

Dealing with Post-Election Stress

Are you experiencing distressing feelings (like anxiety, depression, stress or anger) over the current Presidential Election? You do not have to deal with this alone. You can call our NAMI Santa Clara County Warmline Helpdesk at 1-408-453-0400, option 1, between 10 am – 2 pm Monday through Friday to talk to someone who will listen non-judgmentally and offer support. You can also check out our suggestions listed below.

We realize that this year's US election process has been intensely emotional, unpredictable and even divisive for many people. Significant changes to our national power structure can evoke anxiety and stress for some. We at NAMI SCC offer the following suggestions for dealing with this political transition period:

- **Be gentle with yourself and others.** This election season has been hard on many of us. Take the time to identify and acknowledge your difficult emotions (like anger, fear or sadness). These are normal in times of stress. But be prepared to move on to something constructive.
- **Seek out support** from friends, family, or organizations who will listen compassionately to your feelings without judging your political views. Focus on emotions, not opinions.
- **Practice self-care:** engage in calming activities, such as listening to music, walking, being out in nature, or engaging in any other hobby or activity that helps you stay centered and peaceful. Avoid TV, newspapers and social media until you have calmed down and gained some perspective. Focus on other things that are important to you.
- **Try to stay in the present moment** rather than regretting the past or worrying about the future. If you know how, practice relaxation, mindfulness or meditation. There are community classes, iPhone apps or audio tapes that can help you with this.
- **Let go of what you cannot change.** We cannot change election results, and we probably cannot change other people's political views. Large social change takes time, and government moves slowly. Take a "wait and see" attitude if you can.
- **Identify what you can change** in your life.
 - **Adjust your attitude** or "reframe" the situation where possible: focus on gratitude for what you have now, cultivate love and compassion for yourself and others, agree to disagree, practice tolerance and look for what you have in common with other people. We all deserve respect as human beings.
 - **Take action:** "Be a point of light in your world". If you are ready, find a way, no matter how small, to become involved in a social or political cause that is important to you. This can involve simple steps like volunteering, or writing letters, or just learning more about the issues. Or simply try to be supportive or helpful to family members, neighbors or friends. Discover your passion and compassion, and look for opportunities to act accordingly.
- **Find the wisdom to know the difference** between what you can and cannot change. Seek guidance if you have a spiritual practice or therapeutic support.

A primary mission of NAMI is to help build bridges of love, understanding and tolerance between all people, no matter what their differences. Our philosophy, programs and services try to reflect this mission. Go to www.namisantaclara.org to learn how you can participate and/or support our cause: providing education, support and advocacy to individuals, families and friends who are affected by mental illness