



Sample Family Member Story

1. My introduction

Hello, I'm Jenny Jones from Springville. I'm a member of NAMI Springville, part of America's largest grassroots mental health organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

I'm also the proud mother of a 23-year-old son who lives with bipolar disorder. I'd like to share my story with you and ask for your support of mental health services.

2. What happened

When my son was still a toddler, I had a thought that no mother should have: I wondered if my beautiful boy would be in juvenile detention on his 16th birthday. He just did not respond the way other children did to requests, to routines, to daily life and love.

As he grew, we never knew what would be broken, who might be hurt or when it would happen.

3. What helped

In fifth grade, my son's teacher said, "Jenny, honey, I've taught hundreds and hundreds of kids. I know when a boy is misbehaving and I know when something is wrong. And something *is* wrong. You just keep looking for help."

When Andy was finally diagnosed with bipolar disorder, our lives changed. With treatment, he started smiling, enjoying school and making friends.

4. How I'm different today

On his sixteenth birthday, Andy wasn't in juvenile detention; he was creating art. Today, he's enjoying life, working hard and making me proud.

5. What is the need or problem

My son is proof that treatment works. But, not everyone gets the help they need.

6. What will help others

A strong mental health system will help children and adults get the right care at the right time.

7. My "ask"

Thank you for meeting with me and listening to my story. Can I count on you to protect mental health services—and give families the hope of recovery?

Sample Peer Story



1. My introduction

Hello, I'm Shannon Johnson from Springville. I'm a member of NAMI Springville, part of America's largest grassroots mental health organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

As a person who lives with schizophrenia, I'd like to share my story with you and ask for your support of mental health services.

2. What happened

I was married and had a successful career in business. I worked hard and never imagined I would experience a mental illness. But, I did.

I started seeing a therapist after experiencing nightmares, nervousness and problems going to work. I thought that with a few visits to a therapist, these problems would be over. But, my symptoms got worse and worse. Eventually, I lost everything.

3. What helped

With the help of a psychiatrist who diagnosed me with schizophrenia, I found my way back again. I will always remember him telling me that having schizophrenia did not mean life was over. He gave me hope.

4. How I'm different today

Today, I'm proud to be working again and volunteering with NAMI's *In Our Own Voice* program.

5. What is the need or problem

Many people have mental illnesses like mine, but not everyone gets the help they need.

6. What will help others

A strong mental health system helps more people get the right care at the right time to experience recovery.

7. My "ask"

Thank you for meeting with me and listening to my story. Can I count on you to protect mental health services?