



OCCOA

OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING



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*We Help.
We Care*

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Are you living well with your chronic condition?

If you're like me, every day you are constantly bombarded with all kinds of good "advice" on a wide variety of health topics. We get it from the television - shows like *The Doctors* and *Dr. Oz* continue their daily crusade to provide the latest on healthcare so we can live healthier, happier lives. We get it in our mailboxes and our e-mail inboxes with newsletters that proclaim such things as, "The Fountain of Youth Breakthrough!" or "10 Powerful Pain Relievers You'll Never Hear about from your Doctor!" (Both recently showed up in my e-mail inbox!) Unfortunately, signing up for or responding to one newsletter usually leads to countless others!

All of this health information seems wonderful... at first. Some of what we are bombarded with is well-intended, some of it can be helpful, and perhaps some of it might even help us lead healthier lives. But too much can be overwhelming, or even downright dangerous - either to our health or our bank accounts, if what we're receiving is really a scam! We are hit with so much information that we don't even have time to read it all, let alone absorb it or even use it! So what do we believe? What really works? Whom can we turn to?

Evidence-based Programs have Proven Results!

Your family care physician should, of course, be the first person you should turn to. We hope the Otsego County Commission on Aging (OCCOA) will be the second! Here, we take the health of older adults seriously; the staff is always on the lookout for the latest in reputable, affordable programming. Over the past several years, the OCCOA has worked hard to incorporate in its offerings several new programs that bear the distinction of being "evidence-based." They are different from many other types of programs in that they have been tested on "real people," and found to have proven, positive outcomes for those who have attended them.

One evidence-based program that the OCCOA launched three years ago is A Matter of Balance. Designed to lessen the likelihood of falls, scores of older adults throughout the country, including Otsego County, have completed this program.

Charlotte Porath, who just finished up the last of a six-week session shares, "This is a program worth taking! When I first enrolled in the program, I was having trouble feeling my feet and legs and couldn't walk around my house without my cane. During the classes, we learned a series of exercises that have really helped to strengthen my muscles and improve my circulation." She continues, "I do them every day and thanks to them, my legs and feet feel a lot better, and I hardly need my cane anymore." She marvels, "I can't get over it!"

Another evidence-based program that the OCCOA offers is Creating Confident Caregivers (CCC). The six-week program of two-hour classes is designed to help caregivers learn strategies and gain confidence in caring for loved ones living with dementia or other types of memory loss. It has been a big hit with area caregivers.

Robin Petruska has been a master trainer for the class for the last three years. She shares, "During the workshop, participants learn to understand memory loss and how it can affect the persons they are caring for. They also learn how to manage challenging behaviors that accompany memory loss and how to keep their family member active and engaged." She adds that some of the most notable outcomes of the program are the improved relationships that occur between the caregivers and the persons they are caring for. She notes, "Because caregivers learn to understand what someone with memory loss is going through, they are better able to communicate with their loved ones and just enjoy and appreciate them more." She recalls, "Several participants have told me how participating in this program has given them back their loved ones!"

Living Well with a Chronic Condition Workshop will start October 4th!

The OCCOA is preparing to launch yet another evidence-based program called Living Well with a Chronic Condition. Tish Jankowski, who has led several of these workshops through the Area Agency on Aging since 2009, will team up with Petruska in leading the upcoming programs. Both women have gone through extensive training in order to lead the workshops.

Jankowski notes, "This workshop is designed to help people, 18 or older, better manage the chronic conditions they are living with." Such conditions include, but are not limited to arthritis, C.O.P.D, high blood pressure, back pain, allergies, and hearing impairment.

"The program was developed by the Stanford University Patient Education Research Center as a collaborative research project between Stanford and the Northern California Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program," Jankowski notes. She highlights, "In a five-year research project, that included 1,000 people, researchers found that people that took the workshop, compared to those who did not, improved their healthful behaviors and actually spent less time in the hospital."

Jankowski observes, "Unfortunately, chronic conditions don't care who we are, and they can enter our lives at any time." She knows this, firsthand, as she has lived with a chronic condition for several years. She notes that during the workshop, attendees will learn how to better manage their symptoms and medications. They will also learn how to communicate more effectively with their doctor, family members and friends. The goal is to reduce pain, and to increase energy.

"Because of the program I have a better outlook on life," Jankowski notes, "because I have learned how to manage my condition and not let it run away with me." She observes, "Over the course of past workshops I have led, I have seen participants getting stronger as they become self-managers, using new or better strategies to cope with or manage their symptoms." She concludes, "I am looking forward to co-leading with Robin Petruska and helping more people in similar situations benefit from what we have learned about chronic conditions!"



TRACY BURLEY (ABOVE) AND VICKI RAMSEY COACH THE MATTER OF BALANCE CLASSES



CCC MASTER TRAINER ROBIN PETRUSKA WILL TEAM UP WITH TISH JANKOWSKI FOR LIVING WELL WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION



LIVING WELL WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION WORKSHOP INSTRUCTOR TISH JANKOWSKI

TO REGISTER FOR ANY OF THE OCCOA'S EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS OR TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CALL THE OCCOA AT 732-1122 OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.OTSEGOCOUNTYCOA.ORG.

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-Complaint Resolution Procedure

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Advocacy Department
-Transitions in Life

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-Make a Donation
-Make a Planned Gift
-Testimonials
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-A Matter of Balance
-Young at Heart

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Living Well with a Chronic Condition

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-Menus
-Meal Reservations

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