



HCQU Northwest

Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell...Cough

‘Tis the season...but not the holiday season. ‘Tis the cold, flu, and Covid season! Unfortunately, these “gifts” seem to be shared the most during the cold winter months. There are things we can do to keep from receiving these “gifts” and keeping ourselves healthy.

During the “Covid Era,” the importance of handwashing was really stressed as it is a means of preventing the spread of germs. If you or those you serve have gotten a little lax on this, it is a good idea to get back in the practice of good handwashing. Turn on the water and get your hands wet. Apply soap and rub hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds, roughly the equivalent of singing “Happy Birthday” twice. (Make sure to scrub all surfaces, including between fingers, backs of hands, and fingernails.) Rinse hands thoroughly, making sure all soap has been rinsed off. Dry hands with a clean towel and then turn off the water using a dry paper towel, if available. Hands should be washed when soiled, visibly or not, before and after toilet use, and before eating. Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol can also be used when appropriate hand washing options are not available.

Colds, flu, and Covid typically come with associated symptoms which can include coughing and sneezing. Proper etiquette for coughing and sneezing is to do so in a tissue, throwing the tissue away after use. If a tissue is unavailable (like when those ones just sneak up on you), you should sneeze or cough into your elbow or upper sleeve. Make sure to wash/sanitize hands after coughing or sneezing. Keeping your distance from others and avoiding crowds can help in keeping not only yourself but also others healthy.

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Speaking of being healthy, your body is less susceptible and more able to fight off infections when you're in good health. Getting proper amounts of sleep and making sure to exercise help keep your body in better shape for fighting off "bugs." Following a healthy diet, including eating citrus fruits and dark, green, leafy vegetables, helps keep your immune system in tip-top shape. Make sure to drink enough water to keep hydrated and "flush out" germs when not feeling well. Give your body an extra "boost" by taking vitamins/supplements (especially Vitamin C, which is great for immune health). It's hard to do, but avoiding touching your face also helps keep you healthier, as there are many portals of entry for germs (mouth, nose, eyes).

The CDC recommends yearly flu vaccines and Covid booster shots. These can help prepare your body and immune system in case of exposure. This can lead to fewer troubling symptoms or prevent someone from even getting sick at all. These are available at most pharmacies (many don't even require appointments) or doctor's office, and are typically covered by insurance.

Staying healthy is not just about our bodies. Using sanitizing spray, such as Lysol, on frequent touch points helps kill and prevent the spread of germs. These areas include doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles, countertops, toys, remotes, and phones to name a few. Opening windows when the weather allows can help keep the air clean. Given we live in Northwest Pennsylvania, that is not always a feasible option. An air purifier can also help clean the air and is helpful when someone in the house is sick.

In addition to these prevention strategies, one of the easiest and most important ways to prevent the spread of illnesses is to stay home and keep your germs to yourself when you're not feeling well.

Here's to a healthy (and happy) new year!

Allison Gentz, RN

At the HCQU



In the above picture, Flat Miles celebrates Hat Day at the HCQU in Warren. He is with his friends, Darryl Bergstrom, Tim Julianao, Amy Tobolski, Lisa Wile, Allison Gentz and Krista Fitzsimmons. He chose the Milestone Green hat for everyone to wear!!

WINNERS of Milestone Flat Miles contest is the staff from the Warren HCQU. This contest was held during our Employee Appreciation Week. The HCQU won a pizza party.



You may find it difficult to think about exercising during the winter months. The cold of the winter may stop us from going outside and may make us want to stay on the couch, under a warm blanket. There are still activities that we can do outside, but if you insist, you can be physically active inside. You don't even need to belong to a gym to get moving. If you have hand weights and resistant bands, that is a plus, but there are ways to increase resistance without these things. Perhaps using objects such as soup cans will increase your work out. Wearing a heavy back pack while working out can add intensity. According to the American Heart Association physical activity recommendations, you should work out for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise per week to improve your quality of life. Some of the listed activities can be done without ever leaving the comfort of your home, and some exercises recommended are:

- Home workout circuit
- Dancing
- Active housework such as vacuuming and sweeping
- Mall walking
- Bowling
- Roller skating
- Yoga or other fun group classes at your local gym, studio or community center
- Stair climbing

If you like going outside during the winter months, heart.org suggests the following activities to stay moving:

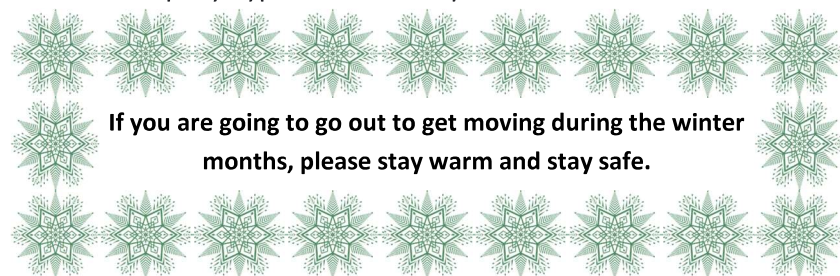
- Brisk walking or hiking
- Jogging or running
- Shoveling snow
- Ice skating
- Sledding
- Cross-country skiing
- Snowshoeing



A person can benefit working out in colder weather. One benefit is, there is no heat and humidity which could allow us to work out longer and burn more calories. Most everyone in our region is lacking when it comes to vitamin D. Getting out into the sunshine during the winter to exercise can help us to improve our vitamin D levels, which in turn, helps us improve our daily moods. Exercising can also help to boost our immune systems.

If going outside, it is important to be prepared. Nobody wants to suffer from hypothermia or frostbite. The cold and wind along with damp conditions can drop a person's body temperature. When a person gets wet, the effects of the weather can be magnified. It is important to layer your clothes. Doing so can trap the heat and act like insulation. Make sure you are aware of the symptoms that accompany hypothermia. They include:

- Lack of coordination
- Mental confusion
- Slowed reactions
- Cold feet and hands
- Shivering





Special Speaker Series

March 19th, 2025

9:30AM – 11AM

"Motivational Interviewing"

presented by

Kelly Burda

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a particular way of talking with people about change and growth to strengthen their own motivation and commitment to change. Participants will learn to apply MI in an interactive/fun learning environment focusing on the foundation of the evidence-based practice, which is the spirit of MI, the core skills of MI using open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summarizing (OARS), and the importance of deeply listening for and responding to change talk.



Kelly Burda For over 25 years, I have had an unwavering stance in helping others achieve independence and growth in their personal recovery goals. My behavioral health background includes clinical and administrative oversight in the state hospital system, along with supporting those living their life in the community.

I focus my work on providing training and consultation for individuals, groups, and organizations that directly support individuals on their recovery journey. I provide training in Motivational Interviewing and all of the Evidence-Based Practices within the Assertive Community Treatment Model (ACT). I am also a member of *Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT)*.

We are very excited to welcome Kelly to the HCQU for this exciting webinar.

To register for this **free** event, go to <http://northwesthcqu.learnupon.com>.

Brrr, it's cold out there!

I hope the Holidays treated everyone well, and you were able to spend it doing the things you love to do this time of year!



With the heart of Winter now here, you can spend those cold winter days or evenings taking one of our Recorded Webinars on the LMS! We have new ones coming out on a monthly basis, and you can take them at your own pace.

For 2025, we will continue to have one live webinar the first Thursday of the month. These will be at 11am only.

If you are interested in a specific topic you'd like to see, be sure to drop me an email!

The HCQU is looking forward to 2025, with our Special Speaker Series, and in person trainings. Be sure to fill out a training request form so we can get you scheduled and on the calendar for the New Year. We are always looking for your feedback and any additional ways to help!

The HCQU has gone digital as well over the summer. You can now submit any Individual Review requests or Technical Assistance trainings right from our website. There is also an option to get a call back from a HCQU staff member if you have questions or need help.

As always, if you would like to set up any in person trainings or have questions regarding a training, feel free to email or call me at kfitsimmons@milestonepa.org or 814-728-9400.

Krista

WEBINAR
Schedule

JAN 2	Assumptions
FEB 6	Anger Management
MAR 6	Kidney Stones
11:00AM	

Try Kombucha—You Might Like It!

Like many people, there was a time when I drank a lot of soda; I guess you could say that I was addicted to it. Unfortunately, soda (some of us call it “pop”) is not the healthiest drink around. In fact, whether regular or diet, soda is downright unhealthy, as it contains a lot of sugar (or, worse, high-fructose corn syrup), which inflames the G-I tract and can lead to fatty liver disease, or an artificial sweetener (like aspartame) which can cause leaky gut, weight gain, headaches, nervousness, and mood swings.

Many soda products, particularly the colas, have a significant amount of phosphoric acid, which can leech calcium from the bones (and can lead to osteoporosis); this, in turn, raises blood calcium levels. If you are one of the unfortunate souls who suffers from calcium-oxalate kidney stones (the most common type), you would be wise to end your relationship with soda. So, how do we satisfy our craving for tasty, carbonated beverages?

Kombucha might just be something to try. It is a drink made from tea (usually black or green tea), healthy “good” bacteria, yeast, and a little sugar (nowhere near the amount in soda), and has been around for centuries. Note: sauerkraut, pickles, kimchi, kefir, and yogurt are also fermented foods. Kombucha has some carbonation (“fizzy” quality), comes in a wide variety of flavors, and can be purchased at your local grocer (usually at about \$3.00 per 16-ounce bottle). Some kombucha bottlers allow you to order online and will ship it to you. This beverage has a little “bite” to it, and has been described as “tangy.”

There are several potential health benefits (*potential*, as not much research on kombucha has been done yet). The fermentation process (lasting one to four weeks) generates the growth of “good” or “healthy” microorganisms that live in your gut (probiotics), which can aid in digestion and absorption of nutrients, and protect against “bad” bacteria. Kombucha is also high in antioxidants, which reduce inflammation and may help fight cancer. It has enzymes that help break down and eliminate toxins.



The fermentation process does produce a little alcohol (less than 0.5%, which allows it to be sold as a non-alcoholic beverage). There may also be some stevia (a natural sweetener) and a little caffeine in kombucha as well. As with any change in diet, it’s always best to discuss it with your doctor first. If you’re really adventurous, you can brew your own kombucha at home. There is plenty of information online regarding how to do this.

So, if you’re looking for a tasty, healthy alternative to drinks loaded with sugar or chemicals, try a cold bottle of kombucha. You might be glad you did!

Tim Juliano

by Amy Tobolski

Have you ever noticed how as soon as you begin to tell someone about a problem, a solution often comes to you? Saying it out loud often helps you clarify your thoughts. Maybe this is because you use more parts of your brain to say something out loud than to read it or think it. In addition, one of the first suggestions we are often given around goal-setting is to say it out loud. Telling people what you plan to do is a way of signaling your commitment.

With this in mind, I want to share with you something I heard many years ago from my favorite speaker, Dave Hingsburger. We lost Dave in 2021, but his words of wisdom live on. In the course of a presentation about keeping people safe from sexual assault, he mentioned a pledge that all staff at his agency (Vita) are required to make. I was intrigued...

Now, like me, you were probably asked to read your agency's mission statement, and maybe even sign off that you "have read and understand" it. But here's the difference: at Vita Community Living Services, they recite their pledge out loud. They say it when they're hired, and again at various times throughout their tenure, at least bi-annually.

Rabbi Noah Weinberg, in *48 Ways to Wisdom* said, "Speaking our beliefs out loud helps reveal how closely we actually follow our principles... and if they truly resonate within."

So, direct support professionals, find your agency's mission statement and read it again – out loud. Agency Administrators, take another look at your mission statement. Does it really say what you want to accomplish as you support people? If not, maybe a pledge of your own is in order. Vita's pledge follows, to give you some ideas. Just remember, the true power and commitment comes from Saying It Out Loud!

Vita's Care Providing Pledge of Service

To Our Members

I will establish trust by proving myself worthy of the word, trust is the process – safety is the goal.

I will remember that I am here to serve your needs, you are not here to meet mine.

I will practice equality by listening and valuing what you have to say.

I will learn your language, if you speak with your shoulders, I will learn 'shoulder'.

I will show loyalty to you and speak of you, always, with respect.

I am aware of my power and will keep you safe from my temper and my prejudices.

It is a privilege to be with you here, I will remember this everyday in my care.

I want to work for the best agency serving people with disabilities and I can only do that by offering the best service I can.

I am Vita therefore Vita is me.

"I have read, understand and abide by VITA Community Living Pledge of Service"

Employee Name

Date

Letter from the Director

After not worrying too much about snow last year, I, like many others had the "privilege" of clearing out my driveway several times after Thanksgiving. While exercise is good for us I had to be careful to not overdo it and hurt my back or slip and fall on the ice or slush. Please be careful while walking, driving, or generally trying to get through the winter. Please also remember that we offer trainings on Fall Prevention along with many medical topics including Hydration/Dehydration, Boosting Your Immune System, Influenza, and the Fatal 5 to Behavioral Trainings such as Seasonal Affective Disorder and De-escalation. I should also mention Weight Management and Nutrition which are often not followed well around the holidays. If you or the individuals that you work with would like these or other trainings, just email Krista at kfitzsimmons@milestonepa.org to submit a request. We can do trainings virtually, in-person, or you can take classes online via our LMS at <https://northwesthcqu.learnupon.com/>, so keep your request coming to us.

As always, I encourage you to get outside whenever possible to enjoy the fresh air, but if not outside, try to find something indoors to keep you moving and to be healthier. If there is a way that the HCQU can help you now or anytime during the year, feel free to call us to schedule a training or request other assistance. Stay safe, drink water, eat fruit and vegetables, and keep on moving.

Darryl

Kindness is
like snow, it
beautifies
everything it
covers.

Kahlil Gibran

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