

Updated 5/28/2025

Anosognosia and the LEAP Method of Communication

When someone rejects a diagnosis of mental illness or refuses treatment, it is tempting to say that they are “in denial”. But that individual may not realize they are experiencing symptoms. They may instead be experiencing a true lack of awareness. The term for this condition is [anosognosia](#), from the Greek meaning “to not know a disease.”

When we talk about anosognosia, we mean that someone is *unaware* of their own mental health condition or that they cannot perceive their condition accurately. Needless to say, when a family member or friend tries to help their loved one, they may be met with rejection and anger. This can create tension, frustration, and deep sadness. Communication can come to a standstill and relationships can be ruptured.

LEAP, which stands for **Listen-Empathize-Agree-Partner**, is a non-confrontational communication approach that can build trust and rapport with a loved one, leading to a more positive and supportive relationship. In the words of Dr. Xavier Amador who developed this communication approach, “LEAP was designed to build mutual respect...” when communication is breaking down. Dr. Amador is a clinical psychologist who is also a family member of a loved one with mental illness. When he used this communication style with his loved one, it transformed their relationship from one filled with tension and anger, to a positive alliance characterized by mutual respect.

While the LEAP approach does not guarantee that your loved one will accept treatment, it can dramatically improve your relationship, and lead to more positive outcomes over time.

Below is a list of videos you may find useful and informative.

Video: The Leap Story (9:01)	https://youtu.be/O15F2BNZyqM
Video: Long-Acting Treatment (29:28)	https://youtu.be/YzZwgt0cgM
Video: I’m not Sick, I Don’t Need Help TEDx (18:03)	https://youtu.be/NXxytf6kfPM
Video: LEAP vs. The Usual Approach (35:41)	https://youtu.be/X_KGEkzA7wU
Video: Defining Anosognosia (8:31)	https://vimeo.com/704530922
Video: I’m Not Sick, I Don’t Need Help! (1:04:37)	https://youtu.be/me21HsRpd60

In addition, we recommend reading “I’m not Sick I don’t Need Help!”, a book written by Dr. Amador. [Here is an excerpt from the book](#), which can be purchased through your favorite bookseller.

To learn more about LEAP, please go to the [LEAP Institute website](#).

About NAMI-NYC

At the National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City (NAMI-NYC), we assist thousands of families and individuals affected by mental illness annually through free education, support, and advocacy.

NAMI-NYC offers [mental health classes](#), [support and social groups](#), [family mentoring](#), and a [Helpline](#) with translation services in 180+ languages. Our support services are free regardless of income, insurance, or immigration status. Contact our Helpline M-F from 10am to 6pm and we'll connect you to NAMI-NYC services or provide you with community resources that can help you take the next step in your journey.

Phone: 212-684-3264

Text: 212-684-3264 (same as phone number)

Chat with us through our website: <https://naminycmetro.org/helpline/>