



nami Coping With COVID

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Southwest Ohio

NAMI Southwest Ohio's Coping with COVID (CWC) is a presentation that has been developed to open the conversation about mental health and anxiety during this global pandemic. This 45-minute interactive virtual presentation is designed for businesses and organizations. Anxiety and depression are more prevalent than ever due to the pandemic, and many individuals with no prior history of mental health challenges may experience them for the first time. Employees may be particularly susceptible to anxiety in a world where they have little control and increased stress. Individuals who live with a mental health condition work very hard every day to manage their illness; in the midst of a crisis, it can become even more challenging for them.

How Important is Mental Health During a Global Crisis?

- One in five Americans experience mental illness each 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, loss of income and insurance within their families, and difficulty accessing healthcare visits add to existing challenges for those already living with a mental illness.
- By now, your organization is adapting to the temporary COVID-19-induced working conditions. Whether employees are working remotely or under altered circumstances in physical settings, there is a danger of rapid declines in productivity, customer service and experience, morale and overall team performance.

How Does the Program Work?

- Presented virtually via Zoom (alternate options for utilizing online platforms already in use) during or outside of traditional business hours, dependent on the organization's needs.
- Delivered by a trained two-person team with lived experience of anxiety or anxiety-related disorders.
- Includes lived experience of the presenters, their recognition of new challenges brought on by the pandemic, and coping skills for new environments.
- *NAMI Southwest Ohio's Coping with COVID* reduces stigma and offers hope through:
 - Education - accurate information about anxiety promotes understanding and dispels myths.
 - Lived experience - putting a human face to anxiety that gives the message that "It's okay/OK to reach out for help."

How is This Program Unique?

- As with all NAMI SWOH's programs, *CWC* is offered at no cost.
- Attendees have the opportunity to learn about anxiety directly from individuals living with it. The sharing of personal lived experiences is powerful and authentic.
- Attendees have the opportunity to ask questions directly of their peers living with anxiety, to share their own coping skills, and to motivate one another to persevere.

How Does NAMI Southwest Ohio's Coping with COVID Benefit Employees?

- Employees receive resources and tools to help themselves, coworkers, or family members who may be experiencing symptoms of anxiety and/or depression.
- By engaging in a discussion about anxiety among their peers, employees dealing with ongoing or situational mental health issues may realize they're not alone.
- Connecting employees with individuals living well with mental illness dispels myths about anxiety and those dealing with it and encourages everyone to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness.
- CWC Instills a message of hope and recovery.

What Are the Key Messages of NAMI Southwest Ohio's Coping with COVID?

- Anxiety, depression, and mental illness are medical conditions like any other physical conditions.
- We are living in stressful times. Not feeling mentally healthy is not anyone's fault or something to be ashamed of.
- You can help yourself, your coworkers, and your loved ones by being aware of signs of anxiety and depression and making sure treatment is sought as soon as possible.
- Although it may feel like it sometimes, you are not alone, and there are many resources you can turn to for support and information.
- There is hope, and we will get through this together.

Testimonials

- *"This was very helpful during a time like this because no one is used to this situation; it was the best time to hear about stress relievers and coping strategies. It was also helpful to hear the presenters share their stories; they let me know we are not alone."*
- *"The presentation was really helpful and I really enjoyed listening and being part of it."*

CWC Presenter Perspectives

- *"There was an energy and excitement I could feel through the video chat that I didn't expect! When people engage after a presentation it really adds to the level of intimacy and their takeaway from the experience. I believe this platform's chat room feature allowed people to feel more comfortable asking us questions because they weren't sitting directly next to their coworkers. Every single time someone shares that they are living with a mental health condition it creates space for others to do the same. To be able to share my story and have a positive impact on these lives is a gift to me. I am truly honored to be a part of this program." - Marisa, CWC Presenter*
- *"The development of this new program to confront the anxiety that is part of living through the COVID-19 pandemic for so many of us is just one example of how much NAMI cares about the community. The present fear, uncertainty, and social distance that we feel can have a big impact on our mental health. This has been an opportunity for me to share my story and the coping strategies that I've had to change in order to deal with the unprecedented circumstances. Guests seemed to appreciate the openness that this program offers and the opportunity to ask questions. It is so encouraging to remind yourself and others that we are in this together!" - Allie, CWC Presenter*