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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Learning about mental illness is a step towards recovery—sign up for free classes today!**

SAN DIEGO— There are more than 240,000 people in San Diego who experience mental illness. You or your loved one may be one of them and learning about mental illness is one of the most helpful things you can do to aid in the recovery process.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI San Diego) is here to help. They offer classes at no charge for both loved ones of those who have mental illness and those who experience it themselves.

Family-to-Family is a program comprised of a series of 12 classes for the families of persons with serious and persistent brain disorders (mental illnesses). These classes are small and represent a new concept and curriculum. In this model, the course co-teachers are family members themselves and the course has been designed and written by an experienced family member-mental health professional. The course balances education and skill-training with self care, emotional support and empowerment.

Important components of the course are:

- Information about Schizophrenia, Major Depression, Bipolar Illness (Manic Depression), Panic Disorder, and Obsessive Disorder (OCD)
- Coping skills, handling crisis and relapse
- Listening and communication techniques
- Problem solving and limit setting; rehabilitation
- Understanding the actual experience of people suffering from mental illnesses
- Self-care; learning how to recognize normal emotional reactions among families to chronic worry & stress
- Basic information about medications and their side effects
- Information about connecting with appropriate community services and community supports
- Advocacy: getting better services, fighting discrimination

Peer-to-Peer is a unique education program for people with any serious mental illness who are interested in establishing and maintaining his or her wellness and recovery. This course consists of nine two-hour sessions and is taught by a team of three trained “mentors” who have personal experience at living well with mental illness.

Course topics include:

- Stigma and Mental Illness
- Taking Care of Yourself Emotionally, Physically, and Spiritually
- Medication, Coping Strategies, Empowerment, Advocacy, Relationships
- Story Telling
- Create a Relapse Prevention Plan and Advance Directive

NAMI San Diego has a number of these classes starting this spring throughout the county. Family-to-Family classes will be held in: Spring Valley, Santee, Coronado, Alpine and Escondido. Peer-to-Peer will be held in locations in Carlsbad, San Diego and Escondido.

Make a difference in your life and that of your loved one by calling the NAMI San Diego Helpline at 619-543-1434 or 1-800-523-5933 to get signed up for these free classes today. Or, for more information, check out [www.namisandiego.org](http://www.namisandiego.org) and click on ‘Services’ to learn more about scheduled classes.

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