

**NATIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH:
PARKS AND IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

More time spent in parks and green spaces can help individuals fight against mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress. Making sure that all people have access to parks and outdoor programming is a critical way to increase these positive effects on health and quality of life for your community.



The Facts

- People living more than 1 kilometer away from a green space have nearly 50 percent higher odds of experiencing stress than those living less than 300 meters from a green space. Respondents who do not report stress have more than 50 percent higher odds of visiting a green space at least a few days a week than those reporting stress. Results also showed that the more often respondents visited green spaces, the less stress they experienced.
- Several studies have confirmed that separation from nature is detrimental to human development, health and wellbeing, and that regular contact with nature is required for good mental health.
- Scientists in the Netherlands found that people who lived in residential areas with the least green spaces had a 44 percent higher rate of physician-diagnosed anxiety disorders than people who lived in the greenest residential areas. The effect was strongest among those most likely to spend their time near home, including children and those with low levels of education and income. *...Continued to page 3*

MENTALLY ILL CHEMICALLY ADDICTED

Peanut butter and jelly. Salt and pepper. Spaghetti and meatballs. The sun and warmth. The fall and leaves changing. Thanksgiving and turkey. Politics and highly charged emotions. There are some things that just go together.

In the realm of mental illness, there are also things that just go together. Depression and lethargy, obsession and madness, social phobia and anxiety are but three examples. One correlation concerning mental illness that is always drawn is between mental illness and substance abuse. According to the National Alliance of the Mentally Ill, “roughly fifty percent of individuals with severe mental disorders are affected by substance abuse.” About 47% of alcoholics and 53% of drug abusers have a mental illness. In light of these startling statistics offered by NAMI, it is important that we consider the reasons why there are such high rates of substance abuse amongst the mentally ill.

The most obvious reason for intoxication is the fact that substances present an escape. The horrors of many mental illnesses are, quite frankly, beyond words. Anything that has the power to assuage said horror may seem infinitely valuable to our brethren with mental illness. Mental illness can be a bit like being tortured on a rack. Knowing that, we can scarcely blame those individuals on the rack for reaching for substances in a misguided attempt to diminish their suffering.

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APP OF THE MONTH: **Pacifica**

For many, addiction is as much a symptom as it is an illness in and of itself. This makes addressing the core issues that may be fueling the need to escape a central part of recovery. For those with depression and/or anxiety, relief and support can be found through Pacifica. In addition to offering a mood tracker and guided meditations, this app uses principles based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to help smooth over distorted thinking patterns and overcome anxiety by breaking it down into bite-sized daily challenges.

iPhone: <http://bit.ly/PacificaMICA> Android: N/A



BOOK SHARE PROGRAM CONTINUES

The Mental Health Association of Cortland County offers a book share program, developed for Mental Health related readings only. (Fiction or non-fiction.) It's *free* - your client gets to *keep* the book, and therapists can send multiple requests for books for multiple clients! Please note, there is a cap on funding so be mindful of your requests. For more information or to make a request, email us at: mhacortlandny@gmail.com



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ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS: TIPS FOR FAMILIES

Summer may seem like a good time to take a break from thinking about school, especially if you are the parent of a child diagnosed with any disability. We hope you'll use summer as a time of slowing down, reconnecting as a family, and also planning out your advocacy strategies before Fall arrives all too quickly. Below is an excellent article published by the University of Minnesota that speaks to the importance of keeping your child's social-emotional well-being in mind when advocating for the support they need in their school career. Academics are important, but just as important is your child's mental health and wellness. The following article was edited to include appropriate information on local, Cortland County resources:

Any child who is not doing well in the social-emotional area of their life will be less likely to do well in their academic performance and overall participation in the school environment. Especially for those who experience barriers to social inclusion at school – which includes many students with disabilities – attention to social-emotional well-being is an important part of supporting success in school and beyond. There are many ways that a family can advocate for the social-emotional well-being of a child with disabilities within educational settings. Below are a few:

- If a child has social-emotional needs that must be addressed in order to support academic learning and participation in the school community, it's important to address these in the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). If families are asked to, or wish to, provide ideas for social-emotional outcomes for IEPs, there are some excellent examples at http://www.specialed.us/autism/05/g_o.htm, a Web page from the Wisconsin Cooperative Educational Service Agency #7. Although the site tags the objectives and outcomes as applying to children with autism, the list is a helpful model for use with many other children, as well.

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- Physician-diagnosed depression was 33 percent higher in the residential areas with the fewest green spaces, compared to the neighborhoods with the most.
- People who lived in close proximity to natural space had significantly improved mental health up to three years after their move. Compared to pre-move mental health scores, individuals who moved to greener areas had significantly better mental health recorded three years after the move.
- Individuals reported less mental distress and higher life satisfaction when they were living in greener areas.
- A strong body of evidence suggests that physical activity in green spaces has stronger mental health benefits than physical activity in non-green spaces.
- Use of green spaces is associated with decreased health complaints, improved blood pressure and cholesterol levels, reduced stress, improved general health perceptions and a greater ability to face



Download the [Parks and Improved Mental Health and Quality of Life Fact Sheet](#) for more information.

To find details on LOCAL Parks and Recreation options in Cortland County visit the following websites:

- City of Cortland: [Youth Bureau](#)
- Village of Homer: [Parks and Recreation](#)
- Cortland County: [Youth Bureau](#)

Original article can be found at [NPRa.org](http://www.npra.org)

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ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS: TIPS FOR FAMILIES

- In IEPs, families may want to ask for inclusion of short-term objectives (such as objectives for a single quarter) related to yearly goals for social-emotional development. And they may want to ask that progress on these objectives be reported on the child's report cards throughout the year. These steps help ensure everyone stays on track and that strategies for supporting social-emotional well-being can be modified as needed.
- In looking at a child's social skills and behaviors, it's often helpful to compare his or her school and home behaviors to see if these are consistent or different. Families and school personnel should meet to discuss differences in home/school behaviors, especially when problems are present in school but not at home, and try to understand the reasons for the differences and how to address them.
- An important dimension of social-emotional well-being is how a child is viewed and treated by others. A child might experience bullying or exclusion by other students. Children with disabilities may not have enough opportunities to interact with non-disabled peers. Issues related to broader school policies or practices may set-up barriers to inclusion, so families should discuss these with officials at the specific school or with school district supervisory personnel.

Adapted and reprinted with permission from Impact: [Feature Issue on Supporting the Social Well-Being of Children and Youth with Disabilities](#), published by the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. Article contributed to Impact by Susan B. Palmer, Research Professor at the Beach Center on Disability, University of Kansas, Lawrence. She may be reached at: spalmer@ku.edu or (785) 864-0270.

Important local and national resources that can support such conversations:

[SUPAC \(Syracuse University Parent Advocacy Center\)](#) - Contact SUPAC Parent Outreach at supac@syr.edu or (315)-443-4336 to learn more about SUPAC resources in Cortland County. Nationally, there are extensive resources from Operation Respect (<http://www.operationrespect.org>).



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MENTALLY ILL CHEMICALLY ADDICTED

Escaping pain and suffering, then, is the first broad category of the mentally ill chemically addicted. However, there is a second type of MICA individual: those who are attempting to make their highs higher. This issues occurs primarily amongst individuals with a diagnosis that includes mania (typically an elevated mood that breeds excess in all forms). A key element of mania is an addictive, over-indulgent tendency... along with grandiosity (a sense that one can do anything). Manic states make substance abuse almost irresistible to the sufferer. Essentially, these cases are individuals who are feeling good, but, want to feel even better. It is what this writer refers to as, “happiness greed”.

Another instance of substance abuse amongst the mentally ill comes with psychotic and anxiety disorders. In these cases, as in the case of the depressive, escaping is usually the motivation.

However, in the case of the depressed or the manic, the obsessive or the psychotic, substance abuse comes at a tremendous cost. In mood disorders, substance abuse can generally result in making the highs higher and lows lower. Substance abuse can induce psychosis (even in people without psychotic disorders) and exacerbate anxiety disorders. While substances such as alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin can seem like saviors to those suffering from mental illness in the short term, they are often exponentially detrimental in the long run. Not only do they oftentimes make the disorder more severe, but also take a tremendous toll on the body and the addiction often consumes one’s life.

So the next time we come across an individual with mental illness who is abusing substances, we must not be condescending or judgmental. Substance abuse is a coping mechanism, albeit a poor one, for mental illness. As attractive and tempting a coping mechanism as it seems, substance abuse eventually may make the disorder worse, and, opens an entirely new can of worms in addiction. We as a society should use kindness and understanding as we discourage, deter, and dissuade our friends with mental illness from grasping toward substances as a solution to their problem. Because some things seem to go together doesn’t mean it is right for them to go together. Substance abuse and mental illness is one such case. They do not have to go together. We can help make sure they don’t.

By Kurt Warner, MSW, Catholic Charities, MHA of Cortland County Board of Directors

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND SUPPORT

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, September 6th, 12:00—3:30pm
County Gym, 60 Central Ave., Cortland

Resource Fair: NY Connects and Emergency Preparedness. A suicide prevention walk to follow.

Visit the [Cortland County Mental Health Facebook event](#) for more information.

607 Healing Hearts

Monday, July 16th, 6:00 - 8:00pm
28 N. Main St., Cortland

Grief support group for parents/guardians who have experienced the death of an adult child.

For more info: 607healinghearts@gmail.com

Cortland LGBT Men's Group (Monthly)

Cortland LGBT Resource Center, 73 Main St.

For more information: (607) 756-8970

Parents & Change Support Group

July 16 August 20 September 17
6:00 to 7:30 PM

Community Center, 90 Central Ave. Cortland

Contact: Beckey Tripp (parentsandchange@yahoo.com)

Caregivers Support Group

Thursday, July 26th, 3:00—4:00pm

Conf. Rm. B, Basement of CRMC, 134 Homer Ave., Cortland

For those who provide support for someone aged 60 or older.

For more info: Caregivers Resource Center (607) 753-5060.

If you have an upcoming community event or article you would like considered for inclusion in the MHA Newsletter, send your submission to susan@sevenvalleyshealth.org by the 14th of the month prior, or subscribe to the newsletter via email.

Disclaimer: The information presented here does not constitute professional medical advice. Individuals respond to treatment for mental health conditions in different ways, and treatment plans often need adjustment over time. Patients should work closely with their doctor and other health professionals in order to achieve optimal control of symptoms.