence-based, most effective treatment strategies available, including medications used to treat mental illness in children and adolescents
- Specific workshops to learn problem solving, listening and communication skills
- Examples of strategies that have been found helpful in handling challenging behaviors in children and adolescents
- Information about the systems that are major players in the lives of children and adolescents with mental illness – the school system and the mental health system
- Exposure to personal record keeping systems that have proven to be effective for parents/caregivers in their interactions with the school and healthcare systems

- Information on planning for crisis management and relapse
- Information on locating appropriate supports and services within the community
- Information on advocacy initiatives designed to improve and expand services, with an emphasis on personal advocates for the parent/caregiver and child on an individual level

Ask the Doctor

As part of the NAMI Basics Education Program curriculum development, NAMI's Medical Director, Dr. Ken Duckworth, answers a few of the most commonly asked questions by parents and other caregivers of children and adolescents with mental illness. [View the video's!](#)

Pilot Study of the Effectiveness of NAMI Basics

Missouri State University is conducting an evaluation of pilot phase of the NAMI Basics program. Dr. Paul Deal, psychologist, is the lead investigator for the project. The evaluation will consist of a pre-post assessment of participants attending classes in Illinois, South Carolina and Utah between January and May 2008.

[Back](#)