

In Our Own Voice

At NAMI Austin, a critical component of our mission is to educate our community about mental illnesses in a way that reduces the shame, the isolation, and the stigma that too often prevent a person from seeking effective treatment.

“In Our Own Voice” is an educational presentation given by trained volunteers who are living full and productive lives while personally overcoming the challenges of their mental illnesses. This program provides audiences with practical, useful information about mental illness and available treatments, presented in a heartfelt, compelling, and interactive format.

This award winning 60 to 90 minute presentation is intimate and candid and includes a short video, personal testimony and a question and answer period that allows for honest and open dialog. It is designed to enrich the audience’s understanding of how individuals do cope with the reality of their illnesses while recovering and reclaiming their lives. And more importantly – that mental illnesses are treatable and people do experience recovery.

This program is offered to you at no cost. A presentation can be done at your location at a time convenient for you. We can also arrange to use a conference room at the Austin State Hospital.

Please call the NAMI Austin office at (512) 420-9810 with any questions you might have, or to schedule an In Our Own Voice presentation. Susan Mulcahy, the In Our Own Voice coordinator, will contact you.

Audience Feedback

From Alice Kessner, MSSW, Adult Protective Services In-Home Classroom Trainer...

“I cannot tell you how much the In Our Own Voice presentations have meant to our advanced training for new in-home workers. After each class, participants indicate that the NAMI presentation is the one from which they learn the most.”

From Athan Schindler, MSSW, Director of Social Work, Sumpter and Gonzalez law firm...

“The presentation went beautifully. Our staff has been raving about it ever since. Many people have stopped me in the office and emailed me to tell me how great it was. Jason and Nancy presented in a way that was touching but also matter-of-fact in their own experiences. They listened to all of our questions and answered them thoughtfully.

Attorneys, like social workers or human service providers, work with and help people. They often come across people living with mental illness but rarely (if ever) receive training on the

dynamics of mental illness, how it effects the person, and how to partner with that person to move toward recovery. I would say that the more law firms (particularly criminal defense firms) and criminal justice professionals (particularly probation, judges, and prosecutors) that you can engage to receive this program, the better. There is a great need in the criminal justice system for education, understanding, and empathy for folks with mental illness.”

From Kitty Viek, R.N.,M.S.N., Assoc. Professor, Assoc. Degree Nursing Program, Austin Community College...

“Thank you for arranging guest speakers from In Our Own Voices this summer. The students truly were awed and touched by their stories. As they complete their Austin State Hospital clinical experience, the students say they are just beginning to recognize the human potential of clients whose mental illness is profound, in many cases. To hear first hand that change and recovery are possible, is inspirational. As a nursing educator, I believe that students must encounter inspiration and hope as a part of nursing practice in order to maintain their own optimism and dedication to helping others.”

From Chuck Roper, PhD, LCDC, Parenting in Recovery Program Director, TC Health and Human Services...

“Thank you so much for sharing your stories with our group on Friday. I heard nothing but glowing reviews of your presentation. I appreciate your generosity so much. You guys made the day.”

Presenter Feedback

From Nancy Weaver, In Our Own Voice presenter...

“It is such a delight to clear up misconceptions and begin a rational conversation around mental illness...It is amazing what it has done for my self confidence to speak before strangers about what has always been a source of shame, denial, and discomfort and be applauded, thanked and invited back! One year ago, I was unable to get out of bed for three months. The training was excruciatingly difficult for me and the first talk terrifying and life changing. I could not imagine being at ease talking in front of people, even if it was a group I knew. My big goal is to give a talk from a stage with a microphone (and then go on to be a standup comedian).”

To schedule an “In Our Own Voice” presentation to your organization or community group, please contact the NAMI Austin office at (512) 420-9810.