



# OurMindsMatter

Improving the representations of people living with mental illness.

THE  
**CREATE FUND**

 **nami**  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
New York City Metro

# Introduction

With the help of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City (NAMI-NYC), Shutterstock is working to improve the representation of people living with mental illness. 50M+ U.S. adults live with a mental illness. Globally, an estimated 264 million people are affected by depression. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide.

In order to destigmatize people living with mental illness, our media can portray mental illness as a common human experience that impacts all of us. Changing our media can start with creating respectful and progressive stock content. We need to represent, in both media and stock content, that mental illness affects all of us, it is common, and it doesn't define us. We are missing diverse and positive representations of people with mental illness in various scenarios, particularly living their lives – at school, work, in the community, in recreation.

In addition to representing those living with a mental illness, it's also important to shed light on the families and caregivers of people with mental illness. More representation of positive interactions with families, caregivers, and community are needed. To that end, representations of support groups, for example, should be less clinical, more positive, and more diverse in activities (e.g. social groups involving art therapy, pet therapy, writing, poetry, knitting, etc). The concept of non-medical “family-support” is an important part of this topic.

Image by [Yaroslav Astakhov](#)







Image by [Maskot Images](#)

## Reimagining Representation

Let's reimagine...

- **Representations of specific conditions**, like bipolar and schizophrenia. These conditions are often only portrayed as negative, distressing, or dangerous, which can be harmful.
- **Representations of the body**. There should not be any harmful imagery, whether it's representations of suicide or unhealthy representations of the body that would exacerbate eating disorders or substance abuse, for example.
- **Representations of caregivers**. Often times this group of people are depicted as only distressed and overwhelmed. Think about the other positive aspects of their work.
- **Diagnosis images**. We can **break age and gender stereotypes** around diagnosis, like young women with eating disorders or men experiencing psychosis. Anyone can experience mental illness and present differently from person to person.
- **Mental health and mental illness as a continuum** from good to bad, or green to red. People will often cycle through these stages in a non-linear way at different points in their lives.
- The vast gap between stock representations of wellness (e.g. journaling or yoga) and negative, clinical representations of mental illness.



# Scenarios

People with mental illness lead active, happy, and productive lives. Here are some way to improve the way they are visually depicted:

- **Show how they experience their lives in different settings.** They lead healthy lives at school, at work, doing errands, and interacting with their community. For example representing someone with schizophrenia at work in a healthy, supportive office environment.
- **With their community**—family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors who provide care and support. People living with mental illness are not alone.
- **Engaging with various forms of non-clinical support** and community, e.g. art, journaling, doing sports, or knitting, just to name a few.
- **As full, complete individuals, not fragments.** Show people's faces and whole bodies. Often times, stock artwork often only shows people's backs/hands, or concealed faces.







Image by [Miriam Doern Martin Frommherz](#)

## Common Day-in-the-Life Scenarios

Shutterstock customers commonly seek lifestyle images of people. Consider depicting people living with a mental illness in these scenarios. For example, a shoot which narrates how individuals get through a normal day, independently or with the support of others, making adjustments as needed.

- People sleeping, getting up and opening the shades, brushing teeth, showering, prepping their hair and/or make-up, making breakfast for their partner or partner + children, reading the paper, looking at devices, heading to work (walking or driving).
- Working on a laptop or desktop in an office, home office or out of the home. The talent could be meeting with colleagues, presenting information to a group, discussing matters with clients.
- Completing chores. Laundry, dishes, making lunch, shopping for groceries, etc.
- Making dinner, drinking wine, eating brunch, washing dishes, spending time with partner or partner + kids watching TV, getting ready for bed.
- Concepts of personal transformation, such as making a fresh start, and loving yourself. Also: Images of people who make a positive difference to others.



Image by [Bonninstudio on Offset](#)

## Common Day-in-the-Life Scenarios cont.

- Crowning achievements: birth of a child, purchase of a new house, accessible renovations, graduation, milestone birthdays.
- Representations of people living with mental illness in leadership roles across various sectors, like healthcare, government, or education.
- Images depicting the use of assistive technology for someone who may have invisible or visible disabilities. This technology can be any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with a mental disability.
- The use of smart home technologies to improve everyday living, ie doorbell with flashing light alert, talking devices such as a talking thermostat, vacuum robots or remote control appliances and electronics.

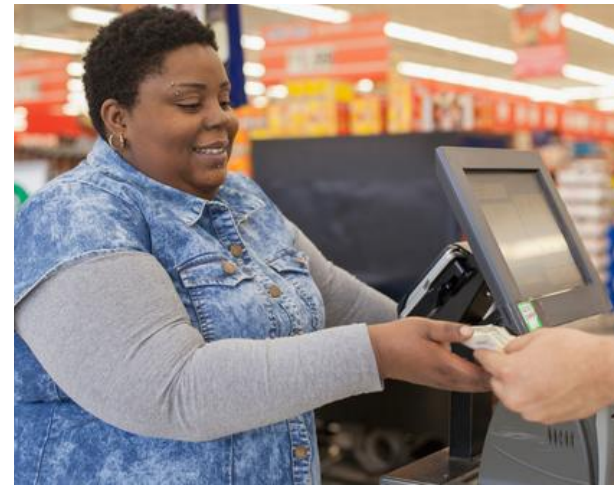


## Cast and work with models who are living with a mental illness

According to the World Health Organization, 1 in every 8 people in the world live with a mental health disorder. In the US, 1 in 5 adults experience mental illness each year and 1 in 6 US Youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. Mental illness touches all of our lives in some way so we encourage casting people who are living with a mental health condition in their real lives.

When casting, also consider:

- **Thinking intergenerationally.** Involve people of a variety of ages in the creation of content and images featuring older family members, friends, mentors, and community members.
- **Engage organizations** working with people who are affected by mental illness.
- **Draw on your own social and professional networks.** If you want to cast authentic actors, reach out to peer organizations serving people with a serious mental illness in your area, like your local NAMI. You are not only creating community and reducing stigma but also offering employment opportunities.
- All imagery should feature a good representation of diversity across race, gender, abilities, sexual preference, body type, ethnicity, and age.



## Working with people who identify as living with a mental illness

- **Ask each person what is needed** to feel comfortable and to work effectively—just as you would with any other model.
- **Avoid making assumptions** about ability levels or the need for assistance, as models may not need any assistance. Ask about accessibility requirements in advance. Be prepared to provide accommodations, like wheelchair access, flexible scheduling, modified break schedule, or service animal. Consult local accessibility experts if you need help.
- **Talk to models with mental illness as you would to anyone else.** Always have a person-first approach to your conversation. Speak at a level appropriate to their age and development level. Keep in mind that mental illness has nothing to do with a person's intelligence. Ask them what would be most helpful and make them comfortable throughout the shoot.





## Additional Educational Resources

[The National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City \(NAMI-NYC\)](#)

For free mental health programs and non-emergency support, call [NAMI-NYC's Helpline](#) available in 180+ languages: 212-684-3264 or email [helpline@naminyc.org](mailto:helpline@naminyc.org). Connect to free classes, support groups, family mentoring, and other programs for families and people affected by mental illness. Virtual programs are available and all are welcome. Connect with your local affiliate [here](#)

[Taking Care of Your Mental Health](#)

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

[The Trevor Project](#) (LGBTQ-focused)

[The Jed Foundation](#) (Teens and Young Adults)

Image by [Tongpool Piasupun](#)





Image by [Cala Image](#)

## Footage

If you're shooting footage for this request, keep these specs in mind:

Frame Rate: 23.98p

Resolution (Cinema 4K) 4096 x 2160  
(UHD) 3840 x 2160  
(HD) 1920 x 1080

Shutter Speed: 180° (1/48th)

Gamma: Rec 709  
Wide Dynamic Range  
(Cinema Style) Log-C

Compression: Pro-Res 422 (HQ)  
H.264 (max bit rate and depth)





# Metadata

We can prevent stereotypes with appropriate labels, titles, and keywords that reflect person-first language. When describing content of people living with an illness, it's important to not lead with the mental health condition. For example, say someone has bipolar or are living with bipolar instead of saying "a bipolar person." Avoid using words embedded in our everyday language like "crazy," "insane," or "psycho" to describe a person with a mental illness. Keep your tone as neutral-positive, use adjectives instead of nouns when referring to characteristics. For more information on writing respectful metadata, please see Shutterstock's [Guidelines for Submitting Diverse and Inclusive Content](#).

When submitting content for this request, include "OurMindsMatter" in your keywords so we can easily surface your work.

If you currently have *OurMindsMatter* images published to your portfolio, add the keyword "OurMindsMatter" using [Catalog Manager](#). We also encourage you to [create sets](#) of *OurMindsMatter* content and share them with us directly.

Other applicable search terms:

*anxiety, bipolar, care, community, depression, doctor, environment, family, friendship, group, healthcare, help, lifestyle, medical, mental health, mental illness, positive, self-care, smile, support, teamwork, wellness*





Image by [VISTA by Westend61](#)  
Cover image by [ikon Images](#)

# THANK YOU!

We all have a role to play in breaking stereotypes about mental illness. Positively portraying people with mental illnesses that show the full range of diversity is a critical step that will influence others. Shutterstock and the National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City (NAMI-NYC) are excited for contributors to add more content that reflect these guidelines to our collection, and for marketers and the media to use more of these types of visuals in the content they create.

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