



High Country

Marya Hornbacher, Visiting Author, Brings Hope to the High Country

Award-winning journalist and author Marya Hornbacher will speak at I.G. Greer on Monday, October 28, in an event co-sponsored by NAMI High Country and ASU Counseling Services.

The presentation will begin at 7 pm, and Hornbacher will address the issues of awareness, advocacy, and above all, hope for those living with mental illness.

As a young child, Marya Hornbacher’s life displayed the polarization and intensity typical of bipolar disorder. She was labeled wild and troubled, gifted, but crazy. They said, “She lives in her head.” It was the 70s, and understanding of bipolar disorder was limited in regard to adults, and virtually nonexistent for children. With unexplained rages, terrors, and mood swings, Hornbacher was sent to a psychiatrist, who only added the label “very angry little girl.” She was too fast, too slow, an underachiever, then driven by frenzied ambition. And although label after label was added in a desperate attempt to explain, it would be twenty-four years before anyone would give her the correct and necessary diagnosis of “bipolar.”

Living for years with an undiagnosed mental illness is a damaging and common condition. Many studies suggest that up to 80 percent of people living with mental illness are undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. For bipolar disorder specifically, the average age of onset is 23, and the average age of a correct diagnosis is 40. Undiagnosed and untreated, Hornbacher’s

illness showed its face in other ways: she was bulimic by the age of nine, self-medicating with alcohol and drugs by the age of ten, and anorexic by the age of fifteen. She swung from wild success to dependency on hospitalizations for years, and there was never a tidy resolution. Hornbacher is in treatment and living well, but in her books, she candidly tells her readers that she can offer them no ending. What she offers instead is an example of both the difficulties and the promise of living with mental illness. When it comes down to it, she says, “Managing mental illness is mostly about acceptance – of the things you can’t do, and the things you must.”

Advocates of mental illness will say that it has “come out of the woodwork” in recent years. It is no longer the taboo topic it once was. Now, we face a stigma of a different nature. The dialogue is happening, but promoting understanding of these illnesses for the sake of empathy is not enough. On this subject that is rooted in discomfort at best and despair at worst, Hornbacher’s voice is recovery-oriented and positive. Her memoirs inspire both empathy and hope for recovery, and her recovery handbooks offer practical advice for those whose lives are impacted by mental illness. With her presentation at I.G. Greer, we look forward to her strong advocate’s voice becoming a part of our conversation on mental health in the High Country.

Sarah Cooke
NAMI High Country Board
Member





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Monday, October 7th at 7 pm

Murray Hawkinson to speak on Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Murray Hawkinson is a Licensed Psychologist with 39 years of experience in the Mental Health field, starting with New River Mental Health Center in Wilkes County in 1974. He has worked as a clinical psychologist with children, adolescents, adults and families through New River Behavioral HealthCare, Daymark and his private practice. He was a Senior Psychologist with New River for several years before becoming the Clinical Director of the entire program for its final two years, and since then has been the Clinical Site Director for Daymark in Watauga County.

DBT combines standard cognitive-behavioral techniques for emotion regulation and reality-testing with concepts of distress tolerance, acceptance, and mindful awareness largely derived from Buddhist meditative practice. It uses techniques that are effective for all people, not just those receiving mental health treatment. Murray's use of DBT began in 1999, and he is a member of the Dialectical Behavior Therapy National Certification and Accreditation Association as well as the American Psychological Association.

-Monday, November 4th at 7 pm – Lisa Curtin on Addictions

-Monday, December 2nd at 7 pm – Holiday Celebration

***Our meetings remain at the Lois Harrill Project on Aging, in the Watauga Human Services Building on W. King St. just past Galileo's, coming from downtown Boone.**

Sharing Stories Through Postcards

In the tradition of Post Secret, and in honor of Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 6-12th, NAMI High Country is asking the High Country Community to send anonymous postcards sharing some bit or piece of your personal story as it relates to your life. The only requirements are that it is postcard size and mailed to us by October 12. It will be displayed on our website.

NAMI High Country is coordinating with the Turchin Center at ASU. We will be collecting post cards from campus and will have a presence at the Performing Arts event at ASU, with the PostSecret creator, Frank Warren. This event is at 8pm on Tuesday, October 8. Find out about the event and purchasing tickets here: <http://pas.appstate.edu/schedule/id/260>

Marya Hornbacher Event

Marya wrote the Pulitzer Prize nominated, Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia. She also wrote critically acclaimed, Madness: A Bipolar Life. In addition to sharing her own experiences at the event, the author will speak on hope and recovery in the lives of people touched by mental illness. Books are for sale in the ASU Bookstore and at the event.

Date: Monday, October 28

Time: 7:30 pm-9:30 pm

Location: IG Greer Auditorium on ASU Campus

Admission to the event is free

