

Tony and His Mental Illness

by Emily Scibilia

He sprints into the room, a look of sheer terror on his face as his fingers claw through the many objects shielding his path to the door. Heart pumping and jaw locked, Tony realizes that the enemy will soon be on him and he has no chance to flee from the peril of disobedience. Hearing the footsteps behind him thumping closer and closer, he leaps to the floor wailing out with remorse and self-pity. Finally, they are standing over him. Tony screams and jolts around on the floor trying to find the nearest object to protect himself. Nothing however is around him but the legs of his adversaries. He grabs a hold and strikes as hard as he possibly can hoping to make a break-away escape to the door once the enemy is distracted. His attempt is successful and Tony makes a frenzied dash to the kitchen grabbing a knife like a knight unsheathing his sword before charging into battle. At this point I, studying at the kitchen table, can not bear the noise anymore and scream at the



Tony and Emily

top of my lungs, "Mom! Dad! Tony's got a knife again. Make him leave so I can do my physics homework!"

You see, Tony is not some grown man on the run from his captors trying to save himself from physical abuse and torture. Instead he is my fourteen year-old brother denied a Nintendo game before his homework is finished. Both of my parents mobilize and corral Tony until his chest stops heaving

and he comes to his senses. Placing the knife back into its holder, he slowly sulks out of the room and stumbles upstairs to sleep it off. This is what my family affectionately calls a "Tony Meltdown". Sometimes I become extremely agitated with my parent's differential punishment for Tony's actions compared to his four siblings. I cause a slight commotion in the car while driving to school and have my television removed for two weeks, while Tony has a nuclear holocaust one evening and is sent upstairs to rest and contemplate his actions.

However my family has come to realize that Tony has both attention deficit disorder

and bipolar disorder. His life seems to be like a rollercoaster with constantly changing dips and bends. He struggles daily to fit in with his classmates and has severe learning disabilities that set him apart from his peers. These disorders cause him much pain when dealing with everyday tasks and many times even the small punishments received from my parents seem overwhelming to him. Whenever Tony is grounded or sent to his room, we realize that his illness may seem like an inconvenience to us, but in reality it causes him much more emotional turmoil and suffering.

Sometimes these "Tony Meltdowns" also occur at our local mall or in other public places. Many people look at Tony and automatically judge

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A message from the Executive Director

As I write this message, NAMI is preparing to travel in June to Austin, Texas for our 2005 Annual Convention. Together in Austin, we will celebrate the new frontiers of recovery. Developments in research and treatment are making it possible for people with serious mental illnesses to live lives that were unimaginable just a few years ago.

NAMI's unrelenting advocacy has expanded the commitment to research on the genetic and biochemical causes of mental illness in both the public and private sectors. This is tremendous progress and a sign of NAMI's influence.

The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health report embraces "a future when anyone with mental illness will recover, a future when mental illnesses can be prevented or cured, a future when mental illnesses are detected early, and a future when everyone with mental illness at any stage of life has access to effective treatments and supports-essentials for

living, working, learning, and participating fully in the community."

NAMI's relentless and effective advocacy on the local, state and national levels is working to ensure that services and supports are in place for people with mental illnesses to lead satisfying and productive lives as fully equal members of our society-ensuring that that future

envisioned by the New Freedom Report might actually be real.

But, much work remains to be done and there are black clouds on the horizon. These are perilous times for America's mental health system, rosy future visions notwithstanding. Budget cuts and service reductions face every community. The consequences of untreated mental illness have personal and economic costs to all of us.

So at our 2005 Annual Convention we'll both celebrate the strides we have made and we'll map out our strategy to continue building on our collective strength and effective-



ness. Only by working together will we be able to fight the battle necessary to transform our mental health system.

This issue of NAMI Voices continues to offer stories of hope and recovery even in the face of significant challenges. Thank you for your ongoing support of NAMI. We cannot move ahead to create effective change and the transformation of America's mental health system without you.

Mike Fitzpatrick

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The Faces of NAMI

Mike Skinner Manchester, NH

Mike Skinner is a professional musician who provided anthems for NAMI New Hampshire's non-partisan "I Vote, I Count" rally during the 2000 New Hampshire presidential

primary election and for the state's 2003 NAMI WALKS celebration. He grew up in Billerica, Massachusetts and learned to play the drums at the age of 10, later performing in bands at school dances, teen

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The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

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NAMI 2005 National Convention Program at a Glance

Saturday, June 18th

- 9:00am – 6:00pm.....Convention Registration Desk Open
- 9:30am – 12:15pm.....STATE LEADER AND COUNCIL MEETINGS
- 9:30am – 12:15pm.....Affiliate Leaders Networking
- 1:00pm – 3:15pmFamily-to-Family Institute
- 9:45am – 4:00pm.....Estate Planning Seminar
- 2:00pm – 2:50pm.....Leadership Institute: Track One
- 3:00pm – 3:50pm.....Leadership Institute: Track Two
- 4:00pm – 4:50pm.....Leadership Institute: Track Three
- 4:15pm – 4:45pmConvention Orientation
- 5:00pm – 6:00pmShaping NAMI's Future: Open Mic with the Board of Directors



NAMI Members cutting loose at the consumer dance!

Sunday, June 19th

- 8:00am – 8:45am.....Interfaith Worship Service
- 9:00am – 2:00pm.....Asian American and Pacific Islander Mental Health Symposium
- 9:30am – 10:45amNAMI Policy Briefing: Housing
- 9:30am – 12:30pm.....SPECIAL INTEREST NETWORKING MEETINGS
- 10:00am – 12:00pmLearn About NAMIWalks
- 11:00am – 12:15pmNAMI Policy Briefing: Medicare Drug Benefit
- 1:00pm – 2:00pmNAMI Policy Brief: NAMI's Agenda on Capitol Hill
- 1:00pm – 2:00pmOpen Mic with the NAMI National Consumer Council
- 3:15pm – 4:45pmOPENING PLENARY: Transforming the Mental Health System in America
- 5:00pm – 9:00pmCELEBRATION RECOVERY! (Austin Convention Center)
- 5:15pm – 6:00pmState Caucuses
- 6:30pm – 8:00pm.....NAMI C.A.R.E. Consumer Support

Monday, June 20th

- 7:30am – 8:20amState Caucuses
- 8:30am – 9:20amState Caucuses
- 9:45am – 12:30pm.....PROGRAM TRACKS
- 12:30pm – 1:30pm.....Poster Session
- 1:30pm – 2:30pm.....BROWN BAG LUNCHES
- 2:30pm – 6:00pm.....Spirituality and Faith in Communities of Color
- 2:45pm – 4:00pmWORKSHOPS – GROUP ONE
- 4:15pm – 5:30pm.....WORKSHOPS – GROUP TWO
- 6:30pm – 8:00pm.....NAMI C.A.R.E. Consumer Support Group
- 7:00pm – 10:00pm.....EVENING SESSIONS



NAMI Executive Director Mike Fitzpatrick announces at the Opening Plenary that the Smith Bill for youth depression and suicide just passed in Congress and convention attendees respond with a standing ovation.

Tuesday, June 21st

- 8:30am – 10:00amRESEARCH PLENARY: Depression Across the Lifespan
- 10:15am – 11:45amNAMI NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE (Annual Business Meeting)
- 12:30pm – 1:30pm.....Poster Session
- 12:45pm – 1:45pm.....Family-to-Family Program Directors Meeting
- 12:45pm – 1:45pm.....BROWN BAG LUNCHES
- 2:00pm – 3:30pm.....ASK-THE-DOCTOR SESSIONS
- 3:45pm – 5:00pmWORKSHOPS – GROUP THREE
- 5:15pm – 6:45pmNAMI C.A.R.E. Consumer Support Group
- 7:00pm – 9:30pm.....NAMI FIESTA! (Alumni Center at the University of Texas)

Go to www.NAMI.org/Convention for full details. We hope to see you in Austin!

Leadership Alliance Corner

Greetings to all of NAMI's Leadership Alliance members and Welcome to our newest members! You are now part of a group of special NAMI friends who contribute an annual gift of \$500 or more. Levels of giving include:

- \$500 to \$999Member
- \$1,000 to \$2,499Silver Circle
- \$2,500 to \$4,999Gold Circle
- \$5,000 and abovePresident's Circle

NAMI recognizes its top supporters and has established The Leadership Alliance to service and recognize their important role in helping to sustain NAMI's mission as the Nation's Voice on Mental Illness.

Four times a year, Leadership Alliance donors are invited to participate in and receive exclusive

benefits in recognition of their generosity.

Among the most popular Leadership Alliance benefit is the by-invitation-only dinner held at the NAMI annual convention, this year in Austin, Texas. Current Leadership Alliance members should have received their invitations this year's event planned for the beautiful lakeside restaurant, The Shoreline Grill, which includes a presentation by NAMI's medical director, Ken Duckworth, M.D.

And we are pleased to announce the upcoming launch of our Silver, Gold and President's Circle Campaigns for current and new Leadership Alliance members who enhance their contribution to these levels.

To learn more about NAMI's Leadership Alliance giving club and its benefits, how to become a member, renew your membership, or upgrade to the next level, please call Linda Radcliffe at 1-800-950-6264, ext. 7970.

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centers, and night-clubs. By age 21, he had moved to the United Kingdom and traveled for two years. He has owned and operated a successful management and booking agency for musicians and now performs as a singer, songwriter, and guitarist (see www.mskinnermusic.com).



Mike Skinner

He picked up guitar only eight years ago—despite a struggle with severe depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. His song “Walk with Me” from his *Train of Tears* album sends a powerful message against stigma:

*When you look at me, what do you see
Have you judged me by the lack of a smile
But come with me, step into my shoes
Can you walk with me for one mile
Then perhaps you'd see another*

*part of me
I'm also a man who likes to sing
I too have hopes, hopes and dreams
To be more than what you labeled me.*

Gayathri Ramprasad Portland, OR

Gayathri served as a steering committee member for NAMI WALKS Northwest in 2003 and as chair of NAMI Oregon's Family Team, which was instrumental in the event's success—drawing nearly 2,000 participants and raising \$185,000. She was born and raised in Bangalore, India and has lived in the Portland area for the past 19 years. She is a recent MBA graduate from George Fox University in Portland and is currently on the NAMI Oregon board. Married and the “blessed mother of two,” she recalls that 15 years ago, “I was a suicidally

depressed mother trying to dig my grave in my backyard with my bare hands.” While in an isolation room of a psychiatric ward, she had her epiphany in life: “Breakdowns are opportunities for breakthroughs.” Her life since has been a testament to recovery and reintegration. Her father, brother and sister also have struggled with mental illnesses and triumphed in coping with their illnesses, each in their own way, through “unflinching faith and the undying love of our mother, spouses, and children,” as well as adequate medical care.

Gayathri's calling in life is to be a “servant-leader” in transforming the mental health system both in America and abroad. Her areas of focus include public speaking, publishing, and policy-making.

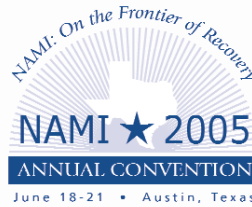


Gayathri Ramprasad

NAMI 2005 Convention

“The opportunities presented here to learn the latest information, to hear of other strategies, and to realize the international scope of support have been invaluable. We have been energized and recommitted to the cause.”

“This was my first convention. I am a consumer and this convention gave me hope that consumers have a place in this society. We can work full time and attend wonderful events like this.”



Join us June 18-21, 2005 when NAMI travels to the Lone Star State to **explore and celebrate the frontiers of recovery**. New developments in research and treatment are making it possible for people with serious mental illnesses to live lives that were unimaginable just a few years ago. And, effective advocacy on local, state, and national levels are ensuring that the social supports are in place for **people with mental illnesses to lead satisfying and productive lives as fully equal members of our society**.

Certainly, much work remains to be done. So, at our 2005 Annual Convention we'll both celebrate the strides we have made and map out our strategy to continue to move forward.

The NAMI convention will offer you four days of the **latest information on new treatments and groundbreaking research**, as well as new developments in critical public and private policymaking. We'll give you ideas of where the next steps need to be taken and together develop strategies and tactics that will support our continued success.

The program will feature plenary sessions offering up-to-the-minute information from some of the sharpest policy and scientific thinkers in the country, learning tracks on such topics as putting consumers and families in the driver's seat of the mental health system, **our ever-popular ask-the-doctor sessions**, and dozens of workshops from the NAMI grassroots.

We look forward to welcoming you to Austin in June for information, inspiration, networking and fun!

- For more information, go to: www.nami.org/convention
- Register on-site for \$250. Registration opens at 9:00 am on Saturday, June 20 at the Austin Hilton Hotel.



2107 Wilson Blvd. ~ Arlington, VA 22201 ~ www.nami.org

Who belongs at the NAMI Convention?

- consumers
- family members
- advocates and friends
- mental health professionals
- policy makers
- NAMI leaders
- anyone who believes in the importance of the NAMI movement

For more information, go to: www.nami.org/convention

“This convention gave me a perspective and insight on mental illness that I never had. Thank you.”

“My first NAMI convention was incredible! I truly felt empowered and optimistic about research developments. It was amazing to have so many people in one place who are all dealing in some way with mental illness. There is strength in numbers!”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the conference, especially the people I met. Give yourselves a pat on the back.”

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him as spoiled or infantile. These onlookers do not understand Tony's condition and their intolerance causes severe stress and frustration for my whole family. Above all else, I wish that someday mental health awareness will be common knowledge in our society. So when Tony has another one of these tantrums, he would be our main focus not the intrusive bystanders who tell my family he needs to learn obedience. When Tony is doing well, I find him to be humorous, witty, affectionate, and kind. He is friendly to everyone and is not

judgmental or rude. In the future, I hope that these close minded people will see the true side of Tony's personality, instead of judging him because of his illness.

Editor's Note: Emily, who is 17 years old and in the 12th grade, lives in Beaver, Pennsylvania with her parents and four siblings. Her mom, Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia, M.D., is a psychiatrist and a member of the NAMI National Board of Directors. The NAMI program StigmaBusters works to fight misperceptions about mental illness every day. NAMI StigmaBusters is a group

of dedicated advocates across the country and around the world who seek to fight the inaccurate, hurtful representations of mental illness. Whether these images are found in TV, film, print, or other media, StigmaBusters speak out and challenge stereotypes in an effort to educate society about the reality of mental illness and the courageous struggles faced by consumers and families every day. StigmaBusters' goal is to break down the barriers of ignorance, prejudice, or unfair discrimination by promoting education, understanding, and respect.

A Gala in New Orleans

From the pages of the *Times-Picayune*:

"The name was NAMI and the message, unmasking.

On a recent Friday evening, "Unmasking the Mystery of Mental

Illness" underscored "An Intimate Evening to Benefit NAMI and NAMI Louisiana", held at the Conservatory of the Two Sisters in City

Park's New Orleans Botanical Garden. The format for the 25th Anniversary celebration was cocktails; a seated dinner; a piano tribute by Paul Soniat; and additional musical entertainment by the Jason Mingledorff Quintet.



Dr. Edward Foulks and Patricia Warburg Cliff

Chief among the headliners were Patricia Warburg Cliff, NAMI Mind of America Foundation; event chair-couple Mr. and Mrs. Walter C. Flower III, and honoree Dr. Edward Foulks, emeritus professor of psychiatry, former associate dean at Tulane University and retiring NAMI national board member.

John Breaux and Billy Tauzin—both former U.S. Senator and Representative, respectively—

were honored as well."

The evening raised over \$70,000 in support of NAMI's mission, raised public awareness, and was made possible by the generosity of the committee members and the following

patrons:

Diamond: Mr. and Mrs. Walter C. Flower III

Sapphire: Darwin and Mary Jane Fenner Family Foundation

Emerald: Eugenie and Joseph Jones Family Foundation; PhRMA; Mr. William F. Reilly

Ruby: Mrs. Adelaide Wisdom Benjamin; Astra-Zeneca; Mr. H. Bruce Shreves; Johnson & Johnson; Dana and Stephen Hansel Family Foundation, Inc.; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Coleman

Amethyst: Ambassador & Mrs. John G. Weinmann; Mr. Andrew Rinker; Dick and Katrina Gay; Gustaf Westfeldt McIlhenny Family Foundation; Lorraine Caffrey Friedrichs; Mrs. Richard B. Montgomery, Jr.; Mrs. Morrell F. Trimble; The Whitney National Bank; Wolfensohn Family Fund

New Brochures for Suicide Prevention Available Soon

NAMI, with the support of the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, is in the process of developing an educational suicide prevention resource kit for patients, families and medical professionals to be distributed through emergency departments across the country. The resource kit will consist of three separate brochures—one for individuals who have attempted suicide, one for their families and one for medical professionals in the emergency department. The patient and family brochures will provide useful information on reducing the risk of suicide at home, preparing a safety plan,

accessing community support and the importance of follow-up care after a suicide attempt. Brochures will be distributed to consumers and families upon discharge from the emergency department and will also be translated to Spanish. The companion brochure for emergency department doctors, nurses and social workers will offer tips on communicating with patients and families in accordance with the federal patient privacy standards known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), as well as other tips to enhance care for

individuals who have attempted suicide. The resource kit should be completed by July 2005, at which time all of the brochures will be posted to the NAMI website for public access. NAMI will also be working with the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) to distribute the resource kits to emergency departments across the country. For more information about this project, please contact Abigail Graf at abigail@nami.org.

Editor's Note: ACEP is also a partner in NAMI's Campaign for the Mind of America.