

# Living Well with Chronic Conditions Program

## Session Zero Leader Guide

### Materials Needed

Symptom Cycle (Chart 7)

Self-Management Tool Box (Chart 2)

Problem-Solving Steps (Chart 6) [If conducting Leader Option 2]

### 1. Introduce yourself

- Explain your involvement in the program (i.e. Organization, Leader, etc.)
- Briefly share why and how you got involved with Living Well with Chronic Conditions
  - Share if you or a loved one has a chronic condition.
  - Share how this program has affected you, a family member or one of your former workshop participants (*do not mention specific names*).

### 2. Give a few details about Living Well with Chronic Conditions

- **Start by involving the group with a few questions**
  - *Example* - How many of you have ever had trouble dealing with pain and fatigue?
  - *Example* - How many have trouble doing things you used to enjoy because of a chronic condition, or are worried about your future?
- **Provide basic program information**
  - Living Well is a six-week program to provide a framework for individuals with chronic conditions to learn to feel better, be in control of their health, and do the things they want to do in life.
  - When we have any type of chronic condition or challenge to our physical or mental health, we are faced with new challenges, limitations, unfamiliar circumstances and maybe new routines and issues in everyday living.
  - The Living Well with Chronic Conditions program is a wonderful opportunity to help deal with all that having a chronic condition hands us, no matter what the condition may be.
  - Living Well with Chronic Conditions is very interactive and the class participants get information, learn new skills and share and learn from each other.

### 3. Here is an example of something that is taught in the workshop

- **Show the Symptom Cycle chart (chart 7)**
- **Discuss the Symptom Cycle (what feeds the cycle and what breaks the cycle)**
  - *Example* - Depression causes fatigue, stress causes tense muscles and these can lead to more pain or shortness of breath and so on...
  - The interactions of these types of symptoms make our disease or condition worse. It becomes a vicious cycle that continues to get worse until we find a way to BREAK THE CYCLE.
- **Explain** that through the Living Well with Chronic Conditions Program, participants come to understand their symptom cycle and how each symptom contributes to their own condition.

**4. What we want is to BREAK THE CYCLE – but we need the tools and techniques to be successful.**

- **Display the Self-Management Tool Box (Chart 2)**
  - We call this our Self-Management Tool Box.
  - When we're talking about our chronic condition, we are going to use self-management tools to help manage or alleviate problems we are experiencing from/related to our chronic condition.
- **Let's pick a tool and see how we can use it today:**
- **Leader Option 1 – Using Our Mind**
  - When we talk about our tools for managing a health problem, our mind is one of the most powerful. Let's do a simple activity to see how our mind affects our body.
  - CLOSE your eyes...get comfortable and take a deep breath. "Imagine you're holding a big bright yellow slice of lemon. Picture it in your mind. You see it? ...You can feel the texture of the lemon rind in your hand. Now lift the lemon to your nose. You can smell its strong, citrus aroma.... pause.... Now bring the lemon to your mouth and take a big bite out of it...its juicy, and it squirts all through your mouth. You can taste the tart lemon juice filling your mouth...the juice dribbles down your chin...suck the juice from that lemon!" OPEN your eyes...
  - What happened to your body while you were imagining the lemon juice in your mouth?
  - Did your mouth salivate?
  - Did your mouth pucker?
  - Did some of you shudder from the sourness?
  - But there was not a lemon in sight! You just changed the way your body felt with your mind.
  - This is just a simple example of how the mind can affect the body with very little effort. Imagine what we could do if we learned ways to use that power to help us with our symptoms!
  - Using our minds is just one tool in the self-management toolbox. In the Living Well with Chronic Conditions 6-week workshop, you will learn how to utilize this tool and all the other self-management tools (mention others if time permits).
- **Leader Option 2 – Problem Solving**
- **Display the Problem-Solving Chart (Chart 6) and review chart once problem solving is over**
  - When we talk about our tools for managing a health problem, problem solving is one of our most essential tools. Let's do a quick demonstration on how problem solving can help us with our chronic condition and daily lives.
  - Forgetting to take our medications is a big problem among people with chronic conditions.
  - Let's problem solve: **What are some ways to remember to take medication?**
  - **Leaders – read back the list and choose or have a guest choose a solution.**

- **Leaders** – Quickly review other tools in the self-management tool box if time permits.

#### **Self-Management Toolbox Tools**

- **Using Your Mind** – Using your mind to help distract you from pain.
- **Healthy Eating** – We don't talk about diets, but how to make the right choices.
- **Understanding Emotions** – We will discuss how your emotions affect your condition and talk about depression.
- **Breathing Techniques** – Learn breathing techniques that will help you relax and deal with tense muscles, pain and fatigue.
- **Medications** – Discuss how to take your medications and common side effects, and ways to remember, etc.
- **Working with Health Professionals** – We will talk about dealing/communicating with your healthcare system, insurance and your physicians.
- **Decision-Making** – How do you make future plans for yourself? We will discuss this topic by working through some decisions and how to do that process.
- **Problem-Solving** – Throughout the whole workshop, we focus on problem-solving techniques.
- **Physical Activity** – We spend a lot of time discussing being physically active and how it can help with all our symptoms.
- **Action Planning** – Every week you will be doing an action plan. This is something just for you - something you want to do and something achievable during the week.
- **Sleep** – We talk about ways to get a better sleep, how to fall asleep and how to fall back to sleep.
- **Communication** – How to ask for what you want by using “I” messages, not “You” messages.
- **Weight Management** – We talk about how maintaining a healthy weight can help decrease some of your physical symptoms you may be experiencing.

#### **5. Sell the Program**

- Share the evidence found by research done by Stanford.
  - Increased involvement and participating in activities they once enjoyed but gave up
  - Improved ability to manage discomfort, stress, and other symptoms
  - Fewer trips to the ER, fewer hospitalizations
- Emphasize how the workshop can make a difference.
  - “Think for a moment: If you could improve your ability to deal with your emotions on the “tough days” ... approach challenges a bit more positively... understand more about your healthcare... and have more confidence in your health... wouldn't that make a difference in your life?”
- Share how it has made a difference for past participants.
  - “Taking this workshop has taught me to look at life and all I do in a more positive way.”
  - “This workshop helped me organize my thoughts and actions to go forward and better manage my chronic condition.”

## 6. Closing

- *Living Well with Chronic Conditions* is a course that is focused on your personal choice. You choose what skills you want to achieve in the workshop.
- Living Well is a fun and exciting program that is very interactive.
- Today was just a small taste of what *Living Well with Chronic Conditions* has to offer everyone.
- The workshop is **Free** and all participants receive a “Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions” book and relaxation cd.
- I am going to send around a sign-up sheet if you are interested in participating in the upcoming workshop.
- Questions?