



NAMI Ending the Silence (ETS) is a 50-minute mental health awareness program for high school age youth. Teens learn how to recognize the early warning signs of mental illness and what to do if they or someone they know is exhibiting these signs. NAMI Ending the Silence instills a message of hope and recovery and encourages teens to reduce stigma and end the silence surrounding mental illness.

How Does the Program Work?

- Presented in health, science or psychology classes, youth groups, clubs and after-school programs.
- Delivered by a trained two-person team, one of whom is a young adult living in recovery with a mental health condition.
- Includes presenter stories, educational slides, videos and discussion.
- Provides teens with resources and tools to help themselves, friends or family members who may be experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition.
- ETS reduces stigma through:
 - Education—provides accurate information about mental illness to promote understanding and dispel myths.
 - Personal contact—puts a human face to mental illness and provides hope that recovery is possible.



How is NAMI Ending the Silence Unique?

- Offered to schools, youth and communities at no cost.
- Provides youth with the unique opportunity to learn about mental health directly from family members and individuals living with a mental health condition.
- Provides an opportunity for youth to ask individuals with lived experience questions directly.
- By engaging youth in a discussion about mental health among their peers, teens dealing with mental health issues realize they're not alone.

Key Messages of NAMI Ending the Silence

- Mental illness is a medical illness like any other physical illness.
- Mental illness is not anyone's fault or something to be ashamed of.
- There are specific, observable early warning signs of mental illness. You can help yourself and your friends by being aware of these signs and making sure treatment is sought as soon as possible.
- If you notice these warning signs in yourself or a friend, it's important to tell a trusted adult as soon as possible. Don't keep warning signs a secret.
- The earlier you seek treatment the better.
- Although it may feel like it sometimes, you are never alone and there are many resources you can turn to for support and information.
- Recovery is possible and there is hope.

Student Testimonials

- *“Thank you, Renee, for coming to my school and sharing our story. You have changed my life forever. The things you explained about your depression relate to how I feel. When I got home, I immediately talked to my parents and hopefully I will get some help. I have had many thoughts of suicide...” – Andrea R.*
- *“I believe I’ve had depression since 7th grade. I have been holding it in for a really long time. After hearing the presentation I went home and told my mom. I told her I need help with this because it is not something I can fix myself; I have tried and tried. Now, after school today, I have a meeting with a psychiatrist. I am really scared, but I know I am doing the right thing.” – Peter B.*
- *“I’m grateful for your presentation because it helped me get the courage to face a mental illness I think I might have and I feel encouraged to seek help.” – Jessica T.*
- *“After your presentation I talked to you about my friend and my concerns about her. I really appreciated your advice and what your program does. It really inspired me to act upon this situation and be brave enough to do so. I have to admit that I didn’t know what to do until your program came to our class.” – Jack A.*

ETS Presenter Perspectives

- *“Ending the Silence succeeds where so many other forms of outreach fail because of the genuine validity of our experience. Unlike many health teachers who work out of a book and have no personal context to draw on we have the lived expertise acquired through years of struggle. We understand the hurt and anguish like no other and have earned the authority to portray hope as more than a concept. To us hope is a way of life that does not diminish our pain or give power to it.” – Danny Gibbs, ETS Presenter*
- *“By participating in NAMI Ending the Silence presentations, I get a chance to teach younger people about my illness, and story of recovery. It only took one person to normalize a very misunderstood health issue and be supportive for me to feel confident enough to seek treatment. I am passionate about the education of mental illness, and believe in striking up a conversation so others can also get help and no longer have to suffer.” – Devin Black, ETS Presenter*
- *“Recently parents from two different families reached out to me after their children had seen NAMI Ending the Silence. Both were thanking me for the work we do along with being grateful to know about us as a resource. They were able to have very meaningful and open conversations with their children/students and happy they are getting this information in the school setting.” – Aileen Caravelli, ETS Presenter*

To learn more about NAMI Ending the Silence, contact Holly Swick at hswick@nami.org or 571-329-0824.

