



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

Tomorrow Starts Today



October 2013

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Welcome to Wellness Week!

My Health, My Choice, My Life held events around the state last month to celebrate SAMHSA's National Wellness Week (September 16-22). The first event, a Wellness Celebration for West Tennessee, was held in Jackson's Muse Park on September 17 and resulted in a smashing turnout of over 110 peers from eight Peer Support Centers in the region. Blue Care Tennessee and UnitedHealthCare were both on hand with donations of fruit and water (thank you!), and there was also a dance competition, wellness walk, and board-breaking demonstrations.

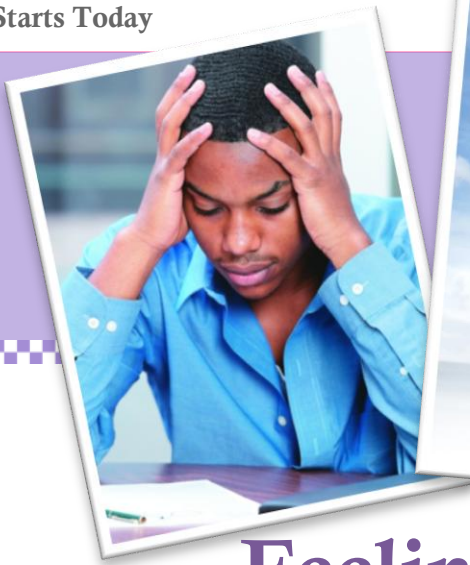
The second event of the week was a Morristown Wellness Celebration, sponsored by Cherokee Health. Sixty people came, along with representatives from UnitedHealthCare, NAMI, and Cherokee Health. Great fun here included a giant game of kickball as well as another dance competition.

My Health, My Choice, My Life rounded out the week with the second Championship Games of the year, held at Athens Regional Park in Athens, Tenn. One hundred fifty people from Regions 2 and 3 gathered for events like a 50-yard dash, tennis ball throw, and a tug-of-war. Wellness Awards were also given out. For more on this event, please turn to Page 3!

Noticed some new faces on the team?

My Health, My Choice, My Life has made some additions over the past couple of months, and you may have seen them out and about at events around the state recently. These new coaches are agency-specific, so if you work with Ridgeview, Cherokee, or Frontier, it's likely you might meet them soon! To learn a little bit more about James, Leanne, and Julie (seen here with Peer Recovery Coordinator Vik Moore), flip to the back cover.





Feeling the Heat?

Try these 12 ways to beat stress.

by Stephanie Wallingford, Johnson City Peer Wellness Coach

(List adapted from: *12 Ways to Beat Stress*, Channing Bete Company, 2011)

Stress is a normal part of daily life. It's the tension felt when faced with a new or difficult situation. Stress isn't always a bad thing. For instance, the rush of energy one gets when under stress can help meet a deadline, deal with a family crisis, or avoid danger.

Experiencing too much stress, though, can cause problems. Ongoing stresses about money, illness, or problems with work or relationships add up, and can affect one's physical and mental health. Some symptoms of stress include headaches, difficulty sleeping, anger, anxiety, depression, arguing with friends and family, and mood changes. Thankfully, there are some steps one can take to help beat stress.

1. Focus on the positive: We often have no control over the sources of stress in our own life. You can, however, control the way you react. Instead of worrying about things you cannot change, try being optimistic and think about the possible positive outcomes.

2. Talk it out: Talking with a trusted friend or family member can help you sort through your feelings and get a new perspective.

3. Make a "To-Do" list: This can help you

manage your time wisely. Write down everything you want to get done in a given day. Prioritize your list by level of importance, starting with the most important activity first and moving down the list.

4. Make time for yourself every day: Set aside time each day to read, take a bath, work on a hobby, or do something you enjoy. Making time for yourself can help you "recharge your batteries".

5. Try Deep Breathing: This is one of the easiest ways to relieve stress. Find a comfortable position sitting or standing, placing one hand on your stomach just above your belly button, and placing the other hand on your upper chest. Then, breathe in through your nose, only feeling your abdomen rise. At the same time, you should feel only a little movement in the upper chest area. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, emptying your lungs completely and feeling your stomach fall. Repeat several times until you feel calm and relaxed.

6. Try Progressive Muscle Relaxation: This technique can help you relieve tension in your muscles. First, sit in a comfortable chair, or lie down. Start with your arms. Make a fist with your hands for 5-10 seconds. Then relax. Now, move on to other muscle groups, like the shoulders, face, chest, stomach, and legs, until you've tensed and relaxed your

whole body.

7. Get enough sleep: Don't get into a habit of giving up sleep to get more things done. It can only lead to more stress in the long run. Most adults need about 7-8 hours of sleep each night.

8. Take regular breaks: Taking a break from what you are doing every once in a while can help you come back feeling refreshed and relaxed.

9. Get regular exercise: Finding time to fit exercise into your busy schedule may seem like one more source of stress. Physical activity can help reduce tension, improve your mood and give you more energy to get through the day.

10. Laugh: Laughing can brighten your mood and relieve tension. Try reading a comic strip or watching a funny TV show.

11. Eat a healthy diet: Give your body the energy it needs to cope with stress. Eat a variety of foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber. Limit fats, cholesterol, salt, caffeine and added sugars.

12. Ask for help when you need it: Let others help you with your tasks and chores. If stress gets out of hand, don't be afraid to ask for help.

On September 19, 130 people from Regions 2 and 3 gathered on a gorgeous sunny day for the Championship Games in Athens, Tennessee. Participants traveled, some leaving very early in the morning, from nine Peer Support Centers, three Psychosocial Rehabilitation Programs, and one group home to the beautiful Athens Regional Park.

The Championship Games experience focused on creativity, competition, and community as everyone celebrated wellness together.

Creativity came to life when each group presented a unique, colorful banner designed to represent them and hung it on a rope for a fabulous, festive display all day.

Competition inspired the best efforts of all participants in the games, which included a fifty-yard dash, tennis ball distance-throw, water-carrying relay race, and center vs. center tug-of-war. Speed, strength, balance and athletic skill created an explosion of smiles, laughter, cheers, waving, dancing, jumping, and fist-pumping. The gathering celebrated those who finished first, second, and third, but all who participated came away winners!

Many boosted their confidence by breaking one-inch pine boards with a palm-heel punch. Every person who tried ultimately succeeded!

After a tasty lunch, the day climaxed with lovely certificate-in-a-frame awards for individual Wellness Champions from each center, chosen because they demonstrated the greatest commitment to living a healthy lifestyle.

A sense of community emerged as people from many places and different life experiences cooperated, competed, cheered, and celebrated...together.

The *My Health, My Choice, My Life* team would like to thank Blue Care Tennessee and United Healthcare Community Plan for their support, partnership, and sponsorship of the Championship Games!



Everyone's a Winner at the Championship Games in Athens

by Mark Bresee, Chattanooga Peer Wellness Coach



Keeping Your Joints Healthy May Lead to Easier Days

by Tiffany Nevin, West Tennessee Peer Wellness Coach



Exercise is vital for reducing joint pain.

Information from:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/arthritis/AR00009>

Moderate exercise is actually very important when it comes to reducing joint stiffness and pain! Your doctor or a physical therapist can recommend the right exercise plan for you.

Different exercises have different results, but exercise in general can:

- Increase the strength of muscles surrounding your joints
- Help you maintain your bones' strength
- Give you more energy for the day
- Make it easier to sleep at night
- Reduce joint pain
- Help you control weight

Avoiding exercise does more harm than good! Just remember, adding any motion is helpful.

Information from:

<http://www.arthritis.org/conditions-treatments/understanding-arthritis/> and <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/spring09/articles/spring09pg14.html>

Anyone who's felt extreme joint pain can tell you: Arthritis isn't fun. This chronic degenerative disease of the joints causes cartilage to wear down or, in the case of rheumatoid arthritis, causes inflammation of the membranes surrounding your joints. Either of these can lead to:

- Pain,
- Stiffness,
- Swelling, or
- Severe joint damage.

Arthritis is actually a growing problem that accounts for 44 million outpatient doctor visits per year, almost a million hospitalizations each year, and is also the leading cause of disability in the United States. Over 50 million Americans have the disease, and two-thirds of those people are under the age of 65. So this isn't just a problem your grandma might have.

Doctors diagnose arthritis using X-rays, magnetic resonance imaging (MRIs), blood tests, and removing and testing the fluid from a joint.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for arthritis unless it's caused by an infection (and in that case, antibiotics should do the trick). Every other kind requires only managing the symptoms using rest, regular exercise, vitamin and mineral supplements, and medications like ibuprofen or Tylenol. Your doctor will recommend the best treatment option for you, so talk to them first.

If damage to the joint is severe enough, your doctor may recommend a complete joint replacement (knees and hips are most common).

However, if you want to try to stop arthritis before it gets a big hold on you, regular exercise, keeping a healthy weight, and a balanced diet rich in Vitamin D are key.

With cooperation from your doctor, you can help reduce some of the pain of arthritis and lead a happier life.

Meet the Wellness Coaches' New Tool: The Smokerlyzer!

by Mark Bresee, Chattanooga Peer Wellness Coach

Are you sick of seeing your money go up in smoke?

Does setting your health on fire every day seem like a bad idea?

Hoping to enjoy your grandchildren for as long as possible?

For these and other reasons, approximately 70% of those who smoke want to break free. To provide additional support for these freedom seekers, the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* Team acquired Smokerlyzers. Some background information will clarify how this smart-tool may help.

Nicotine sinks its addictive teeth into a smoker and with tobacco smoke brings several thousand chemicals, hundreds of which are hazardous-to-your-health, and 70 can cause cancer.

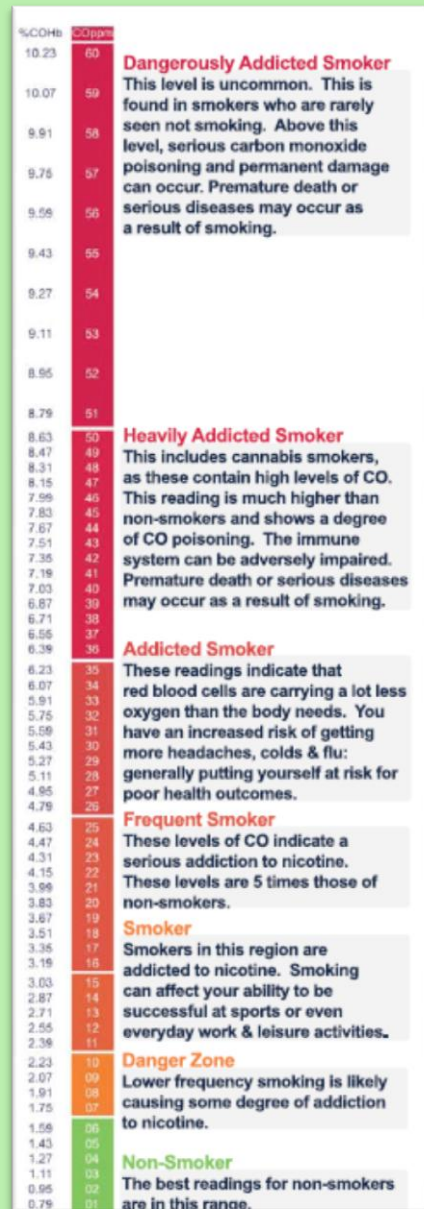
Like a breathalyzer, a person blows into the Smokerlyzer which measures the level of carbon monoxide (CO), one of the poisons in tobacco smoke. Like checking

blood pressure and cholesterol levels, measuring carbon monoxide (CO) tells a person how big the problem is right now. This information provides insight into what to do next. Research indicates most folk are more likely to address problems after receiving measured results.

Smokerlyzer readings also say something about the depth of addiction to tobacco. Those who reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke may draw more intensely on the cigarettes they do smoke and maintain the same level of CO. This ongoing accuracy keeps us informed regarding the actual size of the problem.

Ongoing use of the Smokerlyzer can also provide opportunities to measure success. If the benefits of smoking reduction don't become obvious right away, the Smokerlyzer keeps success clearly visible.

My Health, My Choice, My Life Peer Wellness Coaches are now using the Smokerlyzers in conjunction with workshops and wellness-related events. Ask to be tested. It could make a big difference in your life!



For more about quitting smoking and the Smokerlyzer device, check out these websites:

http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm#dependence

<http://covita.net/whatisismokerlyzer.html>





West Tennessee's First Graduation Celebration: August 2013

The first-ever Graduation Celebration for West Tennessee's *My Health, My Choice, My Life* participants was held on August 1, 2013 at the LIFT Wellness Center in Jackson. Participants came from Carey Counseling's Outreach Center in Paris and Pathways' Rainbow Center in Jackson.

This celebration was themed, too – it was a superhero party! Everyone in attendance got a chance to make a mask and take a flying photo, and every food served had some sort of "superfood" element, with the benefits listed on some POW!-BOOM!-WHAM!tastic signs.

"I'm so glad we got to start West Tennessee's *My Health, My Choice, My Life* celebrations with a bang," said Tiffany Nevin, the Peer Wellness Coach for the region. "Hopefully, I can make the next celebrations live up to this one."





DID YOU KNOW THAT...



A typical fast food meal (burger, fries and a soda) in the 1950s had 590 calories. The typical fast food meal today contains a whopping 1,550 calories.

Today, the American teenager drinks twice as much soda as milk. Just 25 years ago, they drank twice as much milk as soda.

About 65 percent of American adults are overweight or obese. This is up from 1980, when the number was 47 percent.

Did You Know These Junk Food Facts?

by Stephanie Wallingford, Johnson City Peer Wellness Coach

Adapted from Chatfield, Clare. "Junk Food Facts." Journeyworks Publishing, 2009. Print.



Junk food is food that is high in fat, sugar, salt or calories. Junk food might taste good, but it is not good for you – especially if you eat it often. Below are other things you should know about junk food and what it can do to your body.

Junk food is often loaded with FAT.

There are "good" fats and "bad" fats, which are also known as saturated or trans fats. Some kinds of fat are good for your heart, but most of the fat found in junk food is "bad" fat. These fats are found in fast food, packaged foods and fried foods. *Too much of the "bad" fat can cause problems such as: weight gain, heart disease and high cholesterol.* It is best to limit foods like cheeseburgers, French fries, chicken nuggets, cookies, pies and chips.

Junk food can be full of SUGAR.

The average American eats 20 teaspoons of sugar a day, which does not include that natural sugars found in milk or fruit. *Too much sugar in your diet can cause or contribute to:*

cavities, weight gain and type 2 diabetes. Limit sweetened cereals, doughnuts, sodas and candy.

Junk food has too much SALT.

Most of us eat too much salt. Even foods that don't taste salty can have a lot of salt in them. *For some people, too much salt causes high blood pressure, which can increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes and kidney disease.* Want to limit your salt intake? Try cutting out potato chips, French fries, hot dogs and almost all packaged foods or frozen meals, which are loaded with sodium.

SODA and other sugary drinks ARE junk food.

Having a soda every once in a while is not bad, but drinking soda every day instead of water or milk is not a healthy choice. One can of regular soda has about 10 teaspoons of sugar. *Drinking too much soda contributes to cavities, obesity and osteoporosis (brittle bones).*

Meet Our New Coaches!



James Pincham is a recent divorcé whose ex-wife relapsed into alcoholism and drug abuse after over 24 years of sobriety. That experience has motivated him to more greatly appreciate the importance of maintaining his co-occurring issues over 18 years of sobriety, and to continue helping others as well. James is employed as a Peer Wellness Coach by Ridgeview Hospital, with a territory covering over four counties. He recently relocated to the Knoxville, Tenn. area, where he enjoys service work, working out, reading, and a large extended family.



Leanne Crawford attended Tusculum College where she received a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Organizational Management. She previously worked in Child Protective Services for a number of years. She also taught psychology on the collegiate level. She is very excited to be a Peer Wellness Coach with Cherokee Health Systems.



Julie Fann earned a bachelor's degree in English from Wheaton College and a master's degree in English from East Tennessee State University. She has worked as an editorial assistant, reporter, copy editor, adjunct professor and grant writer. Through employment with the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law in Washington, D.C. she learned about existing and developing federal mental health legislation. Now, due to her father's struggle with mental illness and her own lived experience, she is very grateful for the opportunity as a Peer Mental Health Wellness Coach with Frontier Health Systems to provide hope to those who live with and seek to recover from mental illnesses.

