

Stigma Silenced [Stories Spoken]: A Mental Health Podcast

Episode 4.5: Inside NAMI Northern Kentucky with Danei Edelen

Speakers:

Adam Potter (AP) - He/Him

Bailey Patterson (BP) - She/Her, Host

Danei Edelen (DE) - She/Her, Guest

(Introduction Music)

Adam Potter:

Hey everyone, welcome back. Today we're sharing something a little different: a short spotlight featuring someone who's been involved with NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, both as a participant and a staff person. Danei Edelen speaks on her experience with its peer to peer program, what that experience meant to her, and how it shaped her passion for mental health and sleep education. This isn't a full episode; just a personal reflection, but one that offers a meaningful look at how lived experience can lead to purpose.

Bailey Patterson:

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Danei Edelen:

The National Alliance on Mental Illness is the nation's largest grassroots organization for people with a mental illness and their families. It was founded by two mothers who had schizophrenia... You know, two mothers that had a child each that had schizophrenia, and they were told in the 70s that it was due to bad parenting. Well, that was wrong, and they decided to find better solutions. And so NAMI goes very deep into mental illness. You know, NAMI has a number of classes. I got involved in a local affiliate in Cincinnati. I and... I took all the classes. And the exciting thing was, you know, once I got involved in the NAMI world. I

loved it. I have a background in marketing and talking, etc. So I was able to found an affiliate out in my county, Brown County, and that was six years ago. And so you know that affiliate is doing well, and now I'm able to take this position as executive director for NAMI Northern Kentucky. So part of the message is, you know, give yourself time and be honest with yourself and how you're feeling. I mean, that is just so key. But the other thing is, don't give up on your dreams. You know, because I was able I am, I'm passionate that I don't want anybody to have to go through what I am and I did. So that's why I talk about sleep education so much. So there's... the NAMI classes are great. I think what's wonderful about NAMI is that these are people with lived experience. So when I went to the peer to peer class, which is a class for me, there are people like me, you know, and that... that had been through it. And what we do at NAMI connections or family to family classes, is we share our lived experience, we problem solve, we get wisdom from others. So, you know, the message is, you're not alone. So that's, I think that's the most important message. And due to COVID. Everybody has had a taste of mental illness, you know, loneliness, depression, and for some people, suicidal thoughts. So... but, just know that you are not alone, and that people have gone down this road and you can live a productive life. I remember going to the first class that I took. It was a peer to peer class. And actually I dropped out, you know, because it was like, You know what? I can't handle this, you know. But I went back, you know, after some time, and I took the class again, and I loved it. So the biggest thing is... NAMI, when you meet somebody at a support group, you realize you are not alone. They have their own story. You are not crazy, dangerous or violent, you know, which is what our culture for a long time told people like me, but it's much better now. We're making a lot of progress, and you just, you realize, you know, what, if they did it, I can do it. So I think that that's a good, a good starting point

Bailey Patterson:

Yeah, and, um, about, like, the connections you made, you know, with other people with lived experience. Um, how has that impacted your journey with mental health?

Danei Edelen:

Oh, that's key. I mean, the fact that I have friends that I can call if I'm if I'm going through a difficult time, that that's key. In fact, I actually wrote an article in out out in Brown County. I wrote for a newspaper, and I wrote three articles about the warning signs of mental illness, and I interviewed three of my friends that I worked with, you know, presenting and, you know, just to help, again, bust the stigma, but just having that support system, you know that, you know, if I'm having a tough day, you know somebody, it's so key to check in with people in your life. So yeah, I mean, they're some of my closest friends. Are obviously a part of the NAMI

world now, but if you don't have a group of people to kind of pull you up, then you're going to, you're going to, you're going to sink in farther into despair. And that's why the NAMI world is so important, is because you realize you're not alone, and you realize that through, through, through interacting with others. You know, today, I may help you. Tomorrow, you may help me. That's how I would say that.

Bailey Patterson:

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