



HCQU Northwest

"Happy Fall Y'all"

Just so happens fall is my favorite time of year. The foliage and splendor of color are just breathtaking. The mountain views are just spectacular! I hope that you can get out and enjoy this beautiful season. 'Tis the time for cozy sweaters, cocoa, hot apple cider, campfires, smores and so much more. We start hearing of everything apple or pumpkin spice and you know that it's that time of year.

How about a drive through the countryside, take in the picturesque waterfalls, or just a nice hike if able? We here in the Northwestern Pennsylvania are so fortunate to be surrounded by the beautiful Allegheny National Forest. Check out your local listings and plan a day trip or just a casual gathering with friends. Self-care is so important especially when the day light is getting shorter, and we are starting to notice what comes next!

You will be surprised at all the activities that are free or cost little, and are available close by. How many fall activities can you think of?

Lisa

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New at the HCQU

Hello! My name is Allison Gentz, and I am the newest HCQU RN here at Milestone NW. I would like to take a few minutes to introduce myself to everyone.

I have been a Registered Nurse for 17 years. I began my career by working for over a year in a medical-surgical unit at a local hospital. I then spent 13 years working at a local **skilled** nursing facility. I held various positions during my tenure there, including Wound Care RN and RN Supervisor/Manager. I left the skilled nursing setting and transferred to our personal care home for 3 years. As the RN Supervisor there, I was responsible for overseeing staff and tending to resident health needs/concerns, and so much more. Despite loving geriatrics, I felt it was time for me to shift gears and change my career path.

While my career is very important to me, my family is my world. I have been married to my high school sweetheart, Kyle, for almost 15 years. We have 2 children, Hannah and Mason, who have also given me the titles of "Dance Mom," and "Soccer/Baseball/Basketball Mom." We have 2 cats, Roxy and 40 Toes (a nickname because of her polydactyly that stuck). We recently decided there wasn't enough chaos in our life and added a puppy, a mini goldendoodle named Buck, to our family.

Other than being a mom/wife/nurse, here are some random fun facts about me. I enjoy shopping. I am a social butterfly. The beach is my happy place. I love NFL football and have been a Green Bay Packers fan since 2011, when I took my husband to a Monday night game at Lambeau Field. I also love chocolate, coffee, and pizza. Christmas is my favorite holiday/time of year. I like to go to new places and try new experiences.

Thanks for taking the time to get to know a little about me. I am excited to have joined the Milestone team. I am looking forward to interacting with and getting to know everyone as well.



Let's raise awareness of the cause, treatment, and cure! Most of us have been touched or know of an individual who has been affected by this disease. For some of us it's a difficult reminder of personal experience with the disease.

Did you know that breast cancer also affects men?

Knowledge is power!

Do a little research and don't be afraid to ask questions.

Let's make the difference and help bring awareness and spread the word! If you have questions or concerns, see your doctor.

Potential Benefits (and Drawbacks) of Medical Marijuana

November is National Epilepsy Awareness month. Did you know that parents of children who suffered often severe seizures were instrumental in the legalization of medical marijuana in Pennsylvania? It seems that marijuana was the only thing these parents had found that was able to minimize not only the effects of, but in some cases the number of, seizures their children had. If marijuana has the potential to help persons with epilepsy, what else might it be good for? Let's take a look.

The cannabis plant has two primary cannabinoids: cannabidiol (CBD) and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Both of these compounds have been found to offer potential health benefits. CBD, which can also be found in the hemp plant, has anti-inflammatory benefits, similar to NSAIDs. THC can help reduce nausea and increase appetite in people undergoing chemo and other conditions such as HIV.

Some of the conditions for which medical marijuana (MMJ) may be useful include:

- **Pain management.** While not strong enough for severe pain, MMJ can reduce chronic pain associated with things like Crohn's disease, MS, arthritis, fibromyalgia, endometriosis, and neuropathy. MMJ has been helpful in reducing opioid dependency in many individuals, and may also be used in place of NSAIDs, which can have negative side effects when used long-term.
- **Nausea and appetite control.** One common use of MMJ is to help cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy with the often-associated nausea and lack of appetite. It may also help stimulate appetite in those with HIV wasting syndrome and anorexia.
- **Inflammation reduction.** CBD, in particular, seems to have anti-inflammatory properties similar to NSAIDs.
- **PTSD.** MMJ is used by many veterans and others to help alleviate symptoms of PTSD, such as sleeplessness and anxiety. However, PTSD may increase one's risk of becoming addicted to MMJ, so it may be best to work with someone who specializes in PTSD treatment for guidance.
- **Seizures and tremors.** In addition to helping reduce seizures in epilepsy, MMJ has also been shown to help alleviate tremors in persons with Parkinson's disease and Tourette syndrome.
- **Alzheimer's disease.** Some early studies have shown MMJ may be effective in combating some of the anxiety and sleeplessness often associated with Alzheimer's, and may even slow the progression of the disease.
- **Weight management.** Contrary to the popular depiction of marijuana giving us the munchies, some strains actually increase energy and decrease appetite. Sign me up, please! ;)

These are just some of the conditions where MMJ can be beneficial. Keep in mind, we all have unique physiology, so what works for one may not work for another. Our own physiology changes over time, as well, so while excessive use of marijuana may harm the brain of a younger person, there is mounting evidence that MMJ use can actually help improve brain/cognitive function in older persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's/dementia.

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It is important to know that MMJ doesn't work for everyone, and certain strains work better for some conditions than others. For example, if you are prone to anxiety or panic attacks, you would want a strain with little to no THC. Low doses of THC have shown to reduce anxiety in some, but higher doses may actually increase anxiety.

Some of the potential side-effects of marijuana use include:

- Mild hallucinogenic effect due to THC. If this is a concern, you may want to try CBD instead.
- Depressant-like effects. Some people experience a depressant-like effect similar to that of alcohol.
- Stimulating effects. MMJ can cause hyperactivity in some, as well as increased heart rate and blood pressure.
- May cause hyperactivity in children whose mothers used marijuana while pregnant.

If you experience any of these side effects, the cure may be to try a different strain. It is important to consult with an pharmacist who is experienced with MMJ. Many, if not all, MMJ dispensaries have their own.

For *much* more information on MMJ use, including how one local provider used it to help the individuals in her care, check out our *Understanding How Medical Marijuana May Benefit Those You Care For* on-demand webinar (worth 1.5 training hours). If you would like the info but don't need the credit, you can also watch at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JnOvLgejW8>.

(Sources: <https://www.healthline.com/health/medical-marijuana/benefits-of-marijuana#risks>, 9/28,2022
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/320984#So,-is-cannabis-good-or-bad-for-your-health?>,



Fall Webinars

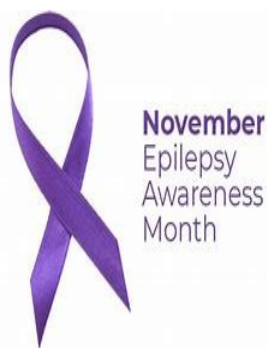
October

6: Boosting the Immune System, Tim Juliano
13: Bullying, Connie Copley
19: Music Therapy, Joe Glarner *
20: Assumptions, Amy Tobolski
27: Diabetes 1, Allison Gentz

November

3: Attitude of Gratitude, Connie Copley
10: Seizures, Tim Juliano
17: Diabetes 2, Allison Gentz

* Guest Speaker



The term *epilepsy* (also called “seizure disorder”) comes from a Greek word which means “to lay hold of, seize upon, attack,” which pretty much sums up what seizures do to a person. At least one in 26 people will develop epilepsy within their lifetime, and the rate of epilepsy in persons with disabilities is reported to be at least *twenty times higher* than that in the general population! Uncontrolled epilepsy can do contin-

ual damage to the brain, severely impair one’s quality of life, and increase the risk of mortality, so it is extremely important that someone afflicted with this disorder be diagnosed and treated.

Probably the best-known type of seizure is the convulsive, or Grand Mal seizure, which can last several minutes, involves altered consciousness, muscle rigidity and convulsions, and sometimes vomiting or bowel/bladder incontinence. A Petit-Mal (or absence) seizure is usually very brief and will cause the person to “zone out,” or stare off into space for several seconds, as though he or she is not aware of what’s going on.

Medical science is discovering that there are many different kinds of seizures, far beyond what we had thought, and which can present in several different ways. According to Ruth Myers, MD, “Any volitional behavior can be a manifestation of seizure activity.” Does someone you support fly into fits of rage without any apparent trigger, or for no known reason? Is there a sudden obsession about sexuality or religion? Do they have spontaneous episodes of crying or laughter without any reason? Deep-brain seizure activity in the limbic system or temporal lobe may be occurring.

There was one case of an elderly man living in a group setting, diagnosed with dementia, who rarely spoke or interacted with people, and who would sit motionless for hours on the couch. It took him an hour-and-a-half just to finish a bowl of soup. He visited a neurologist who suspected there might be something other than dementia going on. A month after taking couple of anti-convulsant medications, this man was initiating conversations and taking dance lessons. He never had dementia. He was in a *constant state* of absence seizure activity!

If you support someone who does have seizures, know the first aid rules: stay with the person, time the seizure, avoid restraining them, (if possible) get them on their side to prevent aspiration if they vomit; if the seizure goes longer than usual, or if they may have been injured, call 911. If the person is demonstrating strange behaviors that don’t respond to redirection or behavior plans, they might just be having unusual seizures. Please consider having them evaluated by a neurologist. You could change their life!

Tim Juliano



The PATH to overcoming negative emotions

All too often we expect others: our spouses, our kids, those we support, to keep themselves in check. We expect that they will handle their struggles in a way that is appropriate in society. Sometimes we forget that handling our own emotions can be difficult.

There are several ways that we negatively handle our emotions, such as refusing to accept that something is wrong or withdrawing from people and/or things we typically enjoy. When we refuse to accept that something is wrong, we may “bottle up” our feelings and end up acting out or exploding. Sometimes when we are feeling emotional and stressed out, we withdraw. Withdrawing is not simply wanting to spend time alone occasionally, but often. We may withdraw from activities and things we previously enjoyed because we find they are no longer pleasurable, and possibly even annoying. Even daily tasks may become aggravating. Withdrawing can be a warning sign of depression: it can bring about extreme loneliness, misunderstanding, anger, and distorted thinking.

Sometimes when a person is struggling to handle their emotions, they may bully others. People are known to bully others when they don't feel good about themselves. There are instances where we need to look beyond the behavior to find out what is really happening. This may be one of those times. Another time to pay attention to what is happening is when you or someone you know is engaging in self-harm. Many people self-harm because they feel like it gives them control over emotional pain. These behaviors only bring about temporary relief and can lead to more out of control behaviors. Another negative behavior that can also be classified as self-harm is substance abuse. Like physically hurting oneself, whether it's alcohol or drugs, this behavior brings about only temporary relief. While it takes away or numbs the pain, using substances damages that brain and consistent use raises a person's tolerance and in turn means one must use more and more to get the desired outcome. Getting drunk and/or high can lead to more and bigger problems in the long run.

There is a helpful way to remember what to do if we need to keep our emotions in check. It is called **PATH**:

Pause. Stop and think. Don't act right away. Take a deep breath and just think about things.

Acknowledge. What is it that you are really feeling? Are you mad? Are your feelings hurt? It's okay to feel what you are feeling, just make sure you are not acting poorly because of your emotions.

Think. Once we pause and acknowledge these feelings, the next step is thinking. Decide what is truly going to make you feel better. The above-mentioned strategies may make you feel better for a short time, but they are only temporary solutions and may cause bigger problems in the long run.

Help. Use what you have come up with to help yourself. Don't turn to negative, destructive behaviors.

If you have a difficult time coming up with ways to help yourself, do an internet search. Use grounding or relaxation techniques. You can always turn to a friend or a professional to help as well. Emotions can be a very difficult thing sometimes. I hope this helps when things feel a bit overwhelming!



Two Exciting Opportunities!

Karyn Harvey & Milestone HCQU NW are
launching an Anti-loneliness Initiative

Relationship Training

This training will discuss sources of trauma and emotional pain for people with intellectual disabilities. It will look at key ingredients for healing, with a focus on healing through relationships. The importance of relationships, in particular, meaningful friendships and possible love relationships, will be discussed. How to teach skills, facilitate connections and support healing relationships will be explored.

This training will be offered in two separate locations:

Nov. 7, 2022 DuBois, PA
9:30-2:30 (lunch provided)
Luigi's Villa

Nov. 9, 2022 Erie, PA
9:30-2:30 (lunch provided)
Ambassador Conference Center

To enroll visit <https://northwesthcu.learnupon.com>

Facilitators Training

This exciting opportunity is open to people interested in facilitating social groups with a focus on relationship skills. There will be a facilitators training in which group facilitation and relationship training skills will be taught. In addition there will be follow-up zoom meetings on a regular basis to provide ongoing support for facilitators.

This training will be offered in two separate locations:

Nov. 7, 2022 DuBois, PA
3:00-4:30
Luigi's Villa

Nov. 8, 2022 Erie, PA
1:00-2:30
Blasco Library, Admiral Room

Please email your interest to: atobolski@MilestonePA.org

If you would like to learn more about becoming a facilitator, check out our interview with Karyn at: <https://youtu.be/clmaOGHDoZA>

Letter from the Director

Fall is a great time of the year to be outside and enjoying the fresh air. The cooler temperatures, fewer bugs, and changing colors all make me want to walk around the woods, and then come home, drink a cup or two of coffee, and make apple dumplings. So, what do you like to do, and what makes individuals that you support happy? So many times we are worried about what we need to do that we often forget the little things that make us smile. The smells of food baking, the sights of nature, the feel of a gentle hug, or sometimes just a nice quiet afternoon all appeal to me. How about you? I realize that not everyone shares my likes, but please find something that you enjoy, and find a way to dedicate some more time to doing it.

Darryl

PS - If you need training hours, check out our online offerings. If there is a topic that interests you, great; but if we can add something to our syllabus, please ask. Whenever possible, take a training that makes you smile and you will remember more of it.

HCQU Training Stats

Between July 1 and September 30, 2022:

581 Home-Study trainings were completed

31 People completed online (Internet Safety) trainings

164 people attended webinars (25 Speaker of the Month, 43 weekly, 27 requested)

69 people completed On-Demand webinars

Xx people attended In-Person trainings

Xx Trainings Completed



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