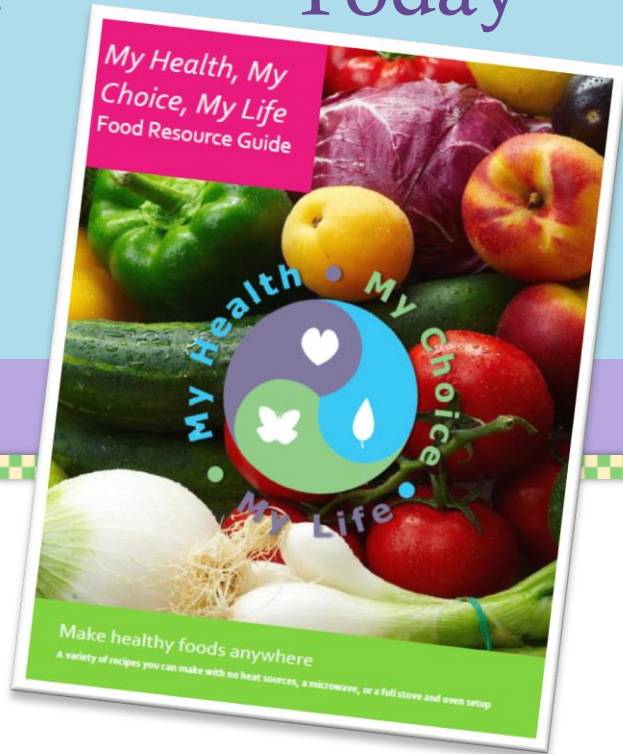




A newsletter about the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* initiative across the State of Tennessee.

Tomorrow Starts Today

July 2014



What's inside?

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- Page 3 Recapping West Tennessee's Championship Games
- Page 5 Work your arms and ankles with the Move of the Month
- Page 6 Learn to practice meditation on your own, any day

A New Recipe Resource is on the Way!

Peer Wellness Coaches have been hard at work on a new recipe guide for a majority of 2014, and we hope our reworked book of simple, healthy recipes will be right at home in Peer Support Centers around the state.

If you need recipes for healthy snacks, we've got 'em. If you want easy dishes to serve as part of a meal, we have those, too. We are also featuring advice on building pasta dishes, sandwiches, and salads.

We tried to take into account many of the unique concerns that Peer Support Centers face when making choices about what to serve, and found recipes that work in a variety of situations.

My Health, My Choice, My Life currently plans to have one bound copy sent to each peer support center when the project is complete, and we will be sure to make a digital version available as well. That way, you can print as many as you want!

Want a Taste?

Here's just one easy recipe featured in the new food resource guide. It's simple, quick, and so far, everyone loves it!

Peanut butter and yogurt fruit dip (Serves 10)

- 1 cup of natural peanut butter
 - 2 cups of nonfat vanilla yogurt
 - Assorted fruit (apple slices, grapes, bananas, strawberries)
1. In a medium bowl, mix together peanut butter and yogurt
 2. Serve with fruit



It's Gettin' HOT in Here

The kitchen, that is. Peer Wellness Coach Leanne Crawford is taking her brand of healthy cooking to program members in Morristown. (Illustration is not an accurate depiction of cooking.)



by Leanne Crawford, Cherokee Health Peer Wellness Coach

It's getting hot but healthy in the kitchen at Cherokee Health Systems Day Treatment Program at 5th Street in Morristown, TN. Every other week, I am having a healthy snack time with the program members in which they help prepare a healthy snack. I provide the recipe and the ingredients. The members and I roll up our sleeves, put our gloves on and have fun all while learning how to make healthy, yet, yummy snacks.

Last week, we made chewy chocolate chip oatmeal breakfast cookies. To say they melted in our mouths would be an understatement. To try them out, follow the recipe to the right:

Chewy Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Breakfast Cookie

Skinnytaste.com

Servings: 8 • Size: 2 cookies

Ingredients:

- 2 medium ripe bananas, mashed
- 1 cup of uncooked quick oats*
- 1/4 cup chocolate chips

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a non-stick cookie sheet with cooking spray or use a Silpat.

Combine the mashed bananas and oats in a bowl. Fold in the chocolate chips and place a tablespoon of each on the cookie sheet.

Bake 15 minutes. Makes 16 cookies.



Think you can't make a healthy cookie? You might be wrong...

The Championship Games Arrive in West Tennessee with a BANG!

by Tiffany Claiborne, West Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

Over 150 peers from nine Peer Support Centers across West Tennessee attended the third-ever Championship Games held in Milan, Tennessee on May 6, 2014.

The event included five competitive games: A walking race, running race, relay, tug-of-war, and tennis ball-throwing. Awards for these events went to the first-, second-, and third-place winners of each.

A best banner award went to Carey Counseling Center's Liberty Place located in Trenton, Tennessee. The best team spirit award went to Quinco's Horizons of Bolivar.

Healthy lunches were provided thanks to a donation from Amerigroup, and the awards were provided with a donation from UnitedHealthcare.

The *My Health, My Choice, My Life* team had a lot of fun that day, and we know our peer Champions did too!



**By James Pincham
Ridgeview Wellness Coach**

John grew up in an abusive home and his family told him over and over again that he would never amount to anything - to the point that he believed it.

His low self-esteem and the abuse he experienced as a child has played a large part in his desire to take his own life on more than one occasion in the recent past. This triggers him to seek refuge in drugs and alcohol.

John was diagnosed with a mental illness as a teenager, and for years his mental illness diagnosis defined him. He recently completed a Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and said that he is feeling much better about himself as a result.

John's doctor is relieved to see that his diabetes is more under control, and that John is managing both his mental health and substance abuse problems. John has reunited with his wife and children, lost about twenty pounds, works two part-time jobs and is preparing to take and pass the GED.

Before taking the the DSMP, John said that he didn't exercise at all, but, now, he walks about 30 minutes a day five days a week, and he attributes exercise to helping him feel better and having more energy.

Having his family back in his life is a dream come true for John because at one point when he was not properly managing his co-occurring issues he almost lost his family. Likewise, passing the GED will mean a lot to him, not only because it will help him find a better job, but also because by passing the exam, he will redefine the little boy who was told over and over that he would never amount to anything.

John said he owes a lot of thanks to what he has learned from his recent DSMP class, and that he wouldn't trade this experience for anything in the world.



Before and After: Peers Are Making Multiple Changes

In every part of Tennessee, peers are making changes that affect their lives in multiple ways. From weight loss to gaining motivation to pursue other goals, their lives are getting better, one step at a time.

Ladonna engages in whole-body muscle strengthening and aerobic physical activities such as jumping jacks and Zumba. Her goal is to lead dance classes at her center someday.

Pain in her knees and her busy life made increasing physical activity more difficult. When interviewed for this article, Ladonna indicated she needed to leave, and she said, "I only have thirty minutes to spend in the fitness center. Time for physical activity is not easy to come by because I have a husband and two children who also need me."

The second picture of Ladonna was taken in April 2014, fourteen months after she started her weight-loss and fitness journey. She lost twenty-eight pounds between the two pictures. In addition to losing weight, through strengthening activities Ladonna replaced fat with tightly toned muscle. Ladonna dropped three dress sizes and isn't done yet.

What improvements will *you* make in the next fourteen months?



**By Mark Bresee
Chattanooga Peer Wellness
Coach**

Ladonna became frustrated with her excess weight because the plus-size clothes she had to purchase cost more than regular sizes. She began her weight-loss journey in February, 2013.

Ladonna consulted with a staff member at her center who recommended she do some weight-loss research on the Internet. Food and physical activity became the focus of her personal study.

Based on what she learned, Ladonna began purchasing nutritious food and planning healthier meals. When asked about the changes she made in her food intake she said, "I take baby steps. For example, when I have a burger and fries, it's a turkey burger and sweet potato fries. I also eat fewer sugary snacks than I used to."

Stephanie's Moves of the Month

by Stephanie Wallingford, Frontier Health Peer Wellness Coach

This month, Peer Wellness Coach Stephanie Wallingford is back with a new set of low-impact exercises designed to make your introduction to physical activity as smooth as possible.

The first exercise focuses on your ankles, and the second is a modified push-up, but don't let that *push* you away! It's actually been made a little bit easier!

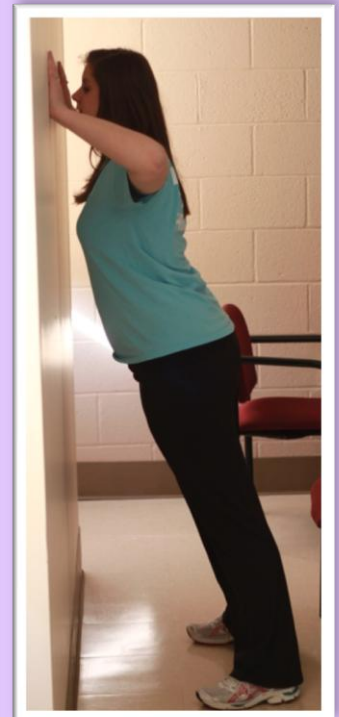
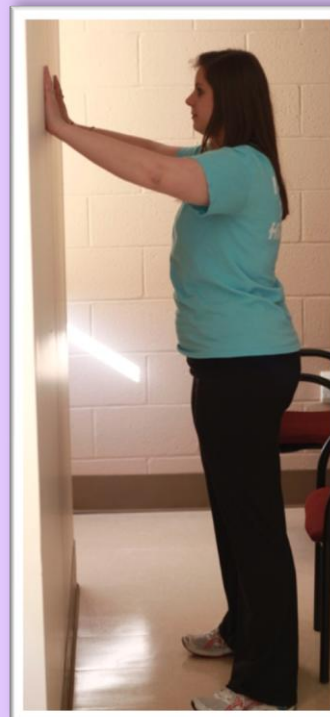
Wall push-ups are designed to strengthen your arms, chest and shoulders (just like a regular push-up), but they're less challenging and they won't require you to get down on the floor. I can get down with that!

Ankle Pumps

1. Bend ankle towards your body as far as possible.
2. Hold for 5 seconds.
3. Now, point your toe away from your body.
4. Hold for 5 seconds.
5. Repeat 10 times (you can do both ankles at once).



Wall Push-Ups



1. Find a wall that is clear of any objects. Stand a little farther than arm's length from the wall.
2. Facing the wall, lean your body forward and place your palms flat against the wall at about shoulder-height and shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly bend your elbows as you lower your upper body toward the wall, keeping feet planted.
4. Pause for a few seconds.
5. Then, slowly push yourself back up until your arms are straight, but don't lock your elbows.
6. Repeat 10 times for one set. Rest for one to two minutes. Then complete a second set of 10.

Meditation and My Journey Towards Recovery

by Julie Fann, Frontier Health Peer Wellness Coach

It is very important for people who live with mental illnesses to know that they're not alone in their journey toward recovery. I'm a Peer Wellness Coach who works for Frontier Health in East Tennessee, and I live with generalized anxiety disorder and major depression.

I also hold a bachelor's degree in English from a reputable liberal arts college and a master's degree in the same subject. I have worked as an editorial assistant for The Associated Press and as a grant writer for a cutting edge mental health law nonprofit in Washington, D.C.

You might think these successes would give me a lot of confidence that would prevent mental illness from overtaking my life, but they haven't always. My mental illness has been so severe at certain points in my life that I twice had to spend time in the hospital. My struggles have caused me in the past to isolate myself from the world and spiral into a mental state so dark that I've even wanted to take my own life.

Much of my distress comes from trauma I experienced as a child that has carried over into my adult life. I started having symptoms of mental illness, in the form of severe and chronic panic attacks, at the age of 17, and, at age 47, though my coping skills have greatly increased through therapy and medication, I still at times experience brief setbacks.

Dr. Barbara Fredrickson, a research psychologist at the University of North

Carolina, Chapel Hill, states in an article published in the July issue of "Sun" magazine that, "...[t]here is strong evidence that people who are depressed, anxious, or lonely experience fewer feelings of safety around others, and that starts a downward spiral in which they cut themselves off because any interaction, to them, seems threatening. They may want to connect, but their actions don't support that desire, which reinforces their loneliness."

I've found this to be true in my own life. Because I'm so often on the alert and protecting myself, I don't even notice sometimes the person(s) I'm trying to connect with. I fail to recognize that I'm dealing with other people who have their own thoughts and feelings that include fears and concerns. Through hard work and a more positive attitude, though, I'm able to find ways to conquer my worry.

We can't be curious about the world around us unless we feel safe. And it is when we feel safe that can we build healthy relationships – relationships that are critical to our physical and mental health that are based on trust and the exchange of more positive emotions than negative ones.

In my own personal journey toward recovery, in addition to my regular treatment and therapy for my mental illness, I've found the practice of meditation also to be helpful in increasing my ability to bond with others. I join those medical experts who are discovering through intensive research that meditation offers many benefits to our

physical and mental health. The practice of meditation, however, is not for everyone, and you should consult your health care provider before giving it a try.

There are many types of meditation, and the practice of meditation does not need to, and shouldn't, interfere with anyone's spiritual/religious belief system and can even increase positive spiritual feelings.

Because of the positive benefits I've experienced from the practice of meditation, I continue to make it a part of my weekly routine to calm my mind and benefit my physical health. Maybe the practice of meditation would be helpful for you as well. If you think it might be, talk to your therapist and doctor.



Everyday Ways to Practice Meditation (from the Mayo Clinic)



Here are some ways you can practice meditation on your own, whenever you choose:

- **Breathe deeply.** Focus all attention on your breathing. Concentrate on feeling and listening as you inhale and exhale through your nostrils. Breathe deeply and slowly. When your attention wanders, gently return your focus to your breathing.
- **Scan your body.** When using this technique, focus attention on different parts of your body. Become aware of your body's various sensations, whether that's pain, tension, warmth or relaxation.
- **Repeat a mantra.** You can create your own mantra, whether it's religious or secular. Examples of religious mantras include the Jesus Prayer in the Christian tradition, the holy name of God in Judaism, or the om mantra of Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern religions.
- **Walk and meditate.** Combining a walk with meditation is an efficient and healthy way to relax. You can use this technique anywhere you're walking, such as in a tranquil forest, on a city sidewalk or at the mall.
- **Prayer.** This is one of the most widely-used examples of meditation, present in all faiths.

More Graduation Successes Across the State!



By Cassidy Bryant
Knoxville Peer Wellness Coach

Another great success in Knoxville! Participants in a six-week Chronic Disease Self-Management workshop at Cagle Terrace Apartments in Knoxville learned how to stay physically active and make healthier choices. Led by Peer Wellness Coach Cassidy Bryant, and co-facilitated by Courtney Hudson from the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association (TMHCA), the workshop concluded with an exciting graduation celebration.

Those who attended the celebration were able to participate in a variety of activities, including stretching, a hula hoop contest, a dancer-size group, a ball throw and a positive thinking activity. The celebration also included a healthy meal - chicken wraps, salad, fruit salad and sparkling water.

Participants walked to the front and received a certificate of completion and a *My Health, My Choice, My Life* t-shirt, followed by a group picture with the coaches. "I have learned so much from this class and have made a lot of friends. The class taught me how to sleep better, watch what I eat and to be more mindful in decision-making," said Diane Dixon, participant.



Congratulations
to all of our
recent
graduates!

By Tiffany Claiborne
West Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach

Participants in the CDSMP workshop at Pathways' Hope House in Dyersburg (taught by myself and Debbi Young) celebrated the conclusion of the class with healthy food and fun at Okeena Park.

Foods served included a quinoa salad with vegetables, chicken roll-ups, chips and avocado dip, and healthy cookies and fruit for dessert.

Afterward, class members participated in a walk around the park as well as some fun Frisbee time.

We couldn't have asked for more beautiful weather or a better time! Congratulations!



Wellness and Recovery Road Shows are on the Schedule!

There are four Wellness and Recovery Road Shows left on the schedule this year and *My Health, My Choice, My Life* is on board for all of them! Come see the coaches at each event:



July 22 – Athens

Southeast Tennessee Trade and Conference Center

August 28 – Nashville

Ellington Ag Center

September – Jackson

Location TBD

October 28 – Memphis

Lowenstein House East

This month's puzzler:

Find the Dimensions of Wellness in the puzzle and match them to the descriptions.

L A N O I T A P U C C O G D Y
 A V U H Z I O D U Z M Y C Z R
 L M S F I N A N C I A L H I X
 R A X N J N Q E S J O A K Y O
 B Q I H L C N M P V J U Z P D
 P Z Q C M Z M O I F H T Y E P
 C U K K O W T T R X Q C D C U
 X B H O C S P I I S Y E D E K
 Q Y X E M D R O T V X L H U I
 B X O F H J Z N U H R L B W F
 G W R I R P C A A Q L E L A I
 P H Y S I C A L L D C T N M H
 O O E N V I R O N M E N T A L
 W A L U F I C Q W D D I L K Z
 W I P Y E Y V K V O U R D A S

- Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships
- Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being
- Satisfaction with current and future financial situations
- Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
- Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work
- Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods and sleep
- Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system
- Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life