



AANP Member Spotlight: Sabin Gilman, ND

What started your pathway in naturopathic medicine?

When I was two weeks old my mother found me in my crib not breathing. I was blue and “stiff as a board”. She picked me up and rushed to the ER. The nearest hospital was 30 minutes away. The doctors there did a bunch of tests but could not find anything that was wrong. They told my parents that I was a “near SIDs” and that they weren’t sure if I would survive. They hooked me to a monitor and sent me home. Often, when I would fall asleep, I would stop breathing and the alarm would go off. My parents would have to wake me to get me breathing. Eventually, when I was around 9 months, the episodes stopped. The doctors assumed I “grew out of it” and told my parents I was fine.

When I got to talking age, I did not start speaking. My parents brought me back to the doctors, who told them it’s possible I might not talk due to possible damage caused by the episodes or that I would start talking when I was ready. Eventually, I began talking but I had difficulty getting the words out and pronouncing them. I went to speech therapy until 4th grade.

At a very young age I started having stomach pains and diarrhea. My parents again brought me back to the doctors. They did a bunch of tests but could not find anything wrong. They told my parents it was most likely just a behavior and to ignore me when it happened. I learned that I could not trust the doctors and that is when I decided I wanted to become one.

Negative experiences with Western medicine continued through my teenage years and early adult life, to the point that I decided I no longer wanted to become part of that system. At that time, I had never heard of naturopathic medicine. I had a series of deep meaningful life events that brought me to the University of Southern Maine where I went for a bachelor’s in health sciences and a minor in holistic and integrative health. One of the courses that was offered was Intro to Naturopathic Medicine. I decided to take the class. I remember sitting there on the first day listening to the principles and philosophy, and I thought “Where has this been all my life? How have I not heard of this? And why is this not taught to everyone in school?” It was in that moment that the answer came to me – “You are meant to be part of it” – and it was that day I decided I was going to become a naturopathic doctor.



What do you like most about being a naturopathic doctor and what are some of the challenges?

As a trans naturopathic doctor who has experienced medical trauma, mismanagement, and discrimination, I love that I get to provide gender-affirming primary care to trans, non-binary, and intersex folx in a safe and empowering space using medicine that has changed my life. I really enjoy that I get to spend enough time with my patients to hear their full story, develop a therapeutic relationship, and think outside of the box. The biggest challenges for me are trying to remove the financial barrier to care while also trying to make enough money to survive, limited scope of practice with who accepts us (ie: not being able to support patients navigating disability with the state) and hearing stories of how my patients have been mistreated by other medical providers, including NDs.

What makes your membership with the AANP valuable as a naturopathic doctor?

I joined the AANP to be connected and to give back to my profession, which is something I value. It gives me access to the system that can make a difference for the whole. The most valuable part for me is to also get to be a member of the Diversity and Inclusion committee to help promote social change and growth, which is needed and important.

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