



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

Tomorrow Starts Today



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What is.....A CPRS?

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I sometimes get lost in this world full of acronyms. When I began my journey as a peer wellness coach it was no different. I was advised I would have to become a CPRS and my first thought was that I had taken CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) many years ago but what in the world did the "s" stand for? Had the medical world added something to CPR that I didn't know about? This might be interesting. I mean, I am going to be a WELLNESS coach. I may have to save someone's life.

Well, I was right...kind of...it is, after all, a matter of the heart. A CPRS is a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, someone who identifies as being in recovery from mental illness, substance abuse, or both and who wishes to help others in their journey of recovery. I completed the state Peer Recovery Specialist Certification Training in October 2013 and became fully certified in February 2014. In October of this year I became a CPRS master trainer.

December 7th-11th I facilitated my first state Peer Recovery Specialist Certification Training in Johnson City with Ron Hanaver, director of the Knox County Recovery Court. It was a wonderful week of learning, growing, and sharing. Sixteen people successfully completed the 40 hour training and are energetically ready to take the next steps for complete certification.

Recovery is real. Sometimes, we need help, and help coming from someone with lived experience can make all the difference in the world. H(elp) O(ther) P(eople) E(xcel) is the heart of the matter! For more information, go to recoverywithinreach.org or contact the Office of Consumer Affairs and Peer Recovery Services toll-free at 1-800-560-5767.

The Many Benefits of Chair Exercise

By: Dina Savennas, Peer Wellness Coach

Chair exercise is a great choice for those who experience limited mobility or back and knee problems, those who sit at a desk all day at work or who experience dizziness, as well as anyone wanting to complete a no-impact, aerobic workout. Burn calories and have some fun without leaving your chair!

Many of the movements we do while standing - marching in place, stretching, kicking and punching, etc. - can all be done in a chair. It's great for people with diabetes because exercise lowers blood sugar. You can do it anytime, in the comfort of your own home. There's no expensive equipment to buy and there is no risk of falling.

There are various levels of chair exercise: Beginner, intermediate and advanced. Add weights or resistance bands to see results even faster. Chair exercise is great for the whole body! You can kick and punch, march in place to increase your heart rate, re-energize and burn some calories. Or you may choose to do some gentle, restorative yoga for better flexibility and relaxation.

If you haven't worked out in a while and want to improve your cardiovascular health, chair exercise may be an excellent choice for you. It is a great way to achieve better muscle tone, strength, overall conditioning, and stress relief.

It's important to remember that any type of exercise will offer numerous health benefits. Mobility issues inevitably make some types of exercise easier than others, but no matter your physical situation, you should aim to incorporate three different types of exercise into your routines: Cardio, Strength and Flexibility. Always begin with a warm up and cool down, followed by some gentle stretching.

Exercise can ease depression and relieve stress and anxiety. It can enhance your self-esteem, and improve your health and your whole outlook on life. Ask your doctor if chair exercise is a good choice for you, grab a chair and get going!



Randall's Tobacco Free Success Story

By Jessica L. Collins, Peer Wellness Coach

In October, 2015, a Tobacco Free workshop began at Friendship House in Knoxville. Randall entered the workshop determined to quit using chewing tobacco.

At 37 years old, he talked about how he had used chewing tobacco since he was five and how he had a desire to quit using it altogether. "I was five when my cousin gave it to me," he said.

Randall also has a chronic physical illness and recently found out he is beginning to lose his muscle strength. He uses an electric wheelchair, and is constantly walking in an attempt to use his muscles for as long as possible.

Randall is what some would call a fighter, and with his health condition, using tobacco, and other life stressors, he was focused and eager to quit using tobacco. He had perfect attendance throughout the workshop and by the end of the six weeks he had reduced using tobacco from a case of snuff to only a can of chewing tobacco every three days. Randall is now able to tell me that he is no longer buying or using chewing tobacco.

When asked about his tobacco use, Randall said, "I was using five big cases of snuff". He said he had tried to quit many times. Randall was eager to report that quitting snuff has helped him financially. "It is bad for me, but I really had to quit because it was expensive".

Being a peer wellness coach and teaching a Tobacco-Free workshop is very rewarding when an individual quits an unhealthy habit. When asked how he was feeling after stopping the use of tobacco, Randall said, "I am doing ok and feeling better."



Donald's Move of the Month:

It's all in the Hips

By Donald Williams, Peer Wellness Coach

The Holiday season may include some traveling to see family and friends, for many of us. The trips can be by trains, planes or automobiles ranging from a few miles to across the country. All of these modes of transportation will require us to be seated while traveling. Riding in a car for hours or sitting in a cramped seat on an airplane can cause muscle tightness, pain, fatigue and less than festive moods. Here are some stretches that can relieve hip tightness or soreness.

This stretch is a wide legged forward bend.



Sit and open your legs to an angle of about 90 degrees or as far as comfortable. Press your hands against the floor and slide your buttocks forward, widening the legs as much as you comfortably can.

Rotate your thighs outwardly, so that the knee caps point straight up toward the ceiling. Reach out through your heels and stretch your soles.

With your thigh bones pressed heavily into the floor and your knee caps pointing up at the ceiling, walk your hands forward between your legs. Keep your arms long. As with all forward bends, the emphasis is on moving from the hip joints and maintaining the length of the front torso.

Increase the forward bend on each exhalation until you feel a comfortable stretch in the backs of your legs. Stay in the pose 1 minute or longer. Then come up on an inhalation with a long front torso.

I Do This for My Health

By: Donald Williams, Peer Wellness Coach

Alvin R. from Middle Tennessee participated in a Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSMP) workshop and then signed up for Peer Wellness Coaching.

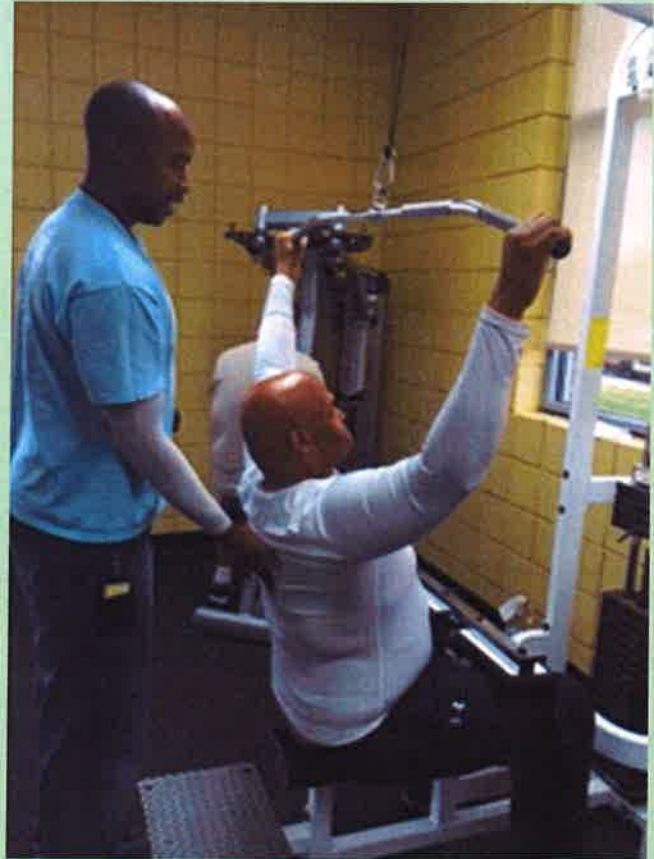
During the course of the workshop, Alvin made some action plans focusing on increasing physical activity and eating healthier. He became a member of Planet Fitness and got into a routine of working out three times a week.

He also became more food conscious and began to make changes in his eating habits. Alvin credits the *My Health, My Choice, My Life* program with helping him feel more assertive, and he has become comfortable with communicating with others.

His workout routine consists of running on a treadmill and lifting weights twice a week. He usually runs 2-2.5 miles on the treadmill before lifting. He also enjoys running outside, and said the cooler weather makes it more enjoyable.

His lifting routine consists of one light and one heavy day. During one coaching session Alvin said he wanted to add to the routine that he is currently doing. I asked him what he thought he could do at home, and he suggested pushups and squats.

I provided him with materials to assist him outside of his gym routine. Alvin stated that one of his future goals is to run in the Country Music Marathon. Go Alvin!





Well Body Workshops Provide Important Tools for Women in Recovery

By: Julie Fann, Peer Wellness Coach

Women in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction, or both, face a host of physical health concerns as they work to heal. As a *My Health, My Choice, My Life* peer wellness coach, I have the privilege of encouraging them to think about the importance of being physically well, and what that means exactly.

I recently completed a Well Body workshop with approximately ten women in recovery who attend a group therapy session at Holston Counseling Center in Kingsport, Tennessee. I met with them for about two hours once a week for six weeks to discuss things like the importance of sleep, healthy eating, and physical activity.

“The most valuable thing I’ve learned through this workshop is how to read nutrition labels, and how important it is to know what is in the food you eat so that you can make healthier choices,” said Codie B.

Because I find that women often struggle with body image issues, we talk a lot about what it means to be healthy, and how that is different from being skinny.

“I miss weighing 94 pounds like I did when I was using (drugs),” Rebecca W. said. “I eat

more now and I’m gaining weight and that bothers me because I don’t feel healthy. I forget that when I was so skinny I was really super unhealthy. I’m actually healthier now.”

Discussing their relationship with food and how it is affected by their withdrawal from drugs and alcohol is very important for women in recovery because they often substitute one addiction for another. Helping them to focus on fundamentals like eating three healthy meals a day and getting some form of physical activity goes a long way.

Two women in the workshop live in a half-way house and don’t have as many options for eating healthily. During the six weeks they learned how to maximize healthy food options that are available, and they’ve started doing yoga on their own in the common room.

I feel encouraged when I finish a workshop and see that the information and support I’ve given women has helped them pay attention more effectively to how they treat their physical bodies and the ways in which they nourish themselves.

Ways to Beat the Winter Blues

By: Allison Harwell, Peer Wellness Coach



The winter blues, or seasonal affective disorder (SAD), is depression that occurs during the same time of the year, usually during winter when the days are shorter, but it can happen in the summer too.

As it gets cold outside and there is less daylight outside it is easy to feel gloomy and tired. Some other symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder include: feeling sad or moody, lacking interest in activities, gaining weight, sleeping more, or having trouble concentrating.

Treatment may include light therapy, medications, and counseling.

Light therapy uses artificial light exposure to help treat people with SAD. Bright light treatment involves using a light box near you to expose you to the light. Dawn stimulation is a light that progressively gets brighter over time in the morning to mimic the sun rise.

Medications such as antidepressants can be used to help treat the winter blues. Counseling such as cognitive behavioral therapy can help you learn how to manage your symptoms.

Five other ways to help beat the winter blues are: staying active, going outside, spending time with family and friends, taking a trip, and eating healthy.

1. **Stay active:** A study from Harvard University in 2005 reports that walking for about 35 minutes a day five times a week or 60 minutes a day several times a week can improve symptoms of depression. Exercising produces endorphins which make you feel better; therefore, exercising like biking, swimming, or hiking can help lift your mood.
2. **Go outside:** Spending time outside in the natural daylight will provide you with vitamin D.
3. **Spend time with family and friends:** Try remaining social with others that you enjoy being around. Keeping in touch and spending time with others is important, because they can offer support.
4. **Take a trip:** Take a vacation to somewhere that brings you joy. Many people take a trip to the beach and then feel rejuvenated after spending time in the warm sunlight on a calming beach.
5. **Eat healthy:** Eating healthy foods will provide your body with essential nutrients. Eating enough fruits and vegetables will help increase your energy level and help balance those cravings for carbohydrates. Sweet treats like candy bars will only temporarily make you feel better.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/basics/definition/con-20021047?p=1>

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/dealing-with-winter-blues-sad.aspx>

<http://www.realsimple.com/health/mind-mood/emotional-health/winter-blues?print>

Workshop Promotes Courage

By: James Pincham, Peer Wellness Coach

Martha L. has participated in two My Health, My Choice, My Life workshops and says that she wouldn't be alive if it weren't for the program. "They show you how to understand what's going on around you," she said.

Before attending workshops Martha was afraid to ask for help when she needed it. Martha has also learned to value herself more and to set healthy boundaries in her relationships. She's learned that it is okay sometimes to tell people no and to rely on herself.

A few months ago while taking one of my workshops, Martha's husband went to jail and she was afraid that she wouldn't be able to live on her own. She says that at first living without him was very scary. Then one day her back door steps broke and there was no one around to help her fix them. "The steps are the only way in and out of my house and so they had to be fixed." Up to this point she had always relied on her husband to help her take care of herself, as well as for anything around their house that needed fixing. She asked several friends and neighbors for help but no one ever showed up. She soon realized that she was going to either fix them herself or risk hurting herself if she fell. Martha says she looked at how the other steps were put together, went and bought some nails, and hammered away.



She says that today those steps are still holding up. To her those fixed steps represent more than just some fixed steps. They represent that she can take care of herself if I have to, and that I don't have to depend on other people to take care of me and that I can take care of myself.

Martha says that she got the courage to fix the stairs from having taken both the DSMP and CDSMP classes, which showed her, through completing numerous action plans, that she has far more control over her life than she previously realized. Before taking the classes I would have relied on someone else to do for me, but after taking the class, I was motivated to take care of myself. Once I fixed my stairs I had the motivation to tackle other issues in my life, like my diabetes, depression, and hypertension, she said. Fixing her own stairs also motivated her to start walking every day. Now that she is walking daily for thirty minutes, her diabetes measurements have improved, as well as her hypertension and her depression. But most recently she has developed some foot problems and is waiting to see what her doctor suggests.