

A Whole Health Approach To Increase Functioning

**Health Coaching for Veterans
with Chronic Multisymptom Illness**



Things to Know

Meetings Structure

We will meet for 1-hour sessions, once a week, for the next 12 weeks over the phone.

If You Need to Reschedule

Please call your individual provider directly. Contact numbers for all providers can be found on the **Contact Sheet** on page 3.

Confidentiality

Conversations are confidential. This means that they will not be shared with your friends, family or other people not involved with your treatment. Sessions notes describing attendance, discussing points, and participation will be inputted into your VA medical record.

The only exceptions to confidentiality are when the law mandates us to do so. Under the following circumstances, we are required to break confidentiality and contact someone outside the treatment team:

- If you are at risk to harm yourself or someone else;
- If a child, elder, or dependent adult is at risk of harm or abuse

If you are having thoughts of harming yourself and/or someone else, please talk with your provider about this. Also, please refer to the information provided on the local and national emergency **Contact Sheet**, found on page 3. Your safety is important to us and will be continually assessed as part of our practice of standard clinical care.

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Contact Sheet

Provider Contacts & National Hotlines: Below please find a list of contacts at the East Orange New Jersey VA (NJ VA). We also provided you with a list of national hotlines that can be reached at any hour.

Provider Contacts

If you need to reschedule a meeting, please call your provider during normal business hours (8:30 AM – 4:30 PM EST).

Dr. Linda Khatib.....(973) 676-1000 x 202165

Dr. Scott Thien.....(973) 676-1000 x 203375

Supervising Psychologists

Dr. David Litke.....(973) 676-1000 x 202245

Dr. Fiona Graff.....(973) 676-1000 x 201537

Dr. Nicole Sullivan.....(973) 676-1000 x 201177

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)..... (800) 248-8005
East Orange, NJ VA after hours Emergency Room..... (973) 395-7236

National Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline..... (800) 273-8255 (TALK)
Vet Centers and VA Medical Centers stand ready to reach out and help veterans at risk for suicide. Call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention hotline and indicate you are a Veteran (**press 1; Veterans Crisis Line**). You'll be immediately connected to VA suicide prevention and mental health professionals.

Call if you are experiencing emotional distress and need to talk to a trained VA professional; 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

National Sexual Assault Hotline..... (800) 656-4673
<https://www.rainn.org/>

National Child Abuse Hotline..... (800) 424-4453

MEETING ONE

Introduction to a *Whole Health Approach*

Objectives

- Health coaching overview
- Overview of Chronic Multisymptom Illness
- Explain how inflammation relates to symptoms
- Explain the Whole Health approach to symptom management
- Identify reasons for change



Meeting 1: Introduction

This workbook uses **Health Coaching** for Veterans with **Chronic Multisymptom Illness**. You will find meeting content and worksheets to help you learn ways to cope with your symptoms and engage in a healthy life. **We will use this workbook during every meeting, so make sure you have it available!**

Health Coaching

Health coaching is the practice of working with a health professional to reach your personal health and wellbeing goals. Coaches can help you implement goals you may have in the areas of nutrition, exercise, tobacco cessation, stress management, mental health and general health. People often use health coaching to help them lose weight, lower blood pressure, better manage stress or follow an exercise routine. Goals are specific to you and what you would like help with!

Chronic Multisymptom Illness (CMI)

If you are participating in this treatment, then you know first-hand about the challenges that Chronic Multisymptom Illness (CMI) can present. Unfortunately, CMI is a common ailment affecting Veterans. CMI consists of one or more symptoms that last more than six months. These symptoms can include fatigue, difficulty remembering and concentrating, feeling depressed, trouble finding words, difficulty sleeping, and chronic pain. The exact cause of CMI is unknown, and it's possible that there are many things that contribute to CMI symptoms.

CMI can affect every aspect of life, including your ability to work, sleep, pursue pleasant activities, be physically active, be social with others, and maintain a positive mood. Even day-to-day activities can become a challenge when you have CMI.

How would you describe your symptoms? Are some symptoms more intense or frequent than others?

How long have you been dealing with your symptoms?

What do you do to manage your symptoms?

How has CMI impacted your life?

Why Do I Have Chronic Multisymptom Illness?

Inflammation is a major player in the cause of CMI symptoms. It is important to understand what inflammation is, and how it contributes to CMI in order to start gaining control over your body and your health.

Inflammation is the redness, swelling, heat, and pain that happens when you have an infection or injury (like a sprained ankle or cut). While inflammation is uncomfortable, your body needs inflammation to heal. Inflammation helps heal by increasing blood flow to the places that need repair, and releasing chemicals that fight foreign invaders in the body.

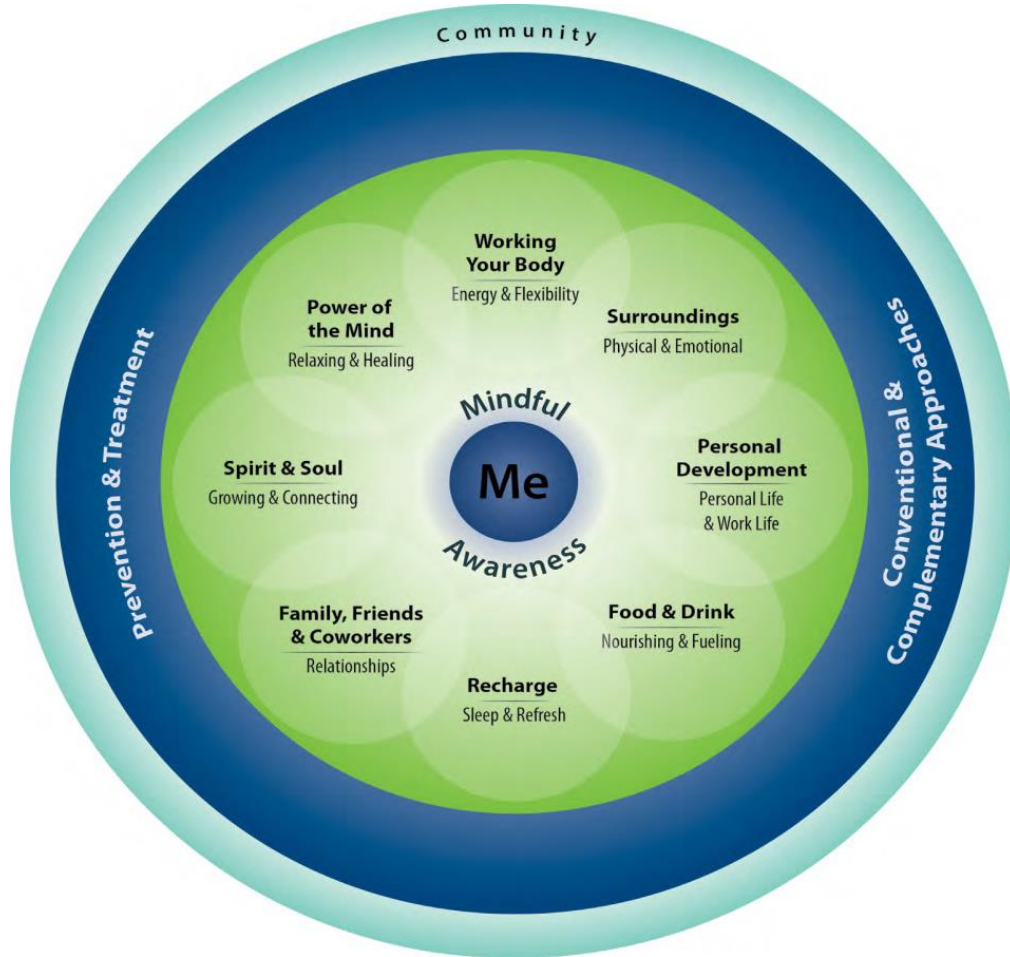
Inflammation is the body's natural defense system and is an important part of the healing process!

However, it is possible to have too much of a good thing. When inflammation continues for a long time, healing cannot occur. Chronic inflammation becomes a disease itself, and it can cause diabetes, cancers, metabolic syndrome, and **the symptoms of Chronic Multisymptom Illness**. You can compare inflammation to fire. Fire keeps us warm, healthy, and protected. But when there is too much fire, or if a fire gets out of control, then it becomes a problem.

Therefore, the goal is to manage inflammation. This may seem difficult because chronic inflammation is very complex. Many different things can cause chronic inflammation. Causes of inflammation include injury, genes and triggers, exposures to toxins, stress, and overactive immune responses. Some of these causes are within your control, and some are not within your control. We are going to focus on the factors that *are within your control*. Specifically, we are going to focus on your lifestyle (such as diet, exercise, and stress management). Your lifestyle can either turn off inflammation (healthy eating) or turn on inflammation (chronic stress). This is good news, because even if lifestyle did not initiate your chronic inflammation, it can help reduce it. This treatment will teach you about the lifestyle factors that affect inflammation, and we will work together to implement changes that will fight chronic inflammation.

Treatment of Chronic Multisymptom Illness

As noted above, there are **many different things that affect inflammation, and therefore your CMI**. However, things you have control over (such as your stress levels, how much you exercise and sleep, and how you eat) can influence the inflammation in your body and therefore your symptoms. In other words, there are things you can do to treat the cause of your symptoms, but it entails a whole health approach. A whole health approach means that we will be addressing the many different parts of your life that contribute to your CMI and overall wellness. The figure on the next page can help you think about your whole health. The inner circle represents you, your values, and what really matters to you. The topics in the **green** circle are aspects of your everyday life that can affect your symptoms and inflammation.



- Which of these areas are particularly important to you?

- Which ones can be improved?

It is important to assess your current health and well-being to make this treatment personalized to you and your needs. Take some time now to fill out the questionnaire on the next three pages. It will help you assess your whole health, and identify areas that could use improvement.

My Whole Health

WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU'D LIKE TO BE

All the areas are important. For each area below, consider **where you are** now and **where you would like to be**. In the **“Where you are”** box, briefly write the reasons you chose your number. In the **“Where you want to be”** box, write down some changes that might make this area better for you. Some areas are strongly connected to other areas, so you may notice some of your answers seem the same. Try to fill out as many areas as you can. You do not have to write in every area or in all the areas at one time. You might want to start with the easier ones and come back to the harder ones.

It is OK just to circle the numbers.

Working the Body: *“Energy and Flexibility”* Includes movement and physical activities like walking, dancing, gardening, sports, lifting weights, yoga, cycling, swimming, and working out in a gym.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

Sleep: *“Recharge and Refresh”* Getting enough rest, relaxation, and sleep.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

Food and Diet: “Nourish and Fuel” Eating healthy, balanced meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables each day. Drinking enough water and limiting sodas, sweetened drinks, and alcohol.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

Social Connection and Relationships: “Personal life and Social life” Feeling listened to and connected to people you love and care about. Feeling supported by other people in your life.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

Stress Management: “Strengthen and Listen” Tapping into the power of your mind to heal and cope. Using mind-body techniques like relaxation, breathing, or guided imagery.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

What should I expect over the next 12 weeks?

Throughout the next 12 weeks, you will be learning about different anti-inflammation activities, including anti-inflammation diets, exercise programs, and stress management techniques, and then putting this information into action. **This treatment requires that you replace less health-promoting behaviors with more health-promoting behaviors in a step-by-step, structured fashion.** The treatment will provide education on the following topics: Food and Diet, Social Connections and Relationships, Physical Activity, Sleep, and Stress Management. A major part of the treatment will focus on making changes in the areas that are particularly important and relevant to you.

This treatment emphasizes the role that food and diet plays in regulating inflammation in your body. This is because food can be a powerful medicine. However, an anti-inflammation diet is just one part of an anti-inflammatory lifestyle. Working to find balance in your life, addressing stress in healthy ways, being part of a community, exercising, sleeping well, and spending time with people you love are equally as important as the foods you eat.

Your Motivations for Change

This treatment is about changing the way you live. It can feel uncomfortable to change your lifestyle, especially when the changes involve food, exercise, and stress. You may have been eating or behaving a certain way your whole life, and changing these patterns will require work and commitment. As you begin to make changes in your life, it will be important to remember why you are making these changes.

Why is it important to you to develop healthier behaviors? What will you gain?

What is your vision of your best possible life? Take a moment to visualize it. What would you be doing?

How to Get the Most Out of this Treatment

Between-Session Practice Exercises: This treatment is not just about learning information, it is about putting that information into practice. At the end of each session, you will choose health-related activities and behaviors to try over the course of the week. This is not an optional part of the treatment, it IS the treatment. It's ok if you run into obstacles or don't do the practice activities perfectly. Part of the process is learning how to implement changes that are going to work in the context of your life and the obstacles you face. What's important is that you are committed to practicing these behavior changes outside of sessions, to the best of your ability.

Meeting Recap

- *CMI is the experience of persistent, ongoing symptoms that interfere with your ability to engage in activities and/or enjoy day-to-day life.*
- *Inflammation is one of the key factors contributing to CMI.*
- *Treating CMI and inflammation entails a whole health approach.*
- *This treatment will provide you with information about what you can do to manage inflammation, and then help you put this information into action based on your own individual goals and circumstances.*

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

Home Practice

A. This week, choose to do one activity that will improve your whole health. It could be spending time with someone you love, engaging in a physical activity, or doing something you value.

This week I will _____

B. Log your food




Next week, we will discuss your diet and the kinds of foods that are helpful for managing CMI symptoms. In preparation for next week, you are going to track what and how much you eat this week using the 'Week 1 Food Log' on page 14. It is important to have an accurate picture of your current diet. Using a food log will help you be mindful of what you are eating. **Remember, the most important thing is to observe your normal eating behavior.** Choose at least 3 days this week to log your food.

Make a plan! Which days will you log your food this week?

Meeting One Food Log

Pick a **few days** this week to log the food you eat. Don't worry, you won't have to do this every week! The purpose is to provide you with an accurate picture of the foods you are eating so that you can set realistic goals going forward.

Tip: It can be helpful to leave the log in your kitchen, or somewhere that is easy to see at meal times.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Example
Breakfast								Bowl of cereal. Banana. 2 cups of coffee. 
Lunch								Ham, cheese, and mayo sandwich with a bag of chips. An apple. 
Dinner								Steak and potato stew with onions. 
Snacks								Chips, a granola bar, bowl of ice cream for dessert. 

MEETING TWO

Food and Diet

Objectives

- Describe how diet affects inflammation
- Provide examples of anti-inflammatory foods and meal plans
- Set diet goals
- Learn how to track your goals



Meeting 2: Food and Diet

“Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.” - Hippocrates

Food can be a powerful medicine. This section will explain how food affects inflammation and provide guidelines to incorporate a healthy diet into your life.

How Does Diet Affect Inflammation?

How we eat can affect inflammation, and specific diets are more likely to decrease symptoms of Chronic Multisymptom Illness (CMI) and other symptoms of disease. It is estimated that 60% of chronic disease could be prevented by a healthy diet.¹

Omega-6's and Omega-3's

The balance of polyunsaturated fat in a person's diet (omega-3's versus omega-6's) can affect inflammation. In general, omega-3 fats decrease inflammation and omega-6 fats increase inflammation. To lower inflammation in your body, eat more foods that are high in omega-3 fatty acids and eat less foods that are high in omega-6 fatty acids.

Omega-3's are found in salmon, sardines, flaxseeds, walnuts and pumpkin seeds. These are the foods you want to eat more of. Omega-6's are found in meats, dairy, and foods with preservatives for longer shelf lives. These are the foods you want to avoid.

The microbiome of the gut

Another theory about how diet affects inflammation has to do with the bacteria in your gut. These bacteria are impacted by food choices. The foods we eat can either promote the growth of healthy bacteria living in our gut, which improves overall health, or it can foster the growth of bacteria that is less health-enhancing. This is an area of much study in the microbiome research community, and hard-and-fast rules on which bacteria is best for the gut are still under discussion.³

Free radicals

Free radicals are molecules in our bodies that can help fight infection. But in excess they can lead to tissue damage and significant inflammation. A healthy diet with antioxidant rich foods can potentially protect against free-radical damage and inflammation. Foods rich in antioxidants include black and green tea, dark leafy greens (such as spinach), citrus fruits, and red, yellow, and orange vegetables (such as carrots and peppers).

Information was derived from VA Whole Health Library, *Whole Health: Change the conversation*
The Anti-Inflammatory Diet Clinical Tool

How to Lower Inflammation with Food

The following pages discuss which foods fight inflammation. An easy way to make sure you are eating the right foods is by using the graphic of the plate below. If your plate looks like the one below, then you are well on your way to eating an anti-inflammation diet!



Remember to stay hydrated. Drink water!



Half of your plate should be filled with vegetables and fruits. The more veggies, the better!



Eat a variety of whole grains, like brown rice. Limit processed grains (like white rice).



Flavor food with herbs, spices, garlic, onions, tomatoes and olive oil



Choose fish, beans, nuts, and poultry. Limit red meat and cheese. Avoid bacon, cold cuts, and other processed meats.



Information was derived from VA Whole Health Library, *The Anti-Inflammatory Diet Clinical Tool and Mediterranean Diet Tool*

Eat fruits and vegetables

Diets high in fruits and vegetables lower inflammation. The more fruits and vegetables, the better. Eight to 10 servings per day is a good goal (i.e., five servings of fruit and five servings of vegetables). Unfortunately, most Americans only get about 1.5 servings of vegetables and 1 serving of fruits daily.^{4,5}



When trying to decide which fruits and vegetables to eat, aim for the most **colorful** ones. **Colorful** fruits and vegetables are often nutritious due to healthy compounds called **flavonoids**. For instance, the darker the color of the salad leaf, the greater the nutritional benefits. (**Think spinach** versus iceberg lettuce.) **Blueberries and cherries** are particularly good choices to reduce inflammation. But beware of fruit and vegetable juices, as these often have *added sugar* and very little of the beneficial fiber than comes with eating the whole fruit.

Eat fiber

Diets high in fiber help reduce inflammation. A good goal is about 30 grams/day, ideally from a diet rich in whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Make sure you are choosing unprocessed carbohydrates and grains. Highly processed carbohydrates (such as white bread and white rice) will increase inflammation! Choose brown rice, whole grain breads, and whole grain pastas.



Avoid unhealthy fats



Trans fats, saturated fats, and fats that are high in omega-6's cause inflammation. These fats are found in many animal products, fast foods, and any foods designed to have a long shelf life. Avoid these unhealthy fats. Monounsaturated fats (like olive oil) are better choices. When cooking, extra virgin olive oil is an excellent choice.^{6,7} Omega-3 fats, like fish and walnuts, are *especially* good for decreasing inflammation. Eat more foods with the healthy omega-3 fats (salmon, pumpkin seeds, walnuts), and eat less foods with the unhealthy omega-6 fats (red meat, dairy).

Choose your protein carefully



Plant-based proteins such as beans and legumes, grains, nuts, and soy-based proteins are healthy alternatives to animal protein. Add more of these proteins into your diet and reduce animal protein (e.g., meats and dairy). This will help reduce inflammation.

Fish are also a wonderful source of protein with many health benefits. Given water pollution levels, avoid the largest fish which are likely to have the highest levels of mercury (shark, swordfish, golden bass, and mackerel). Some of the safest fish are tilapia, wild salmon, and anchovies.



If you choose to eat meat, eat grass-fed or wild sources of meat rather than corn-fed beef, as these are less inflammatory choices. Trim the fat off your meat when cooking it, and try to not char the meat when preparing it to lessen the inflammatory impact.^{8,9}

Be mindful of sugar

Too much sugar can contribute to chronic inflammation. Some studies show that even low to moderate amounts of sugar negatively affects glucose and fat metabolism, and increases inflammation.²⁸ Added sugars can come in many forms, including sugar-sweetened beverages, desserts, and other processed foods. Be mindful of the sugar in your diet.

Information was derived from VA Whole Health Library, *Whole Health: Change the conversation*
The Anti-Inflammatory Diet Clinical Tool

An Eating Plan to Follow: The Mediterranean Diet

The **Mediterranean Diet** is an anti-inflammation diet. This diet follows the pattern of eating that is traditional in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. It emphasizes **fruits, vegetables, legumes** (such as beans, lentils, chickpeas), and **whole grains**. Dairy and meats are limited, with most animal protein coming from fish. Olive oil is used for cooking. An important aspect of the Mediterranean approach to eating is enjoying meals in the company of others. When compared to low-fat diets, Mediterranean diets are more effective at improving inflammation and cardiovascular risk factors like blood pressure and weight.^{10,11}

There are many resources online that provide meal plans and recipes consistent with the Mediterranean diet. There is also an appendix of recipes at the back of this workbook.

Below is a list of guidelines to follow a Mediterranean diet:

- ✓ Eat at least 4-5 servings of vegetables **every day**
 - At least one of your servings of vegetables should be fresh **vegetables** in a salad
- ✓ Eat at least 4-5 servings of fresh fruit **every day**
- ✓ Use olive oil for cooking and dressing salads and other dishes
 - Eat 4 tablespoons or more of olive oil per day
- ✓ Eat 3 or more servings of legumes every week. (Legumes include beans, lentils, chickpeas, soybeans, peanuts, mesquite, alfalfa, and peas)
- ✓ Eat 3 or more servings of fish every week
- ✓ Eat 1 or more servings of nuts or seeds every week
- ✓ Select white meats (chicken without the skin, or rabbit) instead of red meats and processed meats (burgers, sausages)

Foods to avoid:
















- × Cream
- × Butter and margarine
- × Cold meat
- × Pate
- × Duck
- × Carbonated and/or sugared beverages and sodas
- × Pastries
- × Cakes, donuts, cookies
- × Puddings and custards
- × French fries and potato chips
- × Take-out

What's in a Serving?

As you start to make changes to your diet, use this serving size card to help you keep track of your portions.

SERVING SIZE CARD:

Cut out and fold on the dotted line. Laminate for longtime use.

<p>1 Serving Looks Like . . .</p> <p>GRAIN PRODUCTS </p> <p>1 cup of cereal flakes = fist</p> <p>1 pancake = compact disc </p> <p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked rice, pasta, or potato = $\frac{1}{2}$ baseball </p> <p> 1 slice of bread = cassette tape</p> <p>1 piece of cornbread = bar of soap </p>	<p>1 Serving Looks Like . . .</p> <p>VEGETABLES AND FRUIT</p> <p>1 cup of salad greens = baseball </p> <p> 1 baked potato = fist</p> <p>1 med. fruit = baseball</p> <p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fresh fruit = $\frac{1}{2}$ baseball </p> <p> $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins = large egg</p>
<p>1 Serving Looks Like . . .</p> <p>DAIRY AND CHEESE</p> <p> $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. cheese = 4 stacked dice or 2 cheese slices</p> <p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of ice cream = $\frac{1}{2}$ baseball </p> <p>FATS</p> <p>1 tsp. margarine or spreads = 1 dice </p>	<p>1 Serving Looks Like . . .</p> <p>MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES</p> <p>3 oz. meat, fish, and poultry = deck of cards </p> <p>3 oz. grilled/baked fish = checkbook </p> <p> 2 Tbsp. peanut butter = ping pong ball</p>

Your Eating Plan

What does your current diet look like? How does your diet compare to the Mediterranean diet above?

Have you already made changes to improve your diet? If so, what was that like?

What areas of your diet could be improved? What are some realistic changes you can make?

Making Changes and Sticking to Them!

Have you ever set a goal and then been disappointed when you didn't accomplish it? Are you worried about the obstacles that could get in the way of making changes to your diet? **These are normal thoughts and experiences.** Changing behaviors can be difficult, and obstacles are a normal part of the process. **But there are ways to maximize the chance of success.** As you set goals each week, reflect on the following questions.

Think of a time you successfully changed a behavior in the past. What did you do? How did you do it?

What obstacles do you think might get in the way of accomplishing your diet goals?

What would need to happen to overcome these obstacles?

Meeting Recap

- Eating an anti-inflammation diet can reduce inflammation and improve CMI and overall health.
- Aim to eat **colorful** fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and plant-based proteins like nuts and legumes. **Avoid processed foods!**
- The Mediterranean diet is a diet that incorporates many anti-inflammation foods. There are many recipes available in the appendix of this workbook, and online! Also see “Additional Resources” on page 91
- Remember to track your goals. It will help you see whether the changes you are making are helpful, and problem solve around any obstacles that get in your way.

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

Write down your food and diet goals, and track your progress on the goal sheet below. Make your goals as specific as possible. There is an example below.

The purpose of the goal sheet is to help you see how easily you are meeting your goals, and figure out ways to overcome obstacles. **Using behavior logs has been proven to increase success when building new habits.** Simply write your food goals in the left column, and check off each day that you completed your goal.

My food and diet goals this week:

Example:

- For at least 4 of the next 7 days, I will eat a cup of **blueberries with my breakfast.**

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 4 of 7 days, I will eat a cup of blueberries with my breakfast.</i>	√		√		√	√	
A.							
B.							
C.							

MEETING THREE

Overcoming Obstacles

Objectives

- Identify obstacles to meet your goals
- Introduce Problem-Solving
- Present SMART goals
- Apply these skills to your life



Meeting 3: Overcoming Obstacles

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.” – Booker T. Washington

Obstacles are part of the behavior change process. Not only are they to be expected, but they are great opportunities to learn how to tweak your plan for success. This section will explain the process of identifying obstacles, and provide guidelines for problem-solving these obstacles. We will also discuss some general tips for changing behavior.

Identifying Obstacles

It's common to run into obstacles when you are trying to make a change. Think about the obstacles that make it difficult to accomplish your food and diet goals. Common culprits are:

- Negative thoughts (e.g., “I can't do this,” “This won't work”)
- Negative emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety, depression)
- Disorganization (e.g., not preparing ahead of time)
- Unrealistic goals (e.g., trying to do too much too fast)
- Fatigue
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of time
- Other people/other people's reactions

Problem-Solving

Making changes is hard! It usually takes a lot of time, energy, and effort. Here are some tools to help you problem-solve when obstacles arise.

1. **Identify the problem and your goal.** Ask yourself, “What do I want?” “What is getting in the way?” “What would make me feel better in the long term?”
2. **Brainstorm ways to accomplish your goal.** Come up with as many solutions as possible, even if they seem unrealistic.
3. Evaluate the **pros and cons** of each solution.
4. **Break down the solution** into small, concrete, achievable steps.
5. **Evaluate your success!** If you are not successful, take a deep breath, and go back through these steps and try again.

How can you apply these steps to the obstacles and problems you faced this week?

Behavior Change Tips

Whether meeting your goal was easy, or extremely difficult, the following behavior change tips will help you continue on your behavior change journey. If you practice these tips, you will maximize your chance of success!

1. Develop SMART goals. These goals are:

Specific

- Be very clear and specific about what you need to do.
- Tip: Think about how you would give step-by-step instructions to someone who did not know anything about the behavior you are trying to change.

Measurable

- Make sure you pick goals that you can track and measure.
- This is important in order to measure whether you are making progress.

Attainable

- Pick goals that are behavioral/things that you can do and are within your control.

Relevant

- Pick goals that are realistic given your schedule, finances, and overall resources.
- Larger goals should be broken down into smaller, achievable steps.

Time-bound

- Pick a time-frame to accomplish the goal (e.g., give yourself a deadline, set aside a specific time to accomplish your goal).

EXAMPLE: Diane's goal is to eat more vegetables. To make this a SMART goal, she needs to be specific. Diane should decide what and how much she will eat, and when she will eat it. For example, Diane could set a goal of eating one serving of broccoli with her dinner three nights this week. To help herself achieve this goal, Diane can identify the smaller, attainable steps to follow. These small steps could include picking a recipe to follow, adding broccoli to her grocery list, and picking a day to go grocery shopping at the beginning of the week.

PRACTICE: Which goals are SMART goals? A column or B column? How do you know?

A	B
I want to feel better.	I am going to walk around my neighborhood for 5 minutes Thursday evening (at 5 pm).
This week, I want to eat a salad (with spinach, peppers, and tomatoes) for lunch on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.	I am going to eat healthier.
I am not going to worry so much.	I am going to practice deep breathing for 10 minutes every Monday before going to bed.

2. Make it a HABIT

- To turn a behavior into a habit, you want to repeat the behavior over and over **in the same context**. Specifically, you should pair your new behavior with something that is already a routine part of your day. For example, let's say you want to eat more fruit. You decide to eat an extra serving of fruit (an apple) every day. In order to make this a habit, you should pair eating your apple with an event that occurs every day (or almost every day). In this case, you could eat an apple with your lunch every day. Consistently pairing the new behavior (eating an apple) with something you already do every day (eating lunch) will help you build a habit. Eventually, eating an apple every day will feel automatic! The key is **consistency**.
- As you build new habits, think about the activities you already do every day (like eating, brushing your teeth, driving, going to bed, etc.). Try to pair your new habit with one of these activities. Think of an example of how you can do this in your own life.

3. Make a Commitment

- Before starting a change, make a contract or commitment to another person if possible; think of it as doing yourself a favor. Enlist the help of your support system (family, friends, coworkers, other veterans). Be prepared to explain what you are trying and how they can help.

Who could you enlist as a support? Who would hold you accountable?

4. Adopt an Experimental Attitude

- Think of yourself as conducting an experiment that looks at whether the changes you are making are helpful. You are testing whether and how your behavior affects your CMI symptoms and mood. This is not a test of your willpower.
- Avoid evaluating the outcome of the experiment while it's going on. Don't jump to conclusions about whether the changes you are making are (or are not) helpful. It can take time to feel the effects of diet and lifestyle changes. Give yourself enough time to fully assess the effects of your behavior changes.

Meeting Recap

- *Obstacles are a normal part of the behavior change process.*
- *The problem-solving steps can help you address the obstacles in your life.*
- *Develop SMART goals. Smart goals are:*
 - *Specific*
 - *Measurable*
 - *Attainable*
 - *Relevant*
 - *Time-bound*
- *Remember to keep tracking your goals!*

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

- 1 • Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.
Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely
- 2 • Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
• **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!
- 3 • Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.
- 4 • Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Example:

- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 6 of 7 days, in the morning, pack an apple and serving of vegetables</i>	√		√	√		√	
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

MEETING FOUR

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Objectives

- Explain the connection between social relationships, inflammation, and CMI
- Explore your social relationships
- Develop your SMART relationship goals



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- Were there logistical obstacles?
- Were you confused about what you had to do?
- Did you forget?
- Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? ____

Meeting 4: Social Connection and Relationships

“Love and intimacy are the root of what makes us sick and what makes us well, what causes sadness and what brings happiness, what makes us suffer and what leads to healing.” – Dean Ornish, M.D.

Social relationships are one of the best protections against chronic inflammation!

Research on the healing power of social connection began as early as the 1960s and 1970s. A number of studies found that when animals were put under stress, the animals who had a companion had fewer negative health effects than animals who were alone. Since then, these effects have been duplicated in humans. People with close ties to family and friends live longer. In fact, social relationships are better predictors of longevity than many other health variables, such as healthy eating, cholesterol levels and exercise.¹⁴ We know that it is not just the quantity of relationships people have, but the quality of their relationships that has the greatest impact on health.¹⁵ Health is influenced by the number of close social supports a person has – not the number of people they know or the number of friends they have.¹⁶

How Does My Social Life Affect My Chronic Multisymptom Illness (CMI)?

Research shows a direct link between the quality of a person’s relationships and levels of inflammation in the body.¹⁷ People with unsupportive or tense relationships have more chronic inflammation. It has even been found that past troubled relationships, not only current ones, can have a lasting impact on levels of inflammation. **Remember that chronic inflammation is one of the leading causes of CMI symptoms**, as well as a number of other chronic health problems, including heart disease, arthritis, and diabetes.

There are many reasons why social relationships affect inflammation. First, positive social relationships can reduce stress. Stress and negative emotions (like depression), increase inflammation. (You will learn more about this in session 7). Therefore, social connection with others lowers stress, which lowers inflammation. Second, positive social relationships may lead to more positive health behaviors in general, like being more physically active. The bottom line is that people with negative social relationships have higher levels of inflammation, and individuals with positive social connections have lower levels of inflammation and overall better health.²⁵ Given the effects of chronic inflammation on CMI and health, anything that can help decrease inflammation has value.¹⁸ Therefore, focusing on your social life is an important part of this treatment.

Information was derived from VA Whole Health Library, *Whole Health: Change the conversation
Family, Friends, and Co-Workers Educational Overview*

How Can I Improve My Social Relationships?

Reflect on the following questions as they relate to the relationships in your life.

Who is most important to you in your life? Do you have someone to confide in about your health and life issues? Do you engage in your community? Are you getting the support that you need right now?

It's time to think about how you can enhance your social life and harness the power of social connection. Below are some suggestions:

1. Explore how you can increase the time and/or quality of time you spend with positive social supports in your life, and how to decrease time with the negative social supports.
2. Learn about and join a support group. There are many online support groups available as well as in-person groups offered at the VA and in the community.
3. Become involved in volunteer work. Volunteer work enhances well-being in a number of different ways, and can provide meaningful interactions with others.
4. Become more active in your local community by:
 - Attending community events, such as civic celebrations, theater performances, or fundraisers
 - Helping to direct or organize community events (e.g., join a steering committee or board)
 - Participating in the arts in the community
 - Attending local sporting events
 - Joining a religious or spiritual community
 - Taking a course of some kind

It may feel overwhelming to meet new people or improve your existing relationships. If you are feeling overwhelmed, start small. Remember to set SMART goals (discussed in meeting 3).

Meeting Recap

- *Positive social relationships protect against inflammation and CMI symptoms.*
- *There are many ways to improve your social connection with others. Small changes can make a big difference.*
- *Remember to track the foods you eat, as well as your social/relationship goals.*

Next meeting will be: _____

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

1

- Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely

2

- Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
- **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!

3

- Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.

4

- Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- On Sunday, **after lunch**, I will **call** my friend.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: On Sunday, after lunch, I will call Josephine</i>							√
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

MEETING FIVE

Working the Body

Objectives

- Explain the connection between exercise, inflammation, and CMI
- Explore obstacles to physical activity
- Introduce the concept of graded exercise
- Develop physical activity goals



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- Were there logistical obstacles?
- Were you confused about what you had to do?
- Did you forget?
- Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? ____



Meeting 5: Working the Body

“To enjoy the glow of good health, you must exercise.” – Gene Tunney

As the quote above states, **exercise and movement are critical to good health.** Physical activity helps protect against many chronic diseases, including diabetes, colon cancer, breast cancer, heart disease, stroke, and *symptoms of Chronic Multisymptom Illness (CMI)*.^{20,21} *Low intensity and moderate intensity exercise decreases fatigue, pain, stress, and symptoms.* Exercise improves health, physical function, and aerobic fitness.

Why is exercise so beneficial?

Physical activity reduces inflammation in the body,^{22,23} and by now, **you are aware of the relationship between CMI and inflammation.** Specifically, muscle contractions during physical activity release proteins that block the inflammation process. Additionally, exercise releases a chemical in the brain, called epinephrine. **Epinephrine can create feelings of positive mood while blocking pain signals in the brain.** This in and of itself reduces the experience of pain. However, epinephrine also releases other proteins that further decreases inflammation.²⁴ Therefore, exercise can be a powerful ally in your fight against inflammation and CMI.

Obstacles to physical activity

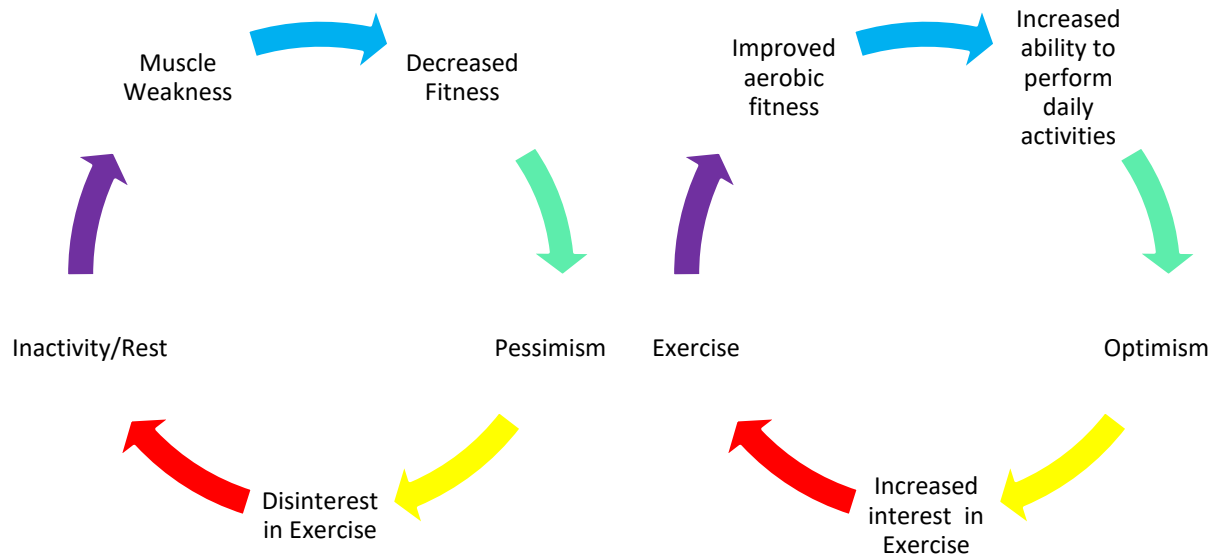


While exercise is very beneficial, there may be some very real obstacles standing in the way of you being active. *Reflect on your current level of physical activity. How does your current level of physical activity compare with where you'd like to be? What is getting in your way?*

Benefits of Regular Physical Activity and Exercise:

- Decreased pain
- Decreased fatigue
- Decreased number of tender points (joint and muscle pain)
- Decrease in blood pressure
- Decreased resting heart rate
- Decreased risk for heart disease or stroke
- Improved sleep
- Decreased anxiety and depression
- Increased efficiency of the heart
- Increased control of blood sugar levels
- Increased ability to burn fat
- Improved physical fitness
- Decreased loss of muscle strength and aerobic fitness
- Increased energy
- Improved cholesterol profile
- Enhanced feeling of well-being
- Enhanced performance of work and recreational

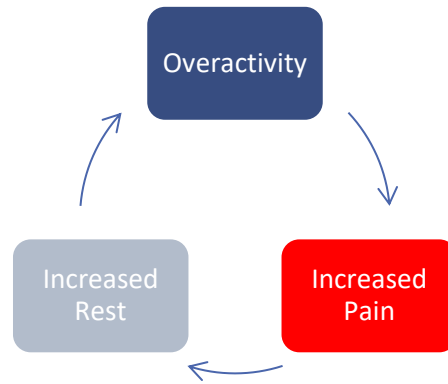
You probably mentioned **pain and fatigue** as obstacles to physical activity. While it may feel natural to avoid physical activity when you are in pain, being inactive can increase your level of fatigue and pain! This is because inactivity leads to deconditioning of the body, tightness in the muscles, decreases in stamina, increased proneness to injury, and puts you at risk for other more severe health problems like weight gain and obesity. These contribute further to fatigue and chronic pain. Adding exercise into your life can combat chronic pain by increasing endurance and strength, improving joint and muscle flexibility, and decreasing inflammation, as shown in the second circle below.



Daily exercise can end that downward cycle and replace it with an upward, positive cycle. The next few pages outline an exercise plan that will help you increase your physical activity while addressing the obstacles of pain and fatigue.

Getting Started in an Exercise Program

While exercise is an important part of CMI management, finding the right amount of exercise is important. Just like too little exercise can increase pain and CMI symptoms, too much exercise can increase pain as well! It is important to not overexert yourself, even on days when you are feeling good or have relatively few symptoms. If you do too much, you may start a “crash and burn” cycle as the figure on the next page depicts.



You may be wondering how you are supposed to increase your physical activity without aggravating your CMI symptoms, especially if you feel like everything that you do causes pain and fatigue! The key is learning how to **pace yourself**. Graded exercise is the practice of starting with very small amounts of low-intensity activity, and very gradually increasing the amount of time you spend doing the activity. To begin an exercise program, **start slowly**. For example,

- Use any opportunity to do some extra walking.
- Take the stairs whenever you can.
- Get up more often and do some tasks around your home.
- Limit your television and excessive computer/video game use (as this promotes inactivity).

Make sure that you contact a doctor and determine your exercise readiness. Exercise must be started slowly and increased gradually.

Types of Exercise and Programs to Try

After you start increasing your daily activity, there are other exercises that have been shown to improve chronic pain and CMI. Walking, swimming, riding a stationary bike, water aerobics, or a rowing machine are all good aerobic exercise sources. Stretching exercises, yoga, and breathing exercises are good additions to the aerobic exercises because they increase blood supply and nutrients to the joints, decrease risk of injury, increase coordination, improve balance, and reduce stress in muscles.

Once you pick an activity/exercise, start by exercising one to two days per week. Initially, the daily duration could be as little as five minutes or less. Gradually build up to three to four times a week. After you have built up to three to four times a week, gradually increase the length of time for your exercise routine. Go from 5 minutes the first couple of weeks, to 10 minutes the next couple of weeks, to 15 minutes the next couple of weeks. Keep increasing the amount of time you exercise until you reach a goal of 30 straight minutes of aerobic activity three or more days per week.

If you have any questions about exercise programs, you can ask your doctor, physical therapist, or a fitness trainer.

Meeting Recap

- *Physical activity reduces inflammation and reduces CMI symptoms.*
- *Increase physical activity gradually. Start a graded exercise program.*
- *Beware of “crash and burn” cycles. Do not overdo it, even on days you are feeling well.*

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

Example of Exercise Progression

Times/Week	Intensity	How Long	Type of Exercise
1	Light	1 x 5 minutes or less	Aerobic/Stretching
1	Light	1 x 5 minutes	Aerobic/Stretching
2	Light	1 x 5 minutes	Aerobic/Stretching
2	Light	2 x 5 minute sessions	Aerobic/Stretching
2-3	Light	2 x 5 minutes sessions	Aerobic/Stretching
3	Light	1 x 5 minute session	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	1 x 5 minute session	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	2 x 5 minute sessions	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	3 x 5 minute session	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	2 x 10 minute session	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	2 x 10 minute sessions 1 x 5 minute session	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	3 x 10 minute sessions	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	2 x 15 minute sessions	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	1 x 20 minute session 1 x 10 minute session	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	1 x 25 minute session 1 x 5 minute session	Aerobic/Stretching
3-4	Light	1 x 30 minute session	Aerobic/Stretching

This document was developed by the War Related Illness & Injury Study Center (WRIISC)
Office of Public Health (OPH)
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)



Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

1

- Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely

2

- Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
- **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!

3

- Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.

4

- Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 5 of the next 7 days, **after dinner**, I will take a 10-minute **walk** around the block.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, walk for 10 minutes right after dinner.</i>	√		√	√		√	
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

MEETING SIX

Check-In and Progress Review

Objectives

- Review your progress
- Identify obstacles to progress
- Identify strategies to keep moving forward



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- i. Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- ii. Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- iii. Were there logistical obstacles?
- iv. Were you confused about what you had to do?
- v. Did you forget?
- vi. Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? _____

Meeting 6: Check-in and Progress Review

“Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned.” – Peter Marshall

Check-In

What has this experience been like so far?

What has been helpful about this treatment?

What else do you need to continue accomplishing your goals?

Progress Review

This is a good time to review the progress that you've made, and problem solve around areas that are not moving forward. Reflect on the questions on the next page.

Compared to week one, have your CMI symptoms changed? Has your diet changed? Are you more engaged in life socially and physically? Reflect on the progress you have made.

In what areas are you still feeling stuck?

Getting Unstuck

It's common to sometimes feel stuck when you are trying to make a change. If you are feeling stuck, it's time to use the skills discussed in meeting three.

First, think about what might be keeping you stuck. Common culprits are:

- Negative thoughts (e.g., "I can't do this," "This won't work")
- Negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, depression)
- Disorganization (e.g., not preparing ahead of time)
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of time
- Other people



Have any of these obstacles challenged you? How so?

Second, go through the problem-solving steps:

1. **Identify the problem and your goal.** Ask yourself, "What do I want?" "What is getting in the way?" "What would make me feel better in the long term?"
2. **Brainstorm ways to accomplish your goal.** Come up with as many solutions as possible, even if they seem unrealistic.
3. Evaluate the **pros and cons** of each solution.
4. **Break down the solution** into small, concrete, achievable steps.
5. **Evaluate your success!** If you are not successful, take a deep breath, and go back through these steps and try again.

How can you apply these steps to your life?

Third, remind yourself of why you are trying to change.

Why is it important to you to live a healthier lifestyle? What will you gain by continuing with this treatment?

Meeting Recap

- *Obstacles are a normal part of the behavior change process.*
- *The problem solving steps on the previous page can help you address the obstacles in your life.*
- *Remember to keep making SMART goals and tracking your behaviors!*

Next meeting will be: _____(date & time)

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

- 1 • Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.
Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely
- 2 • Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
• **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!
- 3 • Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.
- 4 • Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 5 of the next 7 days, **after dinner**, I will take a 10-minute **walk** around the block.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, walk for 10 minutes right after dinner.</i>	√		√	√		√	
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							



MEETING SEVEN

Sleep and Recharge

Objectives

- Define sleep
- Explain the relationship between sleep and CMI
- Describe how to get a good night's sleep



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- i. Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- ii. Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- iii. Were there logistical obstacles?
- iv. Were you confused about what you had to do?
- v. Did you forget?
- vi. Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? ____



Meeting 7: Sleep and Recharge

“Sleep is that golden chain that ties health and our bodies together.”
– Thomas Dekker

What is Sleep?

Sleep was long considered just a block of time when your brain and body shut down. It is now known that sleep is an active process that has distinct stages throughout the night. For instance, certain stages of sleep are needed for us to feel well rested and energetic the next day (**stage 3 of non-REM sleep**), and other stages help us learn and make memories (**REM sleep**).

Sleep helps people stay healthy and function at their best. It provides an opportunity for the body to repair itself, both physically and mentally. **Not getting enough sleep can negatively affect your health, your pain, and it can even be dangerous** – for example, you are more likely to be in a car crash if you drive when you are drowsy.



Sleep and Chronic Multisymptom Illness (CMI)

Poor sleep and CMI symptoms are highly related. Pain can interfere with your ability to both fall asleep and stay asleep. However, lack of sleep reduces your body’s ability to repair and replenish tissues, which leads to increased pain sensitivity and greater fatigue and cognitive problems. Additionally, research shows that both lack of sleep, and too much sleep, increases inflammation in the body. Therefore, many people find themselves in a vicious cycle of more pain, fatigue, and CMI symptoms and less sleep. The good news is you can make changes to improve your sleep quantity and quality. Doing so will reduce your pain sensitivity, and improve your overall experience of your CMI symptoms.

Sleep and Overall Health

Not only is sleep important for CMI management, it’s also essential for many other health processes. However, it’s not just the quantity of your sleep that matters. The quality of your sleep is important as well. People whose sleep is frequently interrupted or cut short might not get enough of certain stages of sleep. In other words, how well rested you are and how well you function the next day depend on your total sleep time and how much of the various stages of sleep you get each night.

Performance: We need sleep to think clearly, react quickly, and create more memories. In fact, the pathways in the brain that help us learn and remember are very active when we sleep. Studies show that people who are taught mentally challenging tasks do better after a good night's sleep. Other research suggests that sleep is needed for creative problem-solving. Cutting back by even 1 hour can make it tough to focus the next day and can slow your response time.

Mood: Sleep affects mood. Insufficient sleep can make you irritable and is linked to poor behavior and trouble with relationships. People who chronically lack sleep are also more likely to become depressed.

Health: Sleep is also important for good health. Studies show that not getting enough sleep or getting poor quality sleep on a regular basis increases the risk of having high blood pressure, heart disease, and other medical conditions.

Hormones released during sleep also control the body's use of energy. Studies find that the less people sleep, the more likely they are to be overweight or obese, to develop diabetes, and to prefer eating foods that are high in calories and carbohydrates.

How Much Sleep is Enough?

Sleep needs vary from person to person, and they change throughout the life cycle. Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Some people believe that adults need less sleep as they get older. But there is no evidence to show that older people can get by with less sleep than younger people. As people age, however, they often get less sleep or they tend to spend less time in the deep, restful stage of sleep. Older people are also more easily awakened.

Get a Good Night's Sleep

Like eating well and being physically active, getting a good night's sleep is vital to your well-being. This section will provide you with information on two tools for improving sleep: stimulus control and sleep hygiene.

Stimulus Control: Using Your Bed Only for Sleep

Do you ever feel sleepy on the couch but then are wide awake when you go to bed? When you spend a lot of time in bed awake and frustrated, your body may start to link your bed with being awake and frustrated. Chronic insomnia develops because of this negative association.

Fortunately, we have a tool to tackle this problem. It's called stimulus control. This is a simple series of tasks to help your body connect your bed as a place for sleep. Stimulus control is done by consistently following a set of rules. Go to bed only when you feel sleepy. Use the bedroom only for sleep (and sex). Here's how it works:

1. If you've been awake in bed for more than 20 minutes or so, leave the bedroom. (Do not watch the clock. Guess the time in your head).
2. Do a calming activity. This may include listening to music, reading, or meditation. **Do not do things that may wake you up.** These include eating, using the computer, doing work, talking on the phone, or watching an exciting TV show.
3. Return to bed when you feel sleepy.
4. Leave the bed if you do not sleep for another 20 minutes or so. (Do not watch the clock. Guess the time in your head.)
5. ***Wake up at the same time each morning***, no matter how much sleep you received.
6. **Do not take naps** during the day.

You must follow these rules consistently for 2 to 4 weeks to see an effect. As you start to change your behavior, you may feel more tired during the day. Over time, your body will adapt so that you will fall asleep quicker and stay asleep longer. By following these rules, you can help retrain your mind and body for sleep.

*Adapted from My HealtheVet: Veteran's Health Library
Understanding CBT-I: Using Your Bed Only for Sleep
http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Search/142,41435_VA*

Sleep Hygiene

The following are healthy habits that can help you sleep better. As you will see from the list below, good sleep hygiene means changing habits with diet and exercise. It may also mean changing your sleep environment.

Good sleep hygiene includes:

- 1. Stick to a sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day—even on the weekends. This is important for resetting your biological clock!
- 2. Exercise is great, but not too late in the day.** Try to exercise at least 30 minutes on most days but not later than 2–3 hours before your bedtime.
- 3. Relax before bed.** Take time to unwind. A relaxing activity, such as reading or listening to music, should be part of your bedtime ritual.
- 4. Take a hot bath before bed.** The drop-in body temperature after the bath may help you feel sleepy, and the bath can help you relax.
- 5. Have a good sleep environment.** Get rid of anything in your bedroom that might distract you from sleep, such as noises, bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or a TV or computer in the bedroom. Also, keeping the temperature in your bedroom on the cool side can help you sleep better.
- 6. Have the right sunlight exposure.** Daylight is key to regulating daily sleep patterns. Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes each day.
- 7. Avoid caffeine and nicotine.** The stimulating effects of caffeine in coffee, colas, certain teas, and chocolate can take as long as 8 hours to wear off fully. Nicotine is also a stimulant.
- 8. Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.** A “nightcap” might help you get to sleep, but alcohol keeps you in the lighter stages of sleep. You also tend to wake up in the middle of the night when the sedating effects have worn off.
- 9. Avoid large meals and beverages late at night.** A large meal can cause indigestion that interferes with sleep. Drinking too many fluids at night can cause you to awaken frequently to urinate.
- 10. Avoid medicines that delay or disrupt your sleep, if possible.** Some commonly prescribed heart, blood pressure, or asthma medications, as well as some over-the-counter and herbal remedies for coughs, colds, or allergies, can disrupt sleep patterns.
- 11. Don't take naps after 3 p.m.** Naps can boost your brain power, but late afternoon naps can make it harder to fall asleep at night. Also, keep naps to under an hour.

Be patient. It may take days or weeks of consistently following this advice to see changes in your sleep.

*Adapted from My HealtheVet: Veteran's Health Library
Understanding CBT-I: What Is Sleep Hygiene?
http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Search/142,41438_VA*

Consulting with your Doctor

If you work hard on implementing the tips above, but you still have trouble sleeping, you should see your doctor and ask about the signs of a sleep disorder. Common sleep disorders include sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, and narcolepsy. Treating these disorders are important, and will improve your sleep.

If you think your sleep needs to be your primary focus, ask your doctor about Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I). CBT-I is a way to treat someone who has trouble sleeping. It is based on research that certain kinds of thoughts and habits can cause ongoing (chronic) insomnia. CBT-I works by changing these thoughts and habits with a series of tools. These tools can help you get to sleep, often without the need for sleep medication.

To Learn More:

Contact the NHLBI for information on healthy sleep and sleep disorders.

NHLBI Health Information Center

P.O. Box 30105

Bethesda, MD 20824-0105

Phone: 301-592-8573

TTY: 240-629-3255

Fax: 301-592-8563

E-mail: nhlbiinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov Web

Website: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/sleep

Meeting Recap

- *Sleep is an active, restorative process that supports healthy functioning across many different domains, including memory, immunity, and mood.*
- *Improving your sleep quantity and quality can reduce inflammation and improve your CMI.*
- *There are concrete steps you can take to improve your sleep!*
- *Two tools you can use are stimulus control and sleep hygiene.*

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

*Adapted from My HealtheVet: Veteran's Health Library
Understanding Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Search/142,41434_V*

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

1

- Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely

2

- Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
- **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!

3

- Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.

4

- Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 5 of the next 7 days, **at bedtime**, I will **read** for 10 minutes.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, at bedtime, read for 10 minutes.</i>	√		√	√	√	√	
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

MEETING EIGHT

Stress Management

Objectives

- Explain the relationship between stress, inflammation, and CMI
- Provide stress management tools
- Set stress management goals



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- i. Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- ii. Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- iii. Were there logistical obstacles?
- iv. Were you confused about what you had to do?
- v. Did you forget?
- vi. Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? ____

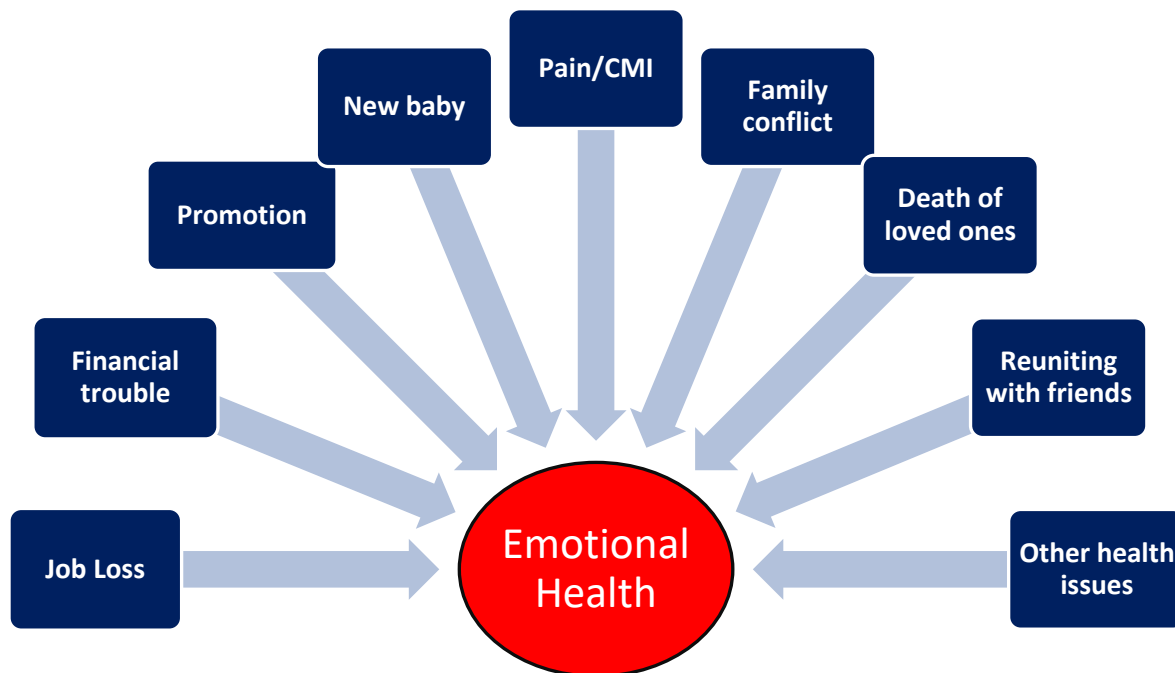


Meeting 8: Stress Management

“It’s not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it.” – Hans Selye

Many things that happen in your life can disrupt your emotional health and lead to strong feelings of sadness, stress, or anxiety. These things might include being laid off from your job, having a child leave or return home, or dealing with the death of a loved one. For service members, there are additional burdens related to the military experience such as a health concern or problem related to deployment, loss of comrades in combat, or the possibility of being re-deployed. For some people, “good” changes can be just as stressful as “bad” changes. For example, getting a promotion at work or having a new baby might also negatively impact your emotional health.

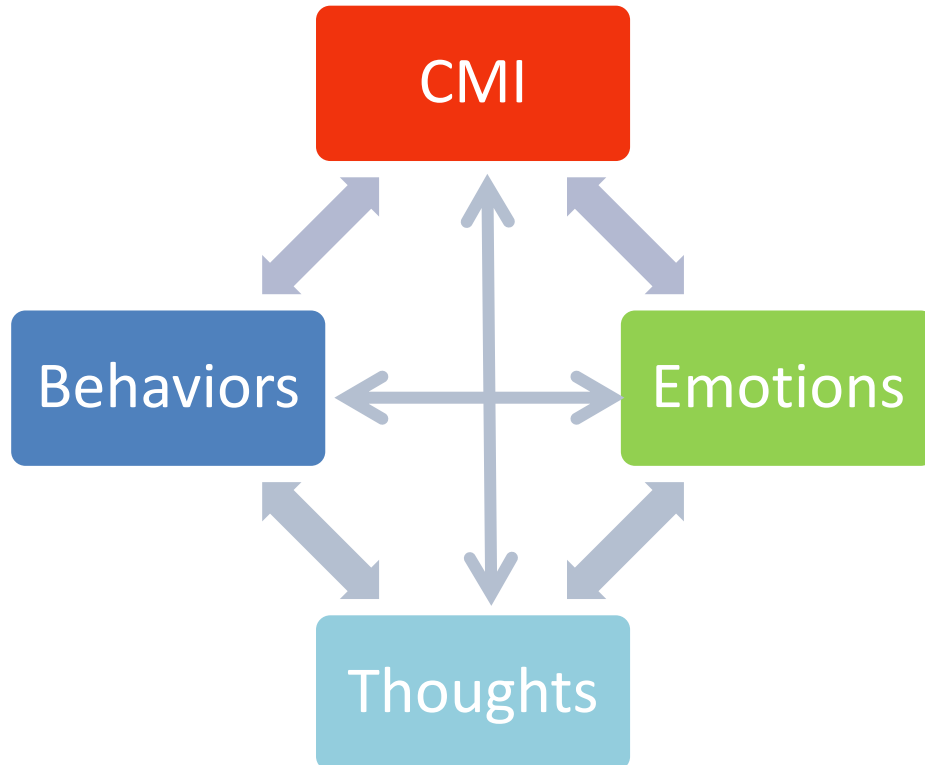
Chronic pain and fatigue are common stressors among service members, and particularly challenging ones. CMI often leads to negative thoughts and feelings, including feelings of depression, stress, and frustration.



The Mind-Body Connection: How Emotions Can Affect Your Health and Your CMI

Managing negative thoughts and feelings is important because your body responds to the way you think, feel, and act. This is often called the “mind-body connection.” For example, high blood pressure or a stomach ulcer might develop after a particularly stressful event, such as the death of a loved one or friend. Poor emotional health can weaken your body’s immune system, making you more likely to get colds and other infections during emotionally difficult times. Physical signs that your emotional health is out of balance include: change in appetite, headaches, high blood pressure, upset stomach, and many others.

In terms of Chronic Multisymptom Illness, research shows that psychological stress can actually increase pain and other CMI symptoms. This is because stress and depression affect a hormone in your body (called cortisol), which leads to your body losing its ability to regulate inflammation.²⁶ A vicious cycle can occur where increases in CMI symptoms lead to negative thoughts and emotions, which lead to more inflammation and more symptoms, which leads to more negative thoughts and emotions, and so on. Additionally, when you are feeling stressed, or upset, you may not take care of your health as well as you should and you are more likely to stop doing the things that could make your CMI better (like exercising, eating nutritious foods, or taking medicine that your doctor prescribes). Therefore, breaking that negative cycle by managing psychological stress is an important part of CMI management.



How Can I Manage Stress?

The following section goes into detail about **two strategies you can try on your own to calm your mind and your body**. By practicing relaxation techniques, you are setting off a chain of responses in your body that lowers inflammation.²⁷ Resources for other ways to improve emotional and psychological well-being are also provided.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Technique

1. Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head, and neck relaxed.



2. OR Lie on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head supported. You can use a pillow under your knees to support your legs.



3. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will help you feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
4. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand. The hand on your chest should be as still as possible.
5. Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips. The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible.

Note: At first, you may get tired while doing this exercise because extra effort will be needed to use the diaphragm correctly. With continued practice, diaphragmatic breathing will become easy and automatic.

Practice this exercise 5-10 minutes about 3-4 times per day.

*From the Cleveland Clinic Foundation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

There are two steps in Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR): (a) deliberately tensing muscle groups, and then (b) releasing that muscle tension

Tension-Relaxation:

STEP 1: TENSION: Tense your muscle by first focusing your mind on the muscle group; for example, your right hand. Then inhale and simply squeeze the muscles as hard as you can for about 8 seconds. For example, make a tight fist with your hand. Feel a slight pull or burn in your fist.

STEP 2: RELEASING THE TENSION: After the 8 seconds, just let the muscle go. Let all the tightness flow out of the muscles as you simultaneously exhale. In the example of your hand, imagine tension flowing out of your hand through your fingertips as you exhale. Feel the muscles relax and become loose and limp, tension flowing away like water out of a faucet. Stay relaxed for about 15 seconds. Focus on and notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Repeat the tension-relaxation cycle with the same muscle. You'll probably notice more sensations the second time.

Use the above approach for most of the major muscle groups in your body. We recommend using the following sequence: 1. Hands and Arms; 2. Head, Face, and Neck; 3. Torso; 4. Legs and Feet

HANDS: Inhale and tighten both hands into fists. Hold (8 seconds). Feel it spread up the arms towards the elbows. Exhale and relax, letting your fingers spread out naturally. (15 seconds)

WRISTS AND FOREARMS: Inhale and bend your right hand back at the wrist and briefly hold the tension. Hold (8 seconds) feeling the tension. Exhale and relax. (15 seconds)

Now do the same thing with the left hand. Inhale and bend your left hand back at the wrist and briefly hold the tension. Hold. Exhale and relax.

ARMS: Inhale and bend both arms at the elbows and raise your hands up towards your shoulders. Tighten up the muscles in the biceps. Hold. Exhale and relax, letting your arms drop down comfortably by your side.

FOREHEAD: Inhale and raise your eyebrows up as far as you can. Hold the tension. Exhale and relax. Now inhale and make a frown with your eyebrows. Try to pull your eyebrows down and close together. Hold the tension in your forehead. Exhale and relax.

EYES: Inhale and squeeze your eyelids tightly together. Hold. Exhale and relax.

JAW: Inhale and bite down and clamp your teeth together. Feel the tension along the jaw. Hold. Exhale and relax. Now open your mouth and jaw as wide as you can. Hold. Exhale and relax.

NECK: Inhale and bend your head forward as if trying to touch your chin to your chest. Hold. Feel the tension along the back of the neck. Exhale and relax by bringing your head upright.

SHOULDERS: Inhale and raise your shoulders up as high as you can and notice the tension. Hold. Exhale and relax by letting your shoulders drop.

CHEST: Inhale and try to touch your shoulder blades together by pulling your arms and shoulders back. Hold. Exhale and relax.

STOMACH: Inhale and pull your stomach in as if trying to touch your backbone with stomach. Hold. Exhale and relax.

BACK: Inhale and arch your back out and away from the chair. Hold. Feel the tension along the spine. Exhale and relax.

FEET: Inhale and curl your toes under your feet. Feel the tension in your toes and through the bottom of your foot. Hold. Exhale and relax.

LOWER LEGS AND FEET: Inhale and bend your toes up as if pointing towards the ceiling. Hold. Feel the tension around the feet and ankles. Exhale and relax.

THIGHS: Inhale and raise your leg up on front of you and feel the tension build. Hold. Exhale and relax. (Most people lift one thigh at a time. Do not raise both legs if you feel a lot of tension in your back.)

BUTTOCKS: Inhale and squeeze the muscles in your buttocks. Hold. Exhale and relax.

ENTIRE LEGS: With your feet flat on the floor, inhale and press down and feel the tension spread up the back of the legs. Hold. Exhale and relax.

FINAL STEPS: In your mind, scan your body for signs of tension or muscle discomfort. Tense and relax those areas. (Hold for 8 seconds, relax for 15 seconds). When you are finished, slowly open your eyes and try to maintain this more relaxed physical posture.

Using stress management strategies like diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation may be helpful in improving how you feel when you are stressed and upset. Although practicing these techniques will not be a cure to your problem or stress, they can help in managing the impact negative emotions have on your health and your CMI symptoms, and help you to feel better. The key is to practice them consistently!

Resources

If you are interested in other ways to manage emotional health, a good place to start is <https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/WARRELATEDILLNESS/education/STAR/index.asp>. This is the WRIISC's online STAR Well-Kit that features videos of Veterans describing their experiences of how wellness techniques have helped them, as well as brief demonstrations of various practices, including deep breathing exercises and guided meditations.

If you are struggling with feelings of depression or anxiety, or if this is an area in which you could benefit from further improvement, it is important to speak with your doctor about different treatment options. Taking care of the emotional aspects of CMI is a necessary part of treating your overall symptoms. Your doctor may want to prescribe medication for depression or anxiety, or they may also suggest cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is based on the idea that emotions and behavior are influenced by our thoughts about a situation (e.g., “this is awful” vs. “this is uncomfortable”). By learning to modify the way we think about difficult situations, we can cope better and avoid acting in ways that make the situation worse. CBT is well-researched, and has been found to be very effective in helping Veterans cope with chronic symptoms such as chronic pain.

Meeting Recap

- *Thoughts, emotions, actions, and physical health are all connected.*
- *Managing thoughts and emotions is an important part of managing CMI.*
- *Diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation can calm your mind and body to improve emotional health.*
- *Track your behaviors to see whether the changes you are making are helpful.*

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

- 1 • Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.
Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely
- 2 • Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
• **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!
- 3 • Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.
- 4 • Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 3 of the next 7 days, **as soon as I wake up**, I will practice **diaphragmatic breathing**.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 3 of 7 days, practice breathing as soon as I wake up.</i>	√	√	√			√	√
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

MEETING NINE

Maintaining Progress

Objectives

- Review and practice behavior change skills
- Continue making progress towards lowering inflammation and improving health



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- i. Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- ii. Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- iii. Were there logistical obstacles?
- iv. Were you confused about what you had to do?
- v. Did you forget?
- vi. Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? ____



Meeting 9: Maintaining Progress

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” – Frederick Douglass

Review of Behavior Change Tips

- Set SMART goals.
- Tell someone else about your commitment to change.
- Monitor your behaviors.
- Adopt an experimental attitude to assess whether the changes you are making are having a positive effect. (Remember, it may take time to really feel the effects of your healthy behavior changes).
- Identify obstacles that get in the way. For example:
 - Negative thoughts (e.g., “This won’t work”)
 - Negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger, depression)
 - Forgetfulness
 - Disorganization (e.g., not planning ahead of time)
 - Lack of time
 - Other people
 - Fatigue
- Problem solve around obstacles
 - Define the problem
 - Identify your goal
 - Brainstorm solutions
 - Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution
 - Break down your chosen solution into small, achievable steps
 - Evaluate your success
- Pay attention to your successes

In-Meeting Exercise:

Identify areas for continued progress, and problem-solve around any obstacles that may get in the way.

Meeting Recap

- Practice ***maintaining*** your behavior change skills!

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

- 1 • Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.
Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely
- 2 • Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
• **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!
- 3 • Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.
- 4 • Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 5 of the next 7 days, **after dinner**, I will take a 10-minute **walk** around the block.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, walk for 10 minutes right after dinner.</i>	√		√	√		√	
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

MEETING TEN

Maintaining Progress

Objectives

- Review and practice behavior change skills
- Continue making progress towards lowering inflammation and improving health



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- i. Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- ii. Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- iii. Were there logistical obstacles?
- iv. Were you confused about what you had to do?
- v. Did you forget?
- vi. Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? ____



Meeting 10: Maintaining Progress

“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” – Theodore Roosevelt

Review of Behavior Change Tips

- Set SMART goals.
- Tell someone else about your commitment to change.
- Monitor your behaviors.
- Adopt an experimental attitude to assess whether the changes you are making are having a positive effect. (Remember, it may take time to really feel the effects of your healthy behavior changes).
- Identify obstacles that get in the way. For example:
 - Negative thoughts (e.g., “This won’t work”)
 - Negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger, depression)
 - Forgetfulness
 - Disorganization (e.g., not planning ahead of time)
 - Lack of time
 - Other people
 - Fatigue
- Problem solve around obstacles
 - Define the problem
 - Identify your goal
 - Brainstorm solutions
 - Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution
 - Break down your chosen solution into small, achievable steps
 - Evaluate your success
- Pay attention to your successes

In-Meeting Exercise:

Identify areas for continued progress, and problem-solve around any obstacles.

Meeting Recap

- *Practice your behavior change skills!*

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

- 1 • Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.
Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely
- 2 • Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
• **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!
- 3 • Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.
- 4 • Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 5 of the next 7 days, **after dinner**, I will take a 10-minute **walk** around the block.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, walk for 10 minutes right after dinner.</i>	√		√	√		√	√
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							



MEETING ELEVEN

Maintainig Progress

Objectives

- Review and practice behavior change skills
- Continue making progress towards lowering inflammation and improving health



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- i. Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- ii. Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- iii. Were there logistical obstacles?
- iv. Were you confused about what you had to do?
- v. Did you forget?
- vi. Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? ____

Meeting 11: Maintaining Progress

“When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.” – Henry Ford

Review of Behavior Change Tips

- Set SMART goals.
- Tell someone else about your commitment to change.
- Monitor your behaviors.
- Adopt an experimental attitude to assess whether the changes you are making are having a positive effect. (Remember, it may take time to really feel the effects of your healthy behavior changes).
- Identify obstacles that get in the way. For example:
 - Negative thoughts (e.g., “This won’t work”)
 - Negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger, depression)
 - Forgetfulness
 - Disorganization (e.g., not planning ahead of time)
 - Lack of time
 - Other people
 - Fatigue
- Problem solve around obstacles
 - Define the problem
 - Identify your goal
 - Brainstorm solutions
 - Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution
 - Break down your chosen solution into small, achievable steps
 - Evaluate your success
- Pay attention to your successes

In-Meeting Exercise:

Identify areas for continued progress, and problem-solve around any obstacles that may get in the way.

Meeting Recap

- *Practice your behavior change skills!*

Next meeting will be: _____ (date & time)

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

1

- Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely

2

- Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
- **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!

3

- Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.

4

- Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 5 of the next 7 days, **after dinner**, I will take a 10-minute **walk** around the block.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, walk for 10 minutes right after dinner.</i>	√		√	√		√	√
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

MEETING TWELVE

Finishing Up

Objectives

- Review your progress
- Identify your goals moving forward
- Prepare for possible setbacks in the future



Goal Review

If you did **not** accomplish your goals, think about what got in the way.

- i. Was the change too big or overwhelming?
- ii. Did you have thoughts like, “this won’t work”?
- iii. Were there logistical obstacles?
- iv. Were you confused about what you had to do?
- v. Did you forget?
- vi. Were you avoiding it for some reason?

If you **did** meet your goals, think about what helped! Did you notice any improvements in your mood or your CMI symptoms? Yes - Great! If not, don’t give up. Sometimes it takes time to feel an effect.

Based on your evaluation above, do you need to revise your goal? If yes, how so?

On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain), what was your average pain level this week? ____

Meeting 12: Finishing Up

This is a time to review the progress that you have made so far and what's been helpful. It is also a time to discuss any potential barriers to maintaining your progress and how to use skills to address them.

Progress Review

Think about your progress. What changes have you made? Have you made changes to your diet or physical activity level? Are you more engaged socially? Are you managing stress or sleeping better? To help you answer these questions, fill out the questionnaire below, and compare your answers with how you responded during the first week of the treatment.

My Whole Health

WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU'D LIKE TO BE

All the areas are important. For each area below, consider **where you are** now and **where you would like to be**. In the **“Where you are”** box, briefly write the reasons you chose your number. In the **“Where you want to be”** box, write down some changes that might make this area better for you. Some areas are strongly connected to other areas, so you may notice some of your answers seem the same. Try to fill out as many areas as you can. You do not have to write in every area or in all the areas at one time. You might want to start with the easier ones and come back to the harder ones.

It is OK just to circle the numbers.

Working the Body: *“Energy and Flexibility”* Includes movement and physical activities like walking, dancing, gardening, sports, lifting weights, yoga, cycling, swimming, and working out in a gym.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

Sleep: “Recharge and Refresh” Getting enough rest, relaxation, and sleep.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

Food and Diet: “Nourish and Fuel” Eating healthy, balanced meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables each day. Drinking enough water and limiting sodas, sweetened drinks, and alcohol.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

Social Connection and Relationships: “Personal life and Social life” Feeling listened to and connected to people you love and care about. Feeling supported by other people in your life.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

Stress Management: *“Strengthen and Listen”* Tapping into the power of your mind to heal and cope. Using mind-body techniques like relaxation, breathing, or guided imagery.

Where you are: Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1 2 3 4 5

What are the reasons you choose this number?

Where you would like to be:

1 2 3 4 5

What changes could you make to help you get there?

How would you rate your average daily pain on a scale of 0-10 (0= no pain and 10 = worst pain ever)? How does this compare to your pain at Week #1? Have you noticed changes in fatigue, memory, or other symptoms of CMI?

What has helped you meet your goals and change your behavior? (Examples include keeping a food log, monitoring your behaviors, setting SMART goals, having support, etc.)

Moving Forward

What are your goals moving forward?

What are some steps you can take to move you closer to those goals?

Preparing for and Responding to Setbacks

A setback is something that temporarily slows you down. Setbacks can be very frustrating because they get in the way of progress. You can expect setbacks. They are natural parts of life! How we respond to them is what's important.

1. Think ahead. Are there any obstacles that you can anticipate in the future? Write them here:

#1: _____

#2: _____

#3: _____

2. Plan ahead. What will you do if you encounter any of the obstacles above?

#1: _____

#2: _____

#3: _____

3. When an unexpected setback occurs, do the following:
 - a. Stop. Be mindful. Notice that a setback is occurring. This is a good time to practice some deep breathing or relaxation techniques to get you in a calm and clear mindset.
 - b. Review the obstacles that set you back.
 - c. Go through the problem solving steps.
 - d. As you attempt to change your behavior, use the skills you have learned, like monitoring your behavior and setting SMART goals.

Meeting Recap

- You have the skills to continue to improve your health, your CMI, and your overall well-being.
- Setbacks are a normal part of life. Don't get discouraged if this happens. Use your behavior change skills to get back on track.

APPENDIX A

Extra Worksheets

- Anti-Inflammation Food Logs and Behavior Chart
- Creating New Healthy Habits



Date: _____

Food Log

Food	Amount (serving size)	Servings of Vegetables	Servings of Fruits	Tablespoons of Olive oil	Servings of Beans/Legumes	Servings of Nuts/Seeds	Servings of Fish	Servings of Red meat and dairy
<i>Example: Salmon with broccoli and brown rice</i>	<i>3 oz salmon, 1 cup broccoli, ½ cup rice, 1 tablespoon olive oil for cooking</i>	1		1			1	
Breakfast								
Lunch								
Dinner								
Snacks								
Day's Totals								
Compare yours to the Mediterranean Diet Eating Plan		4-5/ day	4-5/ day	4 Tb/ day	3/ week	At least 1/wee k	3/ week	Limit/ avoid
Daily Pain Rating: From 1-10, how intense is your pain? 1 = barely noticeable, 10 = worst ever								
Daily Mood Rating: How would you describe your mood? (e.g., sad, happy, worried) From 1-10, how intense is the mood? 1 = barely noticeable, 10 = extremely intense								

Date: _____

Food Log

Food	Amount (serving size)	Servings of Vegetables	Servings of Fruits	Tablespoons of Olive oil	Servings of Beans/Legumes	Servings of Nuts/Seeds	Servings of Fish	Servings of Red meat and dairy
<i>Example: Salmon with broccoli and brown rice</i>	<i>3 oz salmon, 1 cup broccoli, ½ cup rice, 1 tablespoon olive oil for cooking</i>	1		1			1	
Breakfast								
Lunch								
Dinner								
Snacks								
Day's Totals								
Compare yours to the Mediterranean Diet Eating Plan		4-5/ day	4-5/ day	4 Tb/ day	3/ week	At least 1/wee k	3/ week	Limit/ avoid
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Date: _____

Food Log

Food	Amount (serving size)	Servings of Vegetables	Servings of Fruits	Tablespoons of Olive oil	Servings of Beans/Legumes	Servings of Nuts/Seeds	Servings of Fish	Servings of Red meat and dairy
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Daily Pain Rating: From 1-10, how intense is your pain? 1 = barely noticeable, 10 = worst ever								
Daily Mood Rating: How would you describe your mood? (e.g., sad, happy, worried) From 1-10, how intense is the mood? 1 = barely noticeable, 10 = extremely intense								



Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

- 1 • Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.
Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**imely
- 2 • Be **specific**. Plan **when** and **where** you'll do the new action.
• **Remember**: Be **consistent**. Choose a time and place that is already a part of your **routine**!
- 3 • Each time you do your existing routine, add the new action so it becomes a new habit.
- 4 • Use the goal sheet below to track your new habits. Write your goals in the first column, and check off each day you complete the action!

My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 5 of the next 7 days, **after dinner**, I will take a 10-minute **walk** around the block.
- For at least 6 of the next 7 days, **in the morning** when I prep my lunch, I will **pack** an apple and a serving of vegetables.

- A. _____.
- B. _____.
- C. _____.
- D. _____.

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, walk for 10 minutes right after dinner.</i>	√		√	√		√	
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

- 1 • Set a SMART goal to make a new habit.
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- C. _____
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My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, walk for 10 minutes right after dinner.</i>	√		√	√		√	
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							



Home Practice – Creating New Healthy Habits

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My SMART goals this week

Examples:

- For at least 5 of the next 7 days, **after dinner**, I will take a 10-minute **walk** around the block.
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- E. _____.
- F. _____.
- G. _____.
- H. _____.

My Goal Sheet

Goals for the Week	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Example: 5 of 7 days, walk for 10 minutes right after dinner.</i>	√		√	√		√	
A.							
B.							
C.							
D.							

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRES TO TRACK YOUR PROGRESS



Appendix B: Questionnaires to Track Your Progress

Use the following questionnaires to track changes in your symptoms, mood, and diet.

Pain Rating

How would you rate your pain, on average, over the last week on a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain ever)?

Mood Rating

How would you rate your mood, on average, over the last week on a scale of 0 (not at all depressed) to 10 (extremely depressed)? _____

Diet Questionnaire

1. How many servings of vegetables do you eat per day? (*1 serving = 1 cup*) _____
2. How many servings of fruit do you eat per day? (*1 serving = 1 medium fruit or ½ cup fresh fruit*) _____
3. How many servings of fish or shellfish do you eat per week? (*1 serving = the size of a checkbook*) _____
4. How many servings of legumes do you consume per week? (*1 serving = 1 cup*) _____
5. How many servings of nuts (including peanuts) do you consume per week? (*1 serving = a small handful*) _____
6. Do you choose to eat chicken, turkey or rabbit meat instead of veal, pork, hamburger or sausage? Yes or No (*Circle one*)
7. How many servings of red meat, hamburger, or meat products (ham, sausage, etc.) do you consume per day? (*1 serving = size of a deck of cards*) _____
8. Do you use olive oil as your main oil for cooking? Yes or No (*Circle one*)
9. How much olive oil do you consume in a given day (including oil used for frying, salads, etc.)? _____
tablespoons
10. How many servings of butter, margarine, or cream do you consume per day? (*1 serving = 1 tsp*) _____
11. How many sweet/carbonated beverages do you drink per day? _____
12. How much wine do you drink per week? _____ glasses
13. How many times per week do you consume commercial sweets or pastries (not homemade), such as cakes, cookies, biscuits, or custard? _____
14. How many times per week do you consume vegetables, pasta, rice, or other dishes seasoned with *sofrito* (sauce made with tomato and onion, leek, or garlic, simmered with olive oil)? _____

APPENDIX C

Recipes and Additional Resources



Appendix C: Recipes

Below are a few recipes consistent with the Mediterranean diet. You may want to consider adding these or similar meals into your regular diet plan! (Recipes were compiled from the Mayo Clinic, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/mediterranean-diet-recipes/art-20046682?pg=1>)

There are also additional recipes at the end of this workbook

Recipes

MAIN DISHES:

Mediterranean-Style Grilled Salmon (serves 4)

Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 4 salmon fillets, each 5 ounces
- Cracked black pepper, to taste
- 4 green olives, chopped
- 4 thin slices lemon

Directions

Prepare a hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill or broiler. Away from the heat source, lightly coat the grill rack or broiler pan with cooking spray. Position the cooking rack 4 to 6 inches from the heat source.

In a small bowl, combine the basil, parsley, minced garlic and lemon juice. Spray the fish with cooking spray. Sprinkle with black pepper. Top each fillet with equal amounts of the herb-garlic mixture. Place the fish herb-side down on the grill. Grill over high heat. When the edges turn white, after about 3 to 4 minutes, turn the fish over and place on aluminum foil. Move the fish to a cooler part of the grill or reduce the heat. Grill until the fish is opaque throughout when tested with the tip of a knife and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the fish reads 145 F (about 4 minutes longer).

Remove the salmon and place on warmed plates. Garnish with green olives and lemon slices.

Tuscan White Bean Stew (serves 6)

Ingredients

For the croutons

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, quartered
- 1 slice whole-grain bread, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 cups dried cannellini or other white beans, picked over and rinsed, soaked overnight, and drained
- 6 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, coarsely chopped
- 3 carrots, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary, plus 6 sprigs
- 1 1/2 cups vegetable stock or broth

Directions

To make the croutons, heat the olive oil over medium heat in a large frying pan. Add the garlic and saute for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and let stand for 10 minutes to infuse the garlic flavor into the oil. Remove the garlic pieces and discard. Return the pan to medium heat. Add the bread cubes and saute, stirring frequently, until lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside.

In a soup pot over high heat, combine the white beans, water, 1/2 teaspoon of the salt and the bay leaf. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover partially and simmer until the beans are tender, 60 to 75 minutes. Drain the beans, reserving 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid. Discard the bay leaf. Place the cooked beans into a large bowl and save the cooking pot for later use. In a small bowl, combine the reserved cooking liquid and 1/2 cup of the cooked beans. Mash with a fork to form a paste. Stir the bean paste into the cooked beans.

Return the cooking pot to the stove top and add the olive oil. Heat over medium-high heat. Stir in the onion and carrots and saute until the carrots are tender-crisp, 6 to 7 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook until softened, about 1 minute. Stir in the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, the pepper, chopped rosemary, bean mixture and stock. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer until the stew is heated through, about 5 minutes. Ladle the stew into warmed bowls and sprinkle with the croutons. Garnish each bowl with a rosemary sprig and serve immediately.

Grouper with Tomato-Olive Sauce (serves 4)

Ingredients

- 4 grouper fillets or steaks, each 5 ounces and about 1-inch thick
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tomatoes, peeled and seeded, then diced
- 5 large pimiento-stuffed green olives, sliced
- 1 tablespoon capers, rinsed
- 1 jalapeno chili, seeded and cut into 1-inch julienne
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

Directions

Sprinkle the grouper steaks on both sides with 1/4 teaspoon of the salt and 1/8 teaspoon of the pepper. In a large, nonstick frying pan, heat 1 1/2 teaspoons of the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the fish to the pan and sear on both sides until lightly browned, about 2 minutes a side. Transfer to a plate and keep warm.

Reduce the heat to medium and add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil to the pan. Add the onion and saute until soft and lightly golden, about 6 minutes. Add the garlic and saute until softened, about 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, olives, capers and jalapeno and simmer for 10 minutes to allow the flavors to blend. Stir in the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon pepper. Return the fish to the pan, cover and simmer until the fish is opaque throughout when tested with the tip of a knife, 6 to 8 minutes.

Transfer the grouper steaks to warmed individual plates. Stir the lime juice into the vegetables and pan juices and spoon some sauce over each steak. Serve immediately.

Polenta with Roasted Mediterranean Vegetables (serves 6)

Ingredients

- 1 small eggplant, peeled, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- 1 small yellow zucchini, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- 1 small green zucchini, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- 6 medium mushrooms, sliced
- 1 sweet red pepper, seeded, cored and cut into chunks
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups coarse polenta (corn grits) – gluten free variety
- 2 teaspoons trans-free margarine
- 1/4 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 10 ounces frozen spinach, thawed
- 2 plum (Roma) tomatoes, sliced
- 6 dry-packed sun-dried tomatoes, soaked in water to rehydrate, drained and chopped
- 10 ripe olives, chopped
- 2 teaspoons oregano

Directions

Heat the broiler (grill). Position the rack 4 inches from the heat source.

Brush the eggplant, zucchini, mushrooms and red pepper with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Arrange in single layer on a baking sheet and broil under low heat. Turn as needed and brush occasionally with 1 tablespoon olive oil. When tender and slightly browned, remove from the broiler (grill). Use immediately or cover and refrigerate for later use.

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Coat a decorative, ovenproof 12-inch flan or quiche baking dish with cooking spray. In a medium saucepan, bring water to a boil. Reduce heat and slowly whisk in polenta. Continue to stir and cook for about 5 minutes. When polenta comes away from side of pan, stir in margarine and season with 1/8 teaspoon of the black pepper. Remove from heat.

Spread polenta into the base and sides of the baking dish. Brush with 1 teaspoon olive oil. Place in the oven and bake for 10 minutes. Remove and keep warm.

Drain spinach and press between paper towels. Top polenta with spinach. Arrange a layer of sliced tomatoes, chopped sun-dried tomatoes and olives. Top with remaining roasted vegetables. Sprinkle with oregano and the remaining 1/8 teaspoon black pepper. Return to the oven for another 10 minutes. When warmed through, remove from the oven. Cut into 6 wedges and serve.

SALADS AND SIDES:

Bean Salad with Balsamic Vinaigrette

Ingredients

For the vinaigrette

- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1/3 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- Ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 can (15 ounces) garbanzos, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium red onion, diced
- 6 lettuce leaves
- 1/2 cup celery, finely chopped

Directions

To make the vinaigrette, in a small bowl, whisk together the balsamic vinegar, parsley, garlic and pepper. While whisking, slowly add the olive oil. Set aside.

In a large bowl, combine the beans and onion. Pour the vinaigrette over the mixture and toss gently to mix well and coat evenly. Cover and refrigerate until served.

To serve, put 1 lettuce leaf on each plate. Divide the salad among the individual plates and garnish with chopped celery. Serve immediately.

Beet Walnut Salad (serves 8)

Ingredients

- 1 small bunch beets, or enough canned beets (no salt added) to make 3 cups, drained
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- 8 cups fresh salad greens
- 1/4 cup chopped apple
- 1/4 cup chopped celery
- Freshly ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons chopped walnuts

Directions

Steam raw beets in water in saucepan until tender. Slip off skins. Rinse to cool. Slice in 1/2-inch rounds.

In a medium bowl, toss with red wine vinegar.

In a large bowl, combine balsamic vinegar, olive oil and water. Add salad greens and toss.

Put greens onto individual salad plates. Top with sliced beets, and chopped apples and celery. Sprinkle with pepper and walnuts. Serve immediately.

Braised Kale with Cherry Tomatoes (serves 6)

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 pound kale, tough stems removed and leaves coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup low-sodium vegetable stock or broth
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions

In a large frying pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and saute until lightly golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the kale and vegetable stock. Cover, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook until the kale is wilted and some of the liquid has evaporated, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the tomatoes and cook uncovered until the kale is tender, 5 to 7 minutes longer. Remove from the heat and stir in the lemon juice, salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

HEALTHIER DESSERT OPTIONS:

Baked Apples with Cherries and Almonds (serves 6)

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup dried cherries, coarsely chopped
- 3 tablespoons chopped almonds
- 1 tablespoon wheat germ
- 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 6 small Golden Delicious apples, about 1 3/4 pounds total weight
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tablespoons dark honey
- 2 teaspoons walnut oil

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 F.

In a small bowl, toss together the cherries, almonds, wheat germ, brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg until all the ingredients are evenly distributed. Set aside.

The apples can be left unpeeled, if you like. To peel the apples in a decorative fashion, with a vegetable peeler or a sharp knife, remove the peel from each apple in a circular motion, skipping every other row so that rows of peel alternate with rows of apple flesh. Working from the stem end, core each apple, stopping 3/4 inch from the bottom.

Divide the cherry mixture evenly among the apples, pressing the mixture gently into each cavity.

Arrange the apples upright in a heavy ovenproof frying pan or small baking dish just large enough to hold them. Pour the apple juice and water into the pan. Drizzle the honey and oil evenly over the apples, and cover the pan snugly with aluminum foil. Bake until the apples are tender when pierced with a knife, 50 to 60 minutes.

Transfer the apples to individual plates and drizzle with the pan juices. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Berries Marinated in Balsamic Vinegar (serves 2)

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/2 cup blueberries
- 1/2 cup raspberries
- 2 shortbread biscuits

Directions

In a small bowl, whisk together the balsamic vinegar, brown sugar and vanilla.

In another bowl, add the strawberries, blueberries and raspberries. Pour the balsamic vinegar mixture over the berries. Let the fruit marinate for 10 to 15 minutes. Drain the marinade.

Refrigerate or serve immediately. To serve, divide the berries into 2 serving dishes. Place the shortbread biscuit on the side of the bowl.

Poached Pears (serves 4)

Ingredients

- 1 cup orange juice
- 1/4 cup apple juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 4 whole pears
- 1/2 cup fresh raspberries
- 2 tablespoons orange zest

Directions

In a small bowl, combine the juices, cinnamon and nutmeg. Stir to mix evenly.

Peel the pears and leave the stems. Remove the core from the bottom of the pear. Place in a shallow pan. Add the juice mixture to the pan and set over medium heat. Simmer for about 30 minutes, turning pears frequently. Don't boil.

Transfer the pears to individual serving plates. Garnish with raspberries and orange zest and serve immediately.

Additional RECIPE Resources:

Recipes and Cookbooks prepared by VA dieticians for Veterans (Cooking with Ease, Yummy Benefits Cookbook and Low Sodium Cookbook)

- <https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Recipes.asp>

Healthy Teaching Kitchen YouTube Channel

- https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3AQ_JVoBEyWA0DxUr5WalEVr6iGcnjYf

Phoenix VA Health Care System: recipes that can be searched by main ingredient or by health topic

- <https://www.phoenix.va.gov/news/recipes/health.asp>

Healthy Recipes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/recipes.html

Healthy Cooking and Snacking

- <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/healthy-cooking.htm>

Healthy Recipes from the Mayo Clinic: including special diets (meatless, Diabetes meal plan, DASH diet, healthy- fiber)

- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/recipes>

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