

Managing Chronic Conditions

Maurice Estella Wilson, Living Healthy Participant and Workshop Lay Leader

Being diagnosed with liver disease and surviving cancer, Maurice Estella Wilson, knows all too well what it is like to live with a chronic condition on a daily basis. She also has an understanding about how to find relief from chronic disease having participated in Living Healthy, (otherwise called the Chronic Disease Self Management Program, CDSMP) that teaches strategies about managing chronic disease conditions. Maurice became a lay leader in her community and now teaches others the strategies that she learned from the program. Below is an interview where she responds to questions about her experience.



[Living Healthy] made a great difference in my life, opened a lot of avenues, and made me more health conscious. I never even realized I had a condition considered chronic until I came to the class. I can now monitor myself and my health better. I am more in tune with my body.

I also feel the skills I learned in the workshop, which I continue to use, make it possible for me to help others. I pass the knowledge I gained along to my friends and family, so they have benefitted from the program as well.

1. What difference has the program made in your life?

Participation in the program made me understand that [I had a chronic disease] and made me able to live with the condition and live a better life style. Helped me to help others with chronic conditions to recognize ways and conditions to control what conditions we have. The program itself is so beneficial to us. So often when someone has a condition they do not want to discuss it. The program helps us to talk through the condition. We can each share with one another and get more information on controlling and helping others with their condition. It is enlightening and refreshing to get together as a group. During the sessions, you don't focus so much on your condition as ways to alleviate pains from the condition. Sharing with others, being a part of others lives, developing great camaraderie, hearing others view points on issues discussed – this is what CDSMP is about.

Leaders were great. They helped us to pull out things we never thought of. It caused me to go back to my health care provider and find out more about my condition. I discovered how I should care for my condition.

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2. Why did you participate in the program and decide to become a leader?

I joined the program out of curiosity and wanting to find out more about it. Other tenants at Carousal Place told me about the program. So I wanted to know what was offered, the benefits and what I would learn from attending sessions. By coming to the first session, I learned what a chronic condition was about.

I became a workshop leader after realizing that there are others like me with conditions that they also may not recognize require management - this lead me to become a leader.

I became a leader when I saw how fulfilling the sessions were. Residents that I knew who often sat around having pity parties began to open up and had a better understanding of what was happening to their bodies. They took on new challenges, for example they became more physically active. They now had more hope to work around their condition and do more of the things they liked and not stay in a slump.

I found that people after each session were much happier. This program should be in so many other places.

3. What did you observe happen to the other friends and participants by participating in the program?

They became more alive, hopeful, helpful, and just became better citizens. With helplessness removed from them and ending their pity parties they became stronger mentally and physically.

Gave them other tools to work with...since the sessions ended they continue the buddy system. And work to remove the shell of hopelessness. They are being productive. They are joining other programs, like the YWCA (around the corner). They are getting out into society. . . it has been an encouragement for all of us.

The program helped me to help myself. And I love it, I absolutely love it. It is a good feeling to be able to help somebody.

I would, and do, suggest this program to anybody.

To find out more information about Living Healthy/CDSMP
<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/livinghealthy/livinghealthy.htm>