The
Catatonia
Foundation

No one's life should be lost to catatonia

The Catatonia Foundation: Insights and Impact

Advancing understanding, changing outcomes.

January 16, 2026

The First Catatonia Awareness Day

Today, we pause for those who were **misunderstood, misdiagnosed, or overlooked**.
We speak for those who could not.
And we commit to doing better—together.

Catatonia is a **serious but treatable neuropsychiatric condition**—yet far too often it goes unrecognized. Families are told *it's psychiatric*. *It's behavioral*. *It's rare.*

Meanwhile, their loved one is slipping further away.

For many, catatonia didn’t arrive quietly.
It arrived as **fear, agitation, confusion, or relentless distress**.
It looked *volitional*—but it wasn’t.
It looked *psychiatric*—but it was more than that.

For others, it arrived **more subtly**—as slowing, withdrawal, reduced movement, diminished speech, or profound stillness.
In some, it appeared in **episodes**, coming and going over time.
In some, features overlapped or shifted, with **mixed presentations** that were difficult to recognize.
And for some—particularly individuals with autism or other neurodevelopmental differences—it was dismissed as *“just a part of the disorder,”* rather than recognized as a dangerous change from baseline.

And for too long, it was **misunderstood—and often misdiagnosed**.

Catatonia Awareness Day exists because of lived experience

Every founding family of The Catatonia Foundation knows what it means to watch a loved one suffer while answers are delayed—and to feel both the relief *and* the grief that come when the right diagnosis finally emerges.

Families are often the first to recognize that something is deeply wrong—and their observations matter.

January 16 was chosen to honor **Dr. Max Fink**, whose life’s work helped show the world that catatonia *can be recognized* and *can be treated*.

Catatonia Awareness Day is about **hope**.

Hope that clinicians are taught to recognize catatonia earlier.
Hope that families are listened to.
Hope that no one is dismissed or harmed because catatonia was **misdiagnosed or missed**.
Hope that awareness changes outcomes.

Working together to spread awareness saves lives.
And together, we can change the course of catatonia care.

Today, help us shine a light on catatonia.
Share this message. Start a conversation. Learn the signs.
Awareness matters—more than most people realize.

This is why The Catatonia Foundation exists: ***to listen, to educate, and to help change what happens next.***

How You Can Help Spread Awareness (It Really Matters)

Awareness grows person by person, share by share. You can make a meaningful difference by helping amplify this campaign:

- Share this email
- Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X
- Like and comment on our posts (this dramatically increases reach)
- Share our posts and/or add them to your Stories
- Invite friends, family, and colleagues to follow and engage as well

Every interaction helps extend accurate information to someone who may desperately need it—today or in the future.

If there's something you'd like us to cover in our next newsletter, please let us know. You can email us at **info@thecatatoniafoundation.org**.

Learn More