

Community Members Learn to Self-Manage Chronic Disease through Northwell Health's Living Healthy Program

Northwell Health's Living Healthy program is a six-session, evidence-based Chronic Disease Self-Management educational workshop program that aims to equip community members experiencing ongoing physical or mental illness with the self-confidence and ability to control their symptoms and manage how their condition impacts their day-to-day life by utilizing non-medical strategies.

The initiative works towards meeting NQP's DSRIP Domain 3 and Domain 4 disease management and mental health goals.

The 2.5 hour-workshops are held at community locations once a week for six weeks, and are typically facilitated by two community members who have a chronic health condition themselves. Participants learn meditation and breathing techniques, diet and exercise, communication skill development, and mental strategies for stopping the cycle of symptoms.

The program also guides participants through action planning to help them tackle goals that may seem overwhelming at first glance. "Action planning helps participants frame their goals and build on previous successes," explains Lori Ginsberg, RN, MA, Program Director, Center for Equity of Care, Northwell Health. "For example, we will create a manageable action plan for an overweight patient who wants to lose weight so that they will have concrete steps to achieve their weight loss goal."

The program's structure is borrowed from Stanford Medicine's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and includes: 1) Techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation; 2) Appropriate exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility, and endurance; 3) Appropriate use of medications; 4) Communicating effectively with family, friends, and health professionals, 5) Nutrition; 6) Decision making; 7) How to evaluate new treatments.

"Medicine has traditionally addressed the physical symptoms of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, but a chronic condition can progress beyond the physical, impacting a person's self-confidence, decision-making ability, stress management, communication skills, and more," Ginsberg said. "Living Healthy gives participants a metaphorical toolbox with non-medical strategies to help them manage their illness."

For more information, or if your organization would like to train their staff to participate in the Living Healthy program, please call Jessica Byne, Northwell Health Solutions, at 516-600-1147.