



**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- Lend a hand, or some time, and Give HOPE for the holidays
- A new year is on the way! Show your support for NAMI and help others by renewing your membership

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## Give HOPE for the Holidays

**Rev. Gayle Smullen**

**HOPE IS THE GREATEST  
TOOL A HUMAN BEING  
CAN HAVE,  
AND IT'S THE EASIEST  
TO GIVE**

Rather than gifts this season, think about giving HOPE. Begin with little things. I once read about a teacher who had his students write at least one nice thing about each student in class. When the lists were done, they were given out to the often surprised students. It changed lives. It raised self esteem. It gave hope and the teacher discovered, years later, that every one of his students had kept their list and often carried it with them throughout their lives.

So, lets examine HOW:

Everyone looks for and wants AC-

CEPTANCE. This is why gangs are so popular for those who feel lost and alone. Can you look be-



yond a person's faults and still care for them? There's not a better way to give a person hope than by accepting them for who they are, not for what they do.

PRAISE members of your family – mostly for who they are. Are they kind, caring, sensitive, have a great sense of humor? Let them also know how much you APPRECIATE them.

Tell them you LOVE them – often! Being told is important to both of you and it helps

to form a connection between you. LISTEN to them. Are they happy, sad, anxious, excited? Knowing you are heard is a blessing that multiplies.

COMFORT others with appropriate words and physical touch. If a person is grieving, there really are only two things to say: "I'm so sorry," and "I love you." Hug them when they are grieving. I had almost forgotten this one when my daughter's father died, because touch opens a portal in that inner, protective shell many of us carry around. Perhaps you don't totally understand their situation with your own experiences, but tell them that as well. Place your hand on the shoulder of a person in pain and tell that person you're on his side.

*Continued on page 2*



# Brain Training For Schizophrenia

Harnessing the flood of thoughts, sounds, and voices of schizophrenia is like trying to stop an ocean tide. Anyone who has spoken to a loved one with schizophrenia knows— it doesn't take long for our loved one to get distracted when we are trying to communicate. Luckily, a study is being done to determine if brains can be "re-trained" to focus by using simple computer games. So far, the results have been positive. This is not intended as a replacement for prescription drugs, but rather as an aid for increased quality of life. Access the whole article, or listen in, at <http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2014/11/03/359655855/a-new-way-of-thinking-about-schizophrenia-could-lead-to-new-treatments>

*"Urge your loved ones to hang in there, not give up and NEVER EVER GIVE UP HOPE."*

## Give HOPE, *continued from page 1*

**ENCOURAGEMENT.** Urge your loved ones to hang in there, not give up and NEVER EVER GIVE UP HOPE. Phone them "just because". Send notes, meet them for coffee or tea or whatever reason. You might even help them brainstorm a solution to a problem. Give them of your TIME, but also RESPECT them of their TIME.

Speaking of RESPECT, keep your promises so others will learn that they and their TIME and TRUST are important to you.

Tell them so. Cross over into someone else's world with real love. WATCH and OBSERVE their needs!

What you have to give may be the encouragement for which they have long been hoping.

The NAMI effect:  
Every time you offer your hand to pick someone up.

Every time you

share your strength and ability to persevere.

Every time you offer support and understanding to a family who is caring for a loved one.

The NAMI effect grows.

Hope starts with YOU.  
Give hope today.



## Toxoplasma: PRECAUTIONS WITH CATS

By Gayle Smullen, *Based on information from Schizophrenia Help & News for Families, Sufferers*

I have been informed about recent studies that indicate infectious agents may contribute to some cases of schizophrenia. Infections with *Toxoplasma gondii* can alter behavior and neurotransmitter function in animals, especially cats. This infection can be transmitted to humans and may produce psychotic symptoms similar to those displayed by persons with schizophrenia. Two other studies found that exposure to infected cats in childhood was a risk factor for the development of schizophrenia. That being said, there seems to be some other studies that implicate this organism with depression. Pregnant women also need to be extra cautious.

Actually, according to my vet, it is more likely that someone could contract the disease from eating uncooked, or rare, undercooked meat than from playing with your pet cat. This is not to be confused with tularemia or rabbit fever. Cook meat, wash hands no matter what!

For those with small children it is advised:

Minimize un-cooked or rare meat being fed to young children (which can also be a means of transmission of the virus). Dr. Torrey (the leading researcher on this topic) advises parents not to buy pet cats for their young children, and especially to cover the children's sandboxes (or sandy play areas to prevent cats from using them as litter boxes).

No need for panic. You do not need to get rid of your cat(s), since not all cats have this infection. If very concerned, ask your vet to check your cat with an antibody test for exposure to *T gondii*). Most healthy cats will not have or carry the infection.

a. Cats that have been infected in the past will not be a source of infection in the future as they have completed their period of oocyst shedding.

b. The risk of a non- infected cat from getting the infection can be minimized:

- o Avoid feeding raw meat to the cat
- o Keep the cat indoors to prevent access to intermediate hosts such as voles and mice

1. People in 'high risk' groups should not have contact with the cat's litter box. This would include pregnant women or people with compromised immune systems

2. Empty litter boxes daily so that cysts do not have sufficient time to become infective while in the litter box.

3. Wear gloves when handling cat litter and wash hands thoroughly after cleaning the litter box.

4. Use litter box liners if possible and periodically clean the litter box with detergent and scalding water (which kills cysts) e.g. fill the litter box with boiling water and leave for 5 - 10 minutes before emptying out the water.

5. Dispose of cat litter safely. Seal it in a plastic bag before adding it to other household waste. I have learned to double bag it as well.

6. Cover children's sandboxes when not in use to prevent cats using them as litter boxes.

7. Feed only properly cooked food or commercial cat food to your cat to avoid infection.

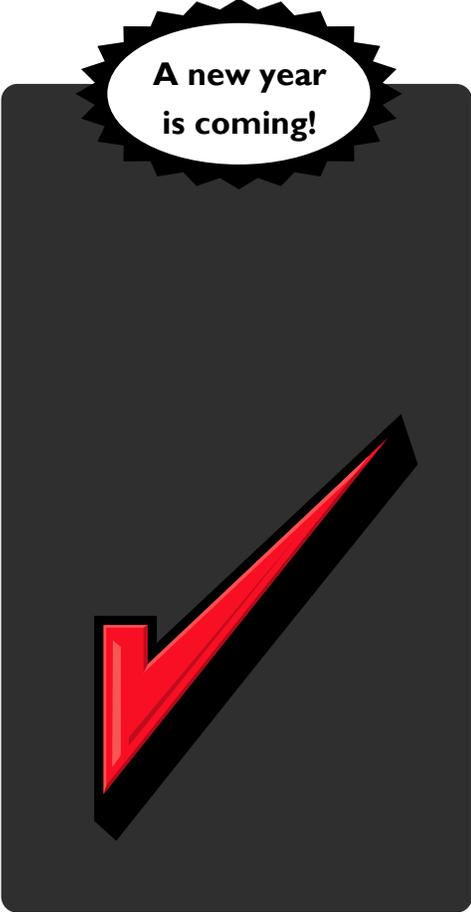
8. Wash your hands thoroughly after contact with a cat (especially before eating).

*"There are two means of refuge from the misery of life - music and cats."*

*- Albert Schweitzer*



## Membership



**A new year  
is coming!**

Thank you for supporting NAMI Placer County!

Annual membership dues are \$35 per year, payable in advance on or before January 1st of each year, part of which goes to NAMI California and part goes to enroll you in the national organization, NAMI.org as a voting member. Member benefits include The Advocate, member discounts, convention registration discounts, access to our online member community, and more.

Consider joining online by clicking on “Membership” above (E-versions only) and selecting Placer County as your affiliation, or with the membership form on the adjoining page.

**Thank you!**  
**THANK YOU!**

NAMI-PC Annual Membership Form:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_, CA, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$35 Membership \$\_\_\_\_\_ Tax-deductible donation

DATE\_\_\_\_\_ In order to serve you better, please fill out our short survey:

What type of speaker or subject or program would you like to have at our Educational / Support group? \_\_\_\_\_

May we call on you to help? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Below is a list of volunteer opportunities. We sincerely hope you would be able to assist us; any help will be appreciated. \_\_\_\_\_ Phone warm line \_\_\_\_\_ Community education

\_\_\_\_\_ Teaching Family to Family classes \_\_\_\_\_ NAMI Walks \_\_\_\_\_

(HOME jobs) \_\_\_\_\_ Newspaper notices \_\_\_\_\_ Peer to Peer Mentoring

Your ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your tax deductible donation with our many thanks.

NAMI- Placer County, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 charitable tax-exempt corporation registered with the

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Corporate Number 1089474-FFSAF

Thank you for being part of NAMI Placer County, Inc.

**P.O. Box 7706, Auburn, CA 95604-7706**



## NAMI Placer County

P.O. Box 7706

Auburn, CA 95604

Warm Line: 916-554-0554

[www.namipc.org](http://www.namipc.org)

Email: [namipc.gayle@yahoo.com](mailto:namipc.gayle@yahoo.com)

*"Placer County's Voice on  
Mental Illness."*

The heart of NAMI's mission is our grass-roots and the sharing of information with people with mental illness, their families, friends, mental health professionals, and the general public. NAMI strives to offer hope, reform and health to our American community through support, education, and advocacy efforts. Research is constantly providing us with new information about the brain and the nature of mental illnesses and, consequently, more effective treatments. If you would like more information on our organization, please contact us. We will be happy to speak with you or your organization.



# The Last Word

## Holiday Tips for Family and Friends

Family and friends can include their loved one in holiday activities to the degree that he or she is able to participate. Setting specific times for family traditions like baking special food, decorating the house, wrapping gifts or attending community celebrations, gives the person something to look forward to.

If there is to be a large gathering of family and friends, plan ahead by preparing those persons who may not know the situation. This is a wonderful opportunity to help erase the stigma and shame too often associated with mental illness. You can help them find ways to be relaxed yet respectful of any special needs. Someone living with a mental illness can feel further disconnected from others if people ignore or avoid them.

Set realistic goals and be flexible. The holidays are about love and caring one another. We would all do better to let go of the image of the "perfect" holiday and focus on accepting ourselves and our loved ones without judging, criticizing or advising.

Summarized from [http://www.nami.org/Content/Microsites58/NAMI\\_Of\\_Multnomah\\_County/Home55/Get\\_Involved2/News\\_and\\_Events1/holidays.pdf](http://www.nami.org/Content/Microsites58/NAMI_Of_Multnomah_County/Home55/Get_Involved2/News_and_Events1/holidays.pdf).