OCD Awareness Week is October 13-19. This brings us an important opportunity to discuss what OCD or obsessive-compulsive disorder is and is not. OCD is a mental health condition that affects millions of adults, adolescents and children in the U.S. alone. It does not discriminate based on age, socioeconomic status or gender. It cannot be turned on or off and is not used to identify preferences.

OCD is far more complicated than hand-washing, being orderly or counting. People with OCD experience impairing anxiety as a result of obsessions, or unwanted thoughts, ideas, images or impulses. Due to these obsessions, people with OCD engage in compulsions or rituals, which are physical or mental actions taken in attempt to make the anxiety go away. Compulsions are not actions taken because a person wants to do the behavior, but rather because the person feels they have to complete the behavior.

OCD can be quick to become a ‘family illness,’ as it affects parents, significant others, and friends who are entangled in the rituals themselves. This level of worry can be debilitating and overwhelming as it gets in the way of a person’s ability to function.

With the right treatment, specifically Exposure and Response Prevention (E/RP), and perhaps medication (e.g., SSRIs), OCD can be successfully managed. If you or someone you know is suffering from OCD, reach out for help. It takes courage to seek assistance and things can and do get better. As a community, we can create public awareness of OCD, so those affected do not feel isolated. Let’s talk to each other about worries and anxiety, while trying to avoid statements such as ‘I’m so OCD,’ as it often minimizes the seriousness of those suffering. As OCD Awareness Week approaches, let’s try to remember OCD is not an adjective.

Dr. Katie Merricks, Ph.D., NCC
Licensed Psychologist
katiemerricks counseling.com

YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program: Lose weight, gain health and reduce your risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Join this year-long lifestyle change program. Groups meet one time per week for 16 weeks, then monthly for continued support. To register, call 379-2473.

Evidence-Based Programs: The Aging Well Center is honored to host evidence-based programs that offer proven ways through defined research to promote wellness and manage or reduce health concerns and/or falls. Class size is limited. The center appreciates several partners and funders who help to provide the evidence-based programs, including Senior Citizens Services, Inc., Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas, Older Americans Act Title III D, YMCA of the Suncoast and Pinellas County Social Action Funding. To inquire about future classes, call the Aging Well Center at 724-3070.

Heart Rhythm Disorders: Wednesday, Oct. 16 (noon) at the Aging Well Center at the Long Center, 1501 N Belcher Road. Learn about stomach pains, including symptoms, risk factors and treatment for issues including gallstones and cholecystitis, which should be treated early. Valerie Stewart, D.O., General Surgeon, will lead this discussion. For more information and to register, call 253-4076.

Continues on next page » » »
LEARN:

Sickle Cell: A Forgotten Disease: Wednesday, Oct. 23 (11:30 a.m.) at North Greenwood Library, 905 N MLK Jr. Ave. Approximately 70,000-100,000 Americans have sickle cell disease, the most common form of an inherited blood disorder. Anthony Hinson, Outreach Coordinator for the Sickle Cell Disease Association, will inform you on everything you want to know about this rare disease. For more information, call 562-4970.

SHINE @ Main Library One-on-One Medicare Counseling: Monday, Oct. 28 (10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.) at the Main Library, 100 N. Osceola Ave. SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) is a free program offered by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and your local Area Agency on Aging. Specially-trained volunteers can assist you with your Medicare, Medicaid and health insurance questions by providing one-on-one counseling and information. SHINE services are free, unbiased and confidential. For more information, call 562-4970.

WORK:

WHERE ARE WE AS A TEAM?

Think it’s too early to get started on your 2020 team goals? Now is the time to make goals, and subsequent plans, on how your team, department, organization, etc. is going to move successfully into 2020.

What does that look like for your work team? The first step is to assess where you currently are. How do members of the team view your team? Find an assessment that all members of the team can take. The results will hopefully show the honest viewpoint of its members and provide a method forward, based on strengths and weaknesses.

Once you have your results, it’s important to do something with the knowledge and figure out how to move forward. Leadership, and team buy in, are critical in this step. If the team acknowledges that “we” can move forward and make improvements, this process will work much better. If members of the team do not want to get better, or do not see that there is an issue, that says something about the team that needs to be addressed. For instance, does your team operate as a united unit, where all people buy into the vision and are working towards that goal, or is your team a bunch of individuals haphazardly working closely together with their own individual goals and ambitions?

If budget is a concern to hiring a consultant and providing intensive training to your staff, see who in your organization could spearhead this type of project. There are several best-selling team and organizational health resources available that could be purchased for a minimal cost and delivered internally.

This could be your best year; now is the time to make sure your greatest asset, the employees, are on board with making 2020 a great year!
PL AY:
(free programs unless specified)

EnhanceFitness: A group-based exercise class that helps with balance, strength and arthritis for those 55 and up. Classes meet three times per week for 60 minutes. Classes take place at the Long Center and YMCA locations. To register, call 379-2473.

Family Fun Fridays: Friday, Oct. 4 (7-9 p.m.) at Countryside Recreation Center, 2640 Sabal Springs Drive. The first Friday of every month, parents and their children will create a new fun craft project. Each family will take one project home with them that night, and additional project kits may be purchased. All tools, materials and light refreshments will be provided. Pre-register to guarantee a spot. For more information and pricing, call 669-1914.

Yoga for Beginners: Saturday, Oct. 5 (11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) at Moccasin Lake Nature Park, 2750 Park Trail Lane. This free and open to all session will teach simple but powerful yoga postures to balance and stabilize your system. No prior experience with yoga is necessary. Enjoy the benefits of yoga and help relieve chronic ailments, relieve back pain, stress, anxiety and tension. Yoga strengthens the spine and takes only 5 to 10 minutes to practice daily. Sessions will be conducted by a trained instructor of the Isha foundation. For more information, contact 562-4315.

Days Out Camp: Monday, Oct. 14 (7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.) at city recreation centers. No school? No problem. Enjoy the day out of school with organized sports, games, arts and crafts, and enrichment activities. Camp available for those in kindergarten through eighth grade. For more information and pricing, call your respective recreation center.

Tips from the Trainer:

NEUROGENESIS

The term neurogenesis is composed of the words “neuro” meaning “relating to nerves” and “genesis” meaning the formation of something. The term therefore refers to the growth and development of neurons. This process is most active while a baby is developing in the womb and is responsible for the production of the brain’s neurons. Research shows that development of new neurons continues during adulthood.

Biology shows us that movement and exercise helps to improve muscular strength, bone strength and neurological interconnections, but only recently have we begun to investigate what movement actually does at the brain level. It has been observed that activities which cross the midline of the body stimulate the different parts of the brain.

Sixty-eight percent of high school students do not participate in physical education or a structured exercise program, and a good portion of our adult population spends over 11 hours a day sitting. Exercise is important for the body, but it is even more important for the brain. We are not creating the opportunities to allow the brain to create new neurons and connections. Midline crossing movement allows each of the sections of the brain to develop. Movement that stimulates the frontal lobe of the brain improves higher order thinking, planning, problem solving, creativity and judgment. Movement that stimulates the occipital lobe aids in processing visual information and patterns. Movement that stimulates the parietal lobe allows us to relay motor and sensory stimulus and helps give us insight and judgment. Movement that stimulates the temporal lobe helps to process all the auditory information, improve comprehension and relevancy of the information we are hearing.

Another portion of the brain which greatly is affected by movement is the cerebellum. The cerebellum is a fist-sized portion of the brain, just under the occipital lobe located toward the rear of the skull. It takes up one tenth of the brain, but it contains half of all the neurons in the brain. The cerebellum helps with novelty learning, cognition and balance and motor control. It has the most neural circuits and it is mainly an outbound influence for the rest of the brain. By sending those messages out, it allows individuals to be predictive and to help with ordering and sequencing of information.

What this all means is that exercise is actually more for the brain than it is for the body. Exercise and movement actually helps to grow a better brain.

Jeanmarie Scordino M.Ed., FAFS
Exercise Physiologist
HEALTHY RECIPES:

STUFFED ACORN SQUASH

YIELDS: 6 SERVINGS
PREP TIME: 15 MINS
TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR 15 MINS

Ingredients
• 3 small acorn squash
• 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
• Kosher salt
• Freshly ground black pepper
• 1 c. farro
• 2 c. plus 2 tablespoons apple cider, divided
• 2 sprigs fresh thyme
• 1/2 lb. sweet Italian sausage
• 1/2 yellow onion, chopped
• 2 stalks celery, chopped
• 2 cloves garlic, minced
• 1 tbsp. fresh thyme, chopped
• 1 bunch lacinato kale, stems removed and chopped

Directions
1. Preheat oven to 400°. Cut each end off squash and halve.
2. Use a spoon to remove seeds and brush all over with 2 tablespoons olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and roast until tender, 30-35 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, make farro: in a medium sauce pan, combine farro with 2 cups cider, 1 cup water, and thyme sprigs. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid is evaporated and farro is tender, 25 to 30 minutes. If your liquid is evaporated and farro is not yet tender, add more water a ¼ cup at a time. Remove thyme sprigs.
4. Meanwhile, make filling: in a large skillet over medium heat, heat remaining oil. Add sausage and cook, breaking up with a wooden spoon and stirring occasionally until golden and cooked through, 5 minutes. Remove sausage with a slotted spoon onto a paper-towel lined plate.
5. Drain most fat from the skillet, reserving about 1 tablespoon for cooking. Add onion and celery and cook until soft, 6 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add garlic and chopped thyme and cook until fragrant, 1 minute more.
6. Add kale and cook, stirring frequently. Add remaining 2 tablespoons cider after 4 minutes of cooking, then cook 4 minutes more, or until kale is tender.
7. Add cooked farro and sausage to skillet with vegetables and stir to combine. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Divide mixture among the 4 squash halves. Switch oven to broil and broil until tops are golden and filling is warmed, 2 to 3 minutes.

SWEET POTATO SALAD

YIELDS: 6 SERVINGS
PREP TIME: 0 HOURS 10 MINS
TOTAL TIME: 0 HOURS 40 MINS

Ingredients
• 3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed (about 2 lb.)
• 1 small red onion, thinly sliced into half moons
• 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
• Kosher salt
• Freshly ground black pepper
• 1/2 c. dried cranberries
• 1/2 c. crumbled feta
• 1/4 c. freshly chopped parsley

Dressing:
• 2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
• 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
• 1 tbsp. honey
• 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
• 1/4 tsp. ground paprika
• 1/4 c. extra-virgin olive oil

Directions
1. Preheat oven to 400°. On a large rimmed baking sheet, toss sweet potatoes and red onion in oil then season with salt and pepper.
2. Distribute them evenly on sheet in a single layer. Bake until tender, about 20 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes then transfer to a large bowl.
3. Meanwhile, make dressing: In a small bowl or in a medium liquid measuring cup, whisk together vinegar, mustard, honey, and spices. Gradually pour in oil, whisking constantly until emulsified. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Toss sweet potatoes with dressing, cranberries, feta and parsley. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Healthy Choices For a Healthy Clearwater is published each month by the city of Clearwater to encourage community wellness by highlighting healthy ways to Live, Learn, Work and Play. Send your questions, comments, or suggestions about this newsletter to regina.novak@myclearwater.com.