

Optum Idaho manages outpatient behavioral health benefits for Idaho Medicaid members. It is our commitment to help transform Idaho's behavioral health outpatient system by focusing on helping people reach recovery in their own health journey, one person, one family, one community at a time.

2023 Spring Issue



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Women in recovery: A conversation with Optum Idaho's Peer Navigator Kristen Smith

Editor's Note: Kristen is a woman in recovery from acute mental illness and works diligently to manage symptoms of her bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis. She is a Peer Navigator with Optum Idaho's Recovery and Resiliency team and has been working as a Certified

Peer Support Specialist and Youth Support Specialist provider for several years now.

Optum Peer Navigators are certified peer support specialists who have a positive and sustained lived experience with recovery and wellness from

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Optum

Resources
For You

If you're feeling suicidal or in crisis, please call or text **988** for the Suicide Crisis Lifeline. You can also chat at **988lifeline.org**.

Optum Member
Access & Crisis Line

If you have questions, concerns or need assistance with an issue, we're available 24/7 and a healthcare professional is ready to help. Call us at **1-855-202-0973** or for TDD/TTY, dial **711**.

You can also visit us at **optumidaho.com** for more resources, including current and past issues of this newsletter.

Youth Empowerment
Services (YES)
Newsletter

Click here for more information about youth mental health empowerment services.

YES website: **yes.idaho.gov**

Women in Recovery *(cont. from page 1)*

mental health illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorder. Peer Navigators can help people create a care team and support infrastructure that works for them, build goals that make sense for their life, and create a safety plan when they need a little extra help, among many other things. They are trained to use their own journey with mental health challenges to create connection and deepen empathy with the people who need it. They are also keenly aware of the community entities who can help lessen some of the barriers that can surface in recovery.

Member Matters (MM): Kristen, thank you for sharing your time and story with Optum Idaho Members. You've dedicated much of your time to helping other women on their path to recovery and we applaud you! We are interested in learning more about your story and what your work is all about.

Kristen: After all these years, after treatment and medication adjustments, attitude adjustments, accomplishments and many setbacks, I still feel hesitant sometimes to share my story. But I hope that in doing so it can resonate and give members and others the courage to take the first steps toward their own recovery.

The fact is that I am a woman in recovery from acute mental illness. I'm also a proud survivor of childhood trauma, domestic abuse and, like an estimated 75% of women in recovery, sexual assault.¹ When I reflect on my personal story, I always think back to when I was 19 and landed a job at an all-women's gym. Growing up, my chaotic homelife had been one landmine after another and I had used food to cope for years. Food didn't tell me that I didn't deserve saving, food was necessary, food was

and is good, and food was not the problem.

I had made a quiet decision one day to start walking home from school, which led me to checking out workout tapes from the 80s from the library and start working out in our family room. And there it was! I could feel joy in movement. Joy in strength. The confidence that came from growing tougher in tiny increments until one day, I could see a squareness in my shoulders and resiliency in my reflection, and I wanted more of that!

Even though I was still nervous to work out around other people I reached out for guidance from the female trainers at my new job. I began learning new skills, but most importantly I felt safe to be vulnerable and to build relationships with other women doing something that mattered to me. Because men had been my primary abusers, I was instinctively afraid of them. It would take me years to reconcile my feelings and I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that my newly discovered love of exercise did eventually mutate into an eating disorder, which mutated into a deep dependence on drugs and alcohol, which led me to seek help finally 15 years later.

MM: How did you take that first step to find the help that you needed in your mental health recovery journey and what has helped create the pathway to where you are today?

Kristen: I had to make the choice for myself. I started small and gathered support and mentorship. I felt safe to learn new things and I grew in power. I really think the experience I had during that time provided the template for my recovery later. Still, even now, the world sometimes swirls around me. I don't like walking down

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Recovery *(continued from page 2)*

open streets by myself. I hate sitting in the middle of a restaurant. Light bugs me. Sounds bug me. I remain ever ready for some new violence and the eyes in the back of my head still well up with tears when I think about who I might have been without the constant thrum of fear, but I am so much stronger than I was. I recognize the intrinsic value of shared experience.

I respect my relationships, especially with women, because they have helped me so much throughout my quest for wholeness. The social infrastructure I've built has celebrated my wins and provided a soft place to land when I've backslid. I am eternally grateful and proud to know them. I often ask the women I work with what they really want, and we want what anyone wants: To not just be heard but listened to. A safe place to unpack our trauma. We want grace in our recovery experience and the opportunity for recompense. We want smart resources and support. We want to shed our shame and abolish stigma. We want to create a life worth sticking around for, and that's something, no matter who you are or what your story is, we can all get behind.

MM: Will you share more with us about the work you do in your current role with Optum Idaho?

Kristen: I work almost exclusively with women, and always have since I've been a peer support specialist so the issues that feel unique to women in recovery are the ones I feel very passionate about.

The best part of my job is walking alongside women as they establish their own unique path in recovery. Through shared experiences and a rooted understanding of the stigma that is often attached to issues surrounding mental health, I work



hard to put a face and a cadence to the obstacles people can encounter when seeking treatment and I try to actively model what healing and forward momentum can look like.

MM: Do you think women face different barriers and challenges to getting help in their recovery journey than men?

Kristen: I do. Mood and anxiety disorders are more common in women, both with and without a co-occurring SUD.* Women, particularly mothers, may face a greater stigma associated with addiction than men. Denial, fear, and humiliation restrict women from confronting their drinking and drug use honestly, as well as from seeking help from friends or family or from contacting a professional. Other typical barriers to assistance for women include childcare obligations, reduced wages/income, substance addiction by a partner or other family members, fear of losing custody of children, a lack of resources or feeling underdeserving of assistance.²

Because our social practices are fundamentally gendered, mental health treatment should reflect that. For instance, while it's widely accepted that women have unique

needs in recovery, less than half of the treatment facilities in the U.S. provide special programs or groups for women and the availability of women-focused services in the community is unknown. It's my enduring belief that we deserve options in treatment. Options have the power to usher in opportunities for us to self-advocate and grant agency to people who feel marginalized. Put simply, options fuel optimism, and optimism is central to the most enduring tenant of recovery, HOPE.

MM: What advice would you give other women seeking support in recovery?

Kristen: I believe that recovery isn't some static catchall of always happy feelings and perfect hope. It can sometimes be challenging, messy and not very exciting. It's paying bills on time, using a calendar, keeping appointments, tracking symptoms, creating boundaries, lobbying friends and family to engage in difficult conversations, self-advocating with providers and having the courage to reach out when life gets hard. And change like that does absolutely get hard, but it's worth it every time.

If you are a person who identifies as female and you need help locating resources, dial **211** or call the Optum Member Access & Crisis Line at **1-855-202-0973**. For more targeted assistance, call the Women's and Children's Alliance at **208-343-3688**. If you're experiencing a crisis, dial **988** or call the Pathways Crisis Center at **208-489-8311**. ■

1. Kunst, J. (2020, November 24). *Sexual Abuse, The Link Between Sexual Abuse and Addiction*. Amethyst Recovery Center Best Florida Drug & Alcohol Rehab Facility. <http://www.amethystrecovery.org/addiction-sexual-abuse/>

2. *Women, Addiction and Recovery* | Hazelden Betty Ford. (n.d.). <https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/unique-challenges-of-women-and-addiction>

Youth mental health

By Amber Leyba-Castle, NAMI Idaho Young and Well Coordinator

When I was 15, I noticed that I was not receiving the support for my mental health that I needed. I did not want to sit in a circle with my peers and talk about the terrible things we were going through and then head back to class. Instead, I wanted to feel like my voice was heard on what I needed during my time of adversity. I wanted to build a community that was safe to share what I was experiencing, but also focused on the resiliency and strength of my story. I wasn't looking for sympathy, I was looking for people that were my age that understood. I created a support group model for youth, ages 12-17 that is activity based and youth-driven. Sharing this resource has been my goal for the last couple of years and through this work I have prioritized being the person that I needed during my time of adversity. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) organization has a support group called NAMI Idaho Rosebuds. This group prioritizes activity-based lessons around common themes that youth experience such as self-confidence, stress, anxiety, etc. I have found this to be extremely helpful when beginning a conversation with youth about mental health topics. Feedback I have received, is that having an activity alongside a serious conversation takes the pressure off the youth to "answer correctly," and they feel like they can speak more clearly about the issue that might be impacting them.

There have been many themes of youth mental health that I have experienced in my work over the years. For example, youth respond very well to relatability. As an adult supporting a young person you don't necessarily need the same experience with the event, but if you share an understanding of what the youth is

going through that can really impact our ability to build a meaningful relationship with the youth where they trust you. For example, maybe you haven't ever been diagnosed with a mental health condition before, but you can understand what it is like to go to a medical provider and not know what your diagnosis will be. That scary feeling can be a shared understanding with youth despite not having the same experience. If a young person can access a youth support specialist (YSP) this can really support them in their mental health goals with a professional that has lived experience with a mental health challenge as a young person. If they cannot access a YSP, I would recommend they join a NAMI Idaho Rosebuds group to connect with other youth about how they are impacted by mental health challenges. This group also focuses on self advocacy and community involvement which have been supportive in youth mental health recovery.

Having a strong support system while youth are going through mental health challenges can decrease loneliness and stress related to the stigmatization that is oftentimes attached to a mental health diagnosis. As an adult, it can feel challenging to begin having conversations about mental health with youth that you care about. Something I have found helpful is asking questions such as "How can I better support you?" or "What could we change about your day to make it less stressful?" Mental health challenges can be extremely stressful for a young person, but encouragement from a trusting adult can really impact their recovery in a meaningful way.

NAMI Idaho offers a wide range of free support groups and education programs for people living with mental illness in Idaho. namiidaho.org

NAMI Idaho Rosebuds Support Group: <https://namiidaho.org/event/online-rosebuds-nami-idaho/2023-04-18/> ■



NAMI Idaho Rosebuds

Youth mental health support group created by young people for young people



NAMI Idaho's Rosebuds is a student-led mental health support group for ages 12 - 17. You'll find a supportive environment with activity-based sessions. Rosebuds gives you an opportunity to practice social and wellness skills and learn Community Resiliency Model techniques.

Mental health affects us all and you shouldn't feel alone while working towards mental wellness. Rosebuds provides that safe community.

Interested in joining Rosebuds virtually or in-person?

Contact Amber Leyba-Castle at youngandwell@namiidaho.org or call/text **208-407-4388**

Tuesdays: Weekly virtual meeting open to all!

Weekly meeting schedule: <https://namiidaho.org/event/online-rosebuds-nami-idaho/2023-04-18>

Optum funds free admission to the Children's Museum of Idaho



The Children's Museum of Idaho, located in Meridian, provides an interactive learning environment for children ages 1-9 years of age and their caregiver and encourages learning through exploration with hands-on interactive exhibits and programming. The museum is a participant in the Museum for All program.

Museums for All is a program that provides reduced admission rates for families that present an EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card demonstrating that they qualify for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). The reduced "Museums for All" rate for the Children's Museum is \$3 per person (up to four persons per EBT card).

Optum has donated \$5,000 to the Children's Museum to cover the \$3 reduced rate admission price so that your admission cost is FREE.

It is estimated that this funding will last approximately six months before it runs out. Visit the Children's Museum today!

Location: The Children's Museum is located at 790 S Progress Avenue, Meridian, Idaho 83642 (next to WinCo off I-84 at Meridian).

Hours of Operation:

Monday - Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
and Sunday 1-5 p.m. ■



FindHelp.org

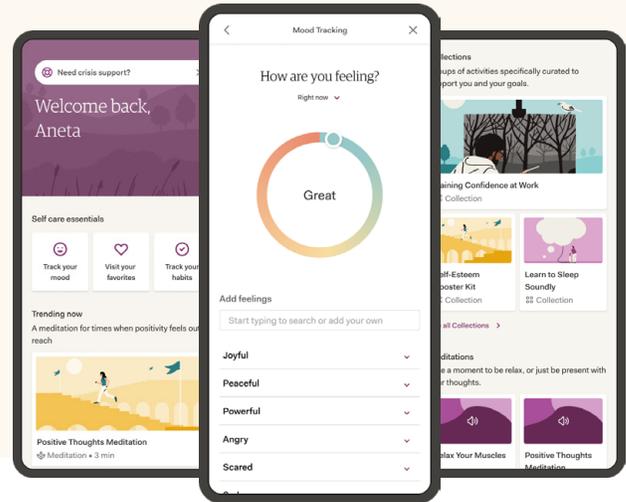
Find local resources for you and your family

Visit **FindHelp.org** and enter your zip code to search and connect to support like financial assistance, food pantries, medical care, and other free or reduced-cost help.



Say hello to Self Care from AbleTo

On-demand help for reducing worry,
stress and improving mood.



Get access to self-care techniques, coping tools, meditations and more—anytime, anywhere. With Self Care, you'll get personalized content that's designed to help you boost your mood and shift your perspectives. Tap into tools created by clinicians that are suggested for you based on your responses to a short optional assessment. Self Care is here to help you feel better—and it's available at no additional cost to you as part of your Optum Idaho Behavioral Health Benefits.

Self Care app features and benefits

Daily mood tracking

Answer daily questions to record your current mood, identify patterns and self-assess your progress.

Meditation tools

Explore classic methods of relaxation—like deep breathing and positive visualization—in the moment when you need them.

Collections

Build life skills with curated content, tools and resources for the stuff that matters most to you—from work life balance and sleep, and much more.

Personalized roadmap

Track your progress, set goals and make strides through weekly check-ins—Self Care helps you create a roadmap to support your self-guided journey to better mental health.

The Self Care app
is **available 24/7**,
confidential and at
no extra cost.



Ready to get started?

Download the app

Visit ableto.com/begin
or scan the QR code with
your phone or tablet camera.



Select the 'Getting Started'
button and answer a few
questions to better customize
your experience.

When prompted, enter access
code: **Optum Idaho**

You will then be given access
to download and install the
Self Care app to your device.

For more information, visit ableto.com

Self Care by AbleTo should not be used for urgent care needs. If you are experiencing a crisis or need emergency care, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. The information contained within Self Care is for educational purposes only; it is not intended to diagnose problems or provide treatment and should not be used on its own as a substitute for care from a provider. Self Care is available to members ages 13+ at no additional cost. Participation in the program is voluntary and subject to the Self Care terms of use. ©2023 Optum, Inc. All rights reserved.

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Optum does not discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, color, national origin or disability.

Free services are available to help you communicate with us. Such as, letters in other languages, or in other formats like large print. Or, you can ask for an interpreter. To ask for help, please call the toll-free number **(855) 202-0973**. TTY **711**.

If you think you weren't treated fairly because of your sex, age, race, color, national origin or disability, you can send a complaint to:

Optum Civil Rights Coordinator
11000 Optum Circle
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Phone: **888-445-8745**, TTY **711**

Fax: 855-351-5495

Email: optum_civil_rights@optum.com

If you need help with your complaint, please call the toll-free number **(855) 202-0973**. TTY **711**. You must send the complaint within 60 days of when you found out about the issue.

You can file a complaint with the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Online: <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>

Complaint forms are available at <https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/complaints/index.html>

Phone: Toll-free **1-800-368-1019**. TTD **800-537-7697**.

Mail: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue,
SW Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

Language Assistance Services and Alternate Formats

This information is available in other formats like large print. To ask for another format, please call the toll-free number **(855) 202-0973**. TTY **711**.

You have the right to get help and information in your language at no cost. To request an interpreter, call **1-855-202-0973**.

Spanish: Tiene derecho a obtener ayuda e información en su idioma sin costo alguno. Para solicitar un intérprete, llame al **1-855-202-0973**.

Chinese: 您有權利免費以您的語言得到幫助和訊息。如需洽詢一位口譯員，請撥電話**1-855-202-0973**。

Serbo-Croatian: Imate pravo da besplatno dobijete pomoć i informacije na Vašem jeziku. Da biste zatražili prevodioca, nazovite **1-855-202-0973**.

Korean: 귀하는 도움과 정보를 귀하의 언어로 비용 부담없이 얻을 수 있는 권리가 있습니다. 통역사를 요청하기 위해서는 **1-855-202-0973**번으로 전화하십시오.

Vietnamese: Quý vị có quyền được giúp đỡ và cấp thông tin bằng ngôn ngữ của quý vị miễn phí. Để yêu cầu được thông dịch viên giúp đỡ, vui lòng gọi **1-855-202-0973**.

Arabic: 1-9073-202-855 يف حق كل اكل تدعاس الما ى لع لوصحلا ي ف قحلا كل مقررلاب لصتا ، يروف مچرتم ببلطل .ةفلكت ي أ لمحت نود كتغلب تامولعمل او

German: Sie haben das Recht, kostenlose Hilfe und Informationen in Ihrer Sprache zu erhalten. Um einen Dolmetscher anzufordern, rufen Sie die Nummer **1-855-202-0973**.

Tagalog: May karapatan kang makatanggap ng tulong at impormasyon sa iyong wika nang walang bayad. Upang humiling ng tagasalin, tumawag sa **1-855-202-0973**.

Russian: Вы имеете право на бесплатное получение помощи и информации на вашем языке. Чтобы подать запрос переводчика позвоните по телефону **1-855-202-0973**.

French: Vous avez le droit d'obtenir gratuitement de l'aide et des renseignements dans votre langue. Pour demander à parler à un interprète, appelez le **1-855-202-0973**.

Japanese: ご希望の言語でサポートを受けたり、情報を入手したりすることができます。料金はかかりません。通訳をご希望の場合は、**1-855-202-0973**までお電話ください。

Romanian: Aveți dreptul de a obține gratuit ajutor și informații în limba dumneavoastră. Pentru a cere un interpret, sunați la **1-855-202-0973**.

Sudan: Urafise uburenganzira bwo kuronka ubufasha n'amakuru mu rurimi gwawe ku buntu. Kugira usabe umusobanuzi, hamagara **1-855-202-0973**.

Persian: ناگهاری روط هب ار دوخ نابز هب تاعالطا و کمک هک دیراد قح امش دی‌امان ل‌صاح سام‌ته‌رامش اب ی‌هافش مچ‌رتم تساوخ‌رد ی‌ارب. دی‌امان تفایرد
0973-202-855-1

Ukrainian: У Вас є право отримати безкоштовну допомогу та інформацію на Вашій рідній мові. Щоб подати запит про надання послуг перекладача, задзвоніть на **1-855-202-0973**.

Haitian: Ou gen dwa pou jwenn èd ak enfòmasyon nan lang natifnatal ou gratis. Pou mande yon entèprèt, rele nimewo **1-855-202-0973**.

Hindi: आप के पास अपनी भाषा में सहायता एवं जानकारी नःशुल्क प्राप्त करने का अधिकार है। दुभाषण के लिए **1-855-202-0973** पर फोन कर।

Portuguese: Você tem o direito de obter ajuda e informação em seu idioma e sem custos. Para solicitar um intérprete, ligue para **1-855-202-0973**.

Member Access & Crisis Line:
1-855-202-0973 (TTY: 711)

Your Voice Matters

We want to hear what you have to say!

What's working well for you? What could we do differently?

Email us at
membermatters@optum.com.

