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Live. Life. Well.

In this issue:

Understanding
Neurodivergence

Identifying Depression

Supporting Others
Through Stressful
Moments

Quit Tobacco

Recipe:
Easy Vegetarian Chili





Understanding Neurodivergence

Neurodivergence is not a medical condition, but rather a term used to describe a range of neurological differences that affect thinking, attention, sensory perception, emotional regulation, and communication.

It is estimated that roughly 15–20% of the U.S. population could be classified as neurodivergent. While it may seem like the prevalence of neurodivergence has increased in recent years, it is more likely that methods of identification have improved.

Neurodivergence is a broad umbrella term that shares some characteristics with other neurological conditions, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, Tourette syndrome, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Many people with neurodivergence describe it as a heightened sense of awareness, an ability to see patterns that others miss, or seeing the world in a unique way that is often misunderstood.

Neurodivergence also shows up differently in children compared to adults. In children, common signs and symptoms include:

- Emotional outbursts
- Difficulty making friends
- Challenges with completing schoolwork

Signs and symptoms of neurodivergence in adults can include:

- Difficulty with organization, time management, or completing tasks
- Sensitivity to light, noise and/or touch
- Difficulty interpreting social situations and expressing emotions
- A strong need for routines
- Intense focus on specific interests or subjects
- Frequent mental fatigue or burnout
- Career instability

- Anxiety
- Difficulty maintaining healthy relationships

Specialists like psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, or neuropsychologists can help confirm a diagnosis of conditions related to neurodivergence. They can also provide guidance around the following treatments:

- **Therapy or counseling:** Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), occupational therapy, or behavioral counseling can be effective therapies for some individuals.
- **Lifestyle changes:** High-quality sleep, physical activity, and stress reduction can help minimize symptoms.
- **Medications:** Stimulants, antidepressants, or antianxiety medications may be prescribed when symptoms interfere with daily activities.
- **Support networks:** Online forums, support groups, and local organizations can help normalize the experience of living with neurodivergence.

If you notice signs of neurodivergence in yourself or others, it may be helpful to connect with a healthcare provider who has experience working with neurodivergent individuals, especially if symptoms are interfering with everyday life.





Identifying Depression

Depression affects more than 21 million adults in the U.S., making it one of the most common mental health conditions. However, depression is sometimes difficult to identify, and it is more complicated than just feeling sad or tired. It is a serious medical condition that affects how you think, feel, sleep, and function. While it may feel overwhelming, depression can be highly treatable with the right support and care.

Depression looks different for everyone, but symptoms commonly include:

- Persistent sadness or feeling empty
- Loss of interest in activities that usually bring joy
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia or oversleeping)
- Low energy and fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, or hopelessness
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Mood changes and irritability
- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Managing depression often starts by having a candid conversation with your healthcare provider. For example, you might say “I have been feeling down for several weeks,” or “I am having trouble coping,” or “I think I may be depressed.” Your doctor may ask more questions, order lab work to rule out physical causes, or refer you to a mental health provider. Treatment options vary but usually include therapy, medications, lifestyle changes, or a combination of these. To screen yourself for depression, you can complete the [PHQ-9 \(Patient Health Questionnaire-9\)](#). The text in the image reads: Benefit eligible District employees can also access the Behavioral Health Network provided through Aetna by calling 1-800-424-4047.

This simple tool is widely used in healthcare settings and can help identify depression. The questions ask how often you experience symptoms like lack of interest, a negative mood, and trouble concentrating. Your score will provide helpful insights for your healthcare provider.

Here are some helpful ways to proactively support your mental health:

- Physical movement, such as walking or yoga
- Connecting with others, even when you do not feel up to it
- Eating balanced meals and staying hydrated
- Creating healthy routines to support sleep and healthy coping

These national mental health resources are available 24/7:

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988
- **SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) National Helpline:** 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- **NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness):** www.nami.org

If you recognize symptoms of depression in yourself or someone you love, reach out to someone you trust to ask for help, or connect with a national helpline. Depression is common, real, and treatable. Knowing how to recognize symptoms and where to access resources can save lives.



Supporting Others Through Stressful Moments

Stress is a natural part of life, but when it becomes constant or overwhelming, it can have serious health effects. Chronic stress triggers the body's fight-or-flight system, which affects almost every system in your body. It impacts sleep, immune function, hormone regulation, digestion, memory, and emotional wellbeing. If you notice that someone close to you is experiencing high levels of stress, your support could make all the difference in how they cope and recover.

Supporting someone through stressful moments can feel awkward, especially if they have difficulty asking for help or expressing what they need. While listening and offering kind words may be helpful for some, here are some lesser-known ways you can provide support:

- **Offer to manage a task:** Stress can make it hard to focus, so offering to lend a hand with simple tasks like doing a load of laundry, picking up groceries, or a work related task may ease someone's load. Some people struggle with asking for help, so it is better to offer to help with a specific task rather than simply asking, "Can I help with anything?"
- **Get creative:** Invite them to participate in a low-stress activity like painting or working a puzzle to help relieve stress and anxiety.
- **Turn down the volume:** Silence can be soothing. Spend time with them in environments without screens or loud activities, like walking on a nature path.
- **Make a calming playlist:** When traveling together, choose music that is calming and relaxing.
- **Respect their space:** Sometimes support means allowing space to decompress. Let them know you are available without pressuring them to hang out or talk.

- **Avoid advice-giving:** Offer empathy, not solutions. Say things like, "That sounds really hard," instead of, "You should try..." unless they specifically ask you for advice.
- **Plan a low-stress event in the future:** Give them something to look forward to, like a movie night or coffee talk.

Unaddressed stress does not simply fade away. It builds up over time and can contribute to a wide range of health conditions like:

- Heart disease
- Immune dysfunction
- Digestive disorders
- Sleep disorders
- Depression, anxiety, and burnout
- Unintended weight changes

If someone you care about seems unusually overwhelmed, irritable, withdrawn, or physically unwell, encourage them to talk with a trusted professional or contact the Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to **741741**). Stress is manageable with the right tools and resources, especially with early intervention. Your support and willingness to listen can be a lifeline to someone who is experiencing stress.

Quit tobacco with **Group Quit.**

There's never been a more important time to quit.



Virtual Group Sessions



877-819-2357

Pre-registration is required!
You will be e-mailed a link to join by Zoom conference.
Starting dates are listed below:

4 WEEK COURSES

A support group that meets once a week for 4 weeks to cover a variety of topics, including:

- **Reasons and Benefits of Quitting.**
- **Your Quit Plan.**
- Becoming Tobacco/Nicotine Free.
- **Preventing Relapse.**

Benefits:

- FREE group session led by a trained specialist.
- FREE nicotine replacement patches, gum or lozenges.*

**If medically appropriate and 18 years of age or older.*

- **In-person and virtual group offerings.**
- Covers all forms of nicotine.
- More than **DOUBLES** your chances of success.

Group Schedule:

Virtual QSN Groups

Sat May 2nd 10:00 AM

Mon May 4th 1:00 PM

Tue May 5th 3:00 & 5:30 PM

Thur May 7th 3:00 & 5:30 PM

Tue May 12th 11:00 AM & 7:00 PM

Wed May 13th 10:00 AM & 5:30 PM

Sat May 16th 11:30 AM

Mon May 18th 12:00 PM & 5:30 PM

Wed May 20th 12:00 PM

Thu May 21st 10:00 AM & 6:00 PM

Tue May 26th 10:00 AM & 5:30 PM

Wed May 27th 5:30 PM

Thur May 28th 10:00 AM

Sat May 30th 10:00 AM

New classes added regularly - please
copy and paste the link below.

<https://www.calendarwiz.com/calendars/calendar.php?crd=ahectobacco&>



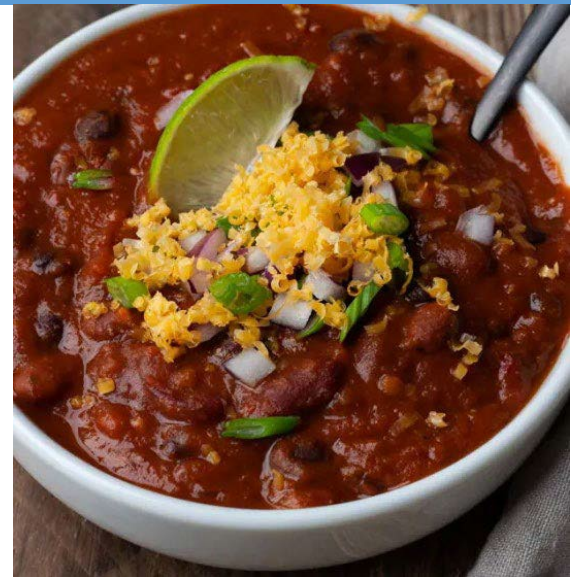
EASY VEGETARIAN CHILI

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 large onion (diced)
- 4 cloves garlic (finely minced)
- 1-3 tablespoons chili powder (more will be spicier)
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- ¼ – 2 teaspoons chili flakes (the more chili flakes the spicier it will be)
- 2 medium bell peppers (diced)
- 2 medium carrots (diced)
- 3 medium celery stalks (diced)
- 2 28-ounce cans of whole tomatoes and their juice (use your hands to roughly crush the tomatoes)
- 2 15-ounce cans of kidney or white beans (drained and rinsed)
- 2 cups frozen corn (you could use fresh but frozen is easy and works great)
- Sea salt (to taste - about 2 teaspoons)
- Optional toppings: sour cream, cheddar cheese, cilantro, diced avocados, or green onion

Instructions

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté for about 3 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for 1 minute more. Add the chili powder, cumin, oregano, and chili flakes and stir.
2. Add the peppers, carrots, and celery and cook for about 5 minutes, or until they just start to soften. Add the tomatoes and their juice and bring to a simmer. Once the chili begins to simmer, reduce the heat to medium-low. You want the chili to be at a low simmer with the lid off.
3. Continue to cook the chili, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes. Add beans and corn and let the chili return to a simmer. Cook for 5 more minutes or until the corn and beans have heated through. Season generously with sea salt.
4. Serve on its own or topped with one (or all!) of the delicious toppings. Enjoy!

Nutrition Facts
(serving 6)

Calories: 333

Carbohydrates: 59g

Protein: 13g

Fat: 8g

Fiber: 14g



The Wellness Newsletter is prepared for you by Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc., Navigate Wellbeing Solutions, and Broward County Public Schools' Benefits Department. The contributions included in this newsletter do not specifically reflect your employer's opinions. Please consult your healthcare provider before making any changes in diet, exercise or recommendations made by this publication.