

Take Some Time for You Today.

We're a few weeks into the New Year and I'm pretty sure you're thinking that this year will be better than last, meaning that if last year was good, this year will be even better. And if last year wasn't what you'd hoped, then perhaps this year will be better.

At NAMI Franklin County we use that term—hope—a lot. For many of us it means that no matter what we or our loved one is going through, we don't give up. We continue to do our best to help them however we can. It means that if we have a bad hour, day, week, or month we pull it together and start again whether it's "dealing with" agencies that are less than helpful, physicians and staff that aren't giving us what we need, or our loved one is non-compliant with medication, crosses our boundaries, or a myriad list of other challenges we may face.

What does Merriam-Webster say about "hope?"

Hope /noun 1. a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. *Example:* "I hope my son will follow through with the treatment team's medication and counseling plan."

Hope /verb 1. want something to happen or be the case. *Example:* "I'm hoping my loved one will take medication."

We tend to always focus on what we're hoping for our loved one. What does hope look and feel like for you today? Because, you know, if you don't have hope, nothing will get done. If you don't have hope, caregiving for your loved one can come to a crashing halt. So, let's hope you can turn an unselfish spotlight on you today. How can you take care of yourself, so you can continue to care for your loved one? Here are two simple suggestions you can begin today:

Keep a journal. Often, there are things you're not ready to share with anyone else, even your spouse or close friend. Write down your real feelings...anger, sadness, grief, resentment, happiness (and there are happy times). Let it out. Go back over your journal periodically to see what has changed for better or worse. Stay tuned in to you.

Be still. When was the last time you took 5-10 minutes just for you? Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Breathe and clear your mind of extraneous thoughts. Seriously, just stop. Put your feet up and relax. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how you feel. Let me know how you did.

Karen Cousins
Mentor Coordinator / Family-to-Family Instructor
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Franklin County