

OCTOBER 2021

Live. Life. Well.

In this issue:

Beyond Positive Thinking: How to Manage Your Mindset

Mental Health Preparedness

6 Reasons to Connect with a Therapist

Mental Health Benefits of Decluttering

Nutritional Psychiatry: Your Brain on Food

Recipe



MENTAL HEALTH



Beyond Positive Thinking: How to Manage Your Mindset

Positive thinking has been endorsed by personal growth gurus for decades, but how exactly does your mindset play a role in your physical wellbeing?

According to Martin Seligman, the director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the father of the positive psychology movement, positive psychology is “the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive.” In other words, positive thinking involves a focus on what is good, or what is going well.

From a wellbeing standpoint, there are many benefits that come with positivity. Researchers¹ have found that positive thinking is protective against cardiovascular disease. For example, the more optimistic you are, the less likely you are to have a heart attack. It has also been linked² to reduced rates of depression and improved immune function.

To manage your mindset, remember these two simple tips: Observe and choose again.

Observe

Pay attention to how you respond to the things that happen around you. In his book, *A Complaint Free World: How to Stop Complaining and Start Enjoying the Life You Always Wanted*, author Will Bowen suggests using visual cues to acknowledge your thoughts. For example, move a bracelet from one wrist to the other whenever you notice yourself complaining. You can also create a journaling practice or use a habit tracker to identify patterns in your thinking.

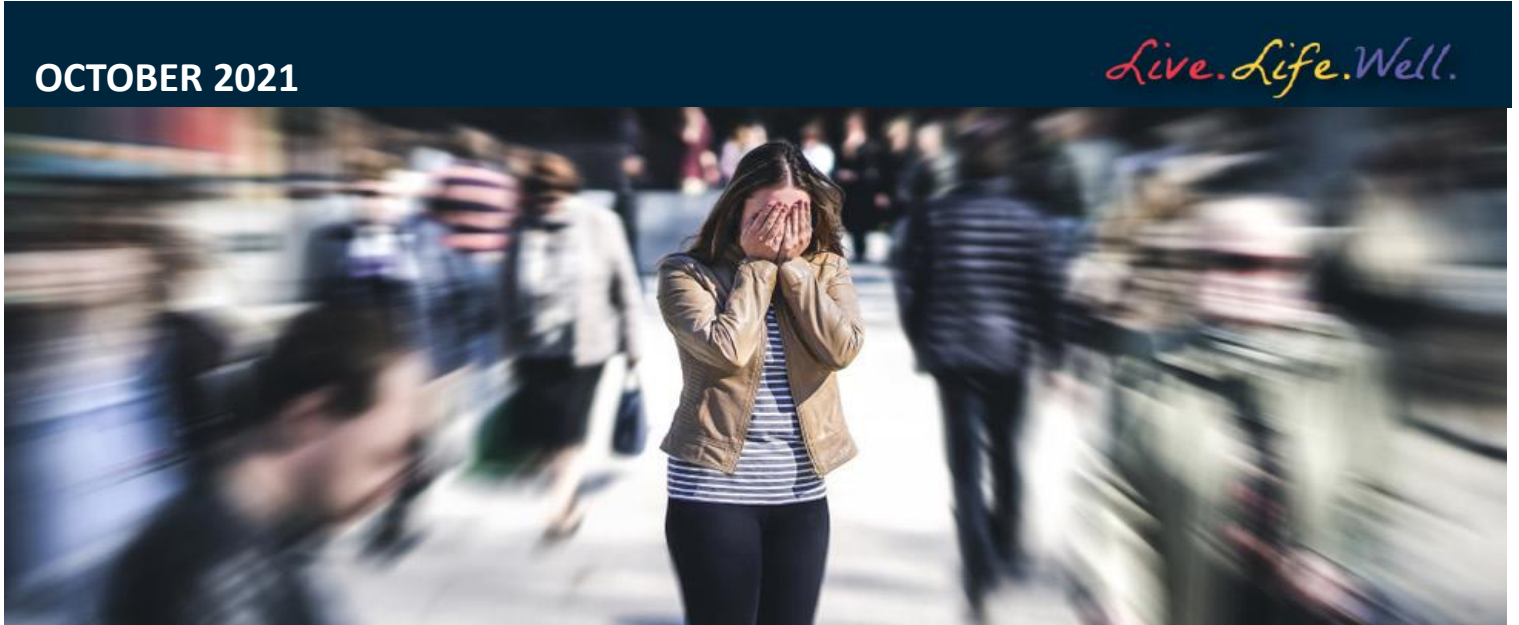
Choose again

Whenever you do happen to catch yourself in a negative thinking pattern, think of it as an opportunity to choose differently. Thoughts and words are powerful. In the moment, reframe your thoughts, or rephrase your words, to make the correction.

Managing a healthy mindset³ is not only about positive thinking. It goes much deeper than that. Since your thoughts ultimately drive your actions, do your best to focus on the positive results you want. That is where your energy will go.



- <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/can-positive-thinking-be-negative/>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22506752/>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950>



Mental Health Preparedness

Mental health has received a lot of attention in recent years, but most of the focus has been on addressing complex issues that result from poorly managed stress. Learning how to manage stress properly can help strengthen your mental wellbeing and better prepare you for life's challenging moments.

A more proactive approach to managing mental health is to have a plan in place before you need it. This can dramatically reduce the physical and emotional strain you experience, making it more likely that you can access help earlier and manage tough times more easily.

Here are some ways to better prepare yourself for life's heavy moments:

Create an emergency self-care plan

Create a plan that includes practical self-care strategies to help you cope with stress. Meditation, journaling, and physical activity can be especially useful at managing intense energy. When challenging situations arise, it is helpful to have a go-to list of strategies you can turn to.

Find a therapist

Establish a relationship with a therapist now, so you can connect more easily with them when you need help unraveling a problem. Contact your Employee Assistance Program or your insurance plan for a list of providers in your area. Employee Assistance can be reached at 754-322-9900.

Build a strong support network

Nurture your friendships by reaching out regularly and staying connected. Having a strong support network to lean on in times of need will make you more resilient.



Much like preparing for a natural disaster, mental health preparedness is a proactive approach that can safeguard your wellbeing. Create a plan that you can easily execute when you face challenging or life-changing circumstances.



6 Reasons to Connect with a Therapist

Therapists are mental health specialists who are trained to guide people through mental and emotional challenges. Here are a few reasons⁴ you might consider connecting with a therapist:

Intense emotions

Do you struggle with managing intense emotions? Unmanaged stress can take a toll on your wellbeing. Finding healthy outlets for intense emotions is key, and a therapist can guide you through some practical options.

Sleeplessness

Are you struggling to get a good night's sleep? If you are getting less than seven hours of sleep each night, it could be damaging your health. Sleep deprivation leaves you less equipped to solve problems and make good decisions.

Grief: Have you experienced a recent loss?

If you have suffered the loss of a loved one, a pet, or a job, it can trigger some intense emotions. A therapist can help you process, express, and manage the intense emotions that surface throughout the grieving process.

Appetite changes

Have you noticed a change in your appetite? Stress can often lead to an increase or decrease in appetite. Without proper nutrition, your body will be less capable of managing stress.

Strained relationships

Are you having difficulty with a friendship or partnership? Relationships are tricky, and therapists are trained to help you find ways to manage challenges in your personal and professional relationships.

Burn-out

Are you feeling overwhelmed by stress in the workplace? According to the World Health Organization, burn-out is defined as "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." If you are struggling with work-related stress or other issues, please contact the Employee Assistance Program at 754-322-9900.



If you think you may be depressed or are struggling to navigate a difficult situation, it may be helpful to sort through it with a mental health expert. For a referral to a therapist within your network, contact your Employee Assistance Program or insurance plan.

Nutritional Psychiatry: Your brain on food

Think about it. Your brain is always “on.” It takes care of your thoughts and movements, your breathing and heartbeat, your senses — it works hard 24/7, even while you’re asleep. This means your brain requires a constant supply of fuel. That “fuel” comes from the foods you eat — and what’s in that fuel makes all the difference. Put simply, what you eat directly affects the structure and function of your brain and, ultimately, your mood.

Like an expensive car, your brain functions best when it gets only premium fuel. Eating high-quality foods that contain lots of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants nourishes the brain and protects it from oxidative stress — the “waste” (free radicals) produced when the body uses oxygen, which can damage cells.

Unfortunately, just like a high performance vehicle, your brain can be damaged if you ingest anything other than upgraded fuel. If substances from “low-premium” fuel (such as what you get from processed or refined foods) get to the brain, it has little ability to get rid of them. Diets high in refined sugars, for example, are harmful to the brain. In addition to worsening your body’s regulation of insulin, they also promote inflammation and oxidative stress. Multiple studies have found a correlation between a diet high in refined sugars and impaired brain function — and even a worsening of symptoms of mood disorders, such as [depression](#).

It makes sense. If your brain is deprived of good-quality nutrition, or if free radicals or damaging inflammatory cells are circulating within the brain’s enclosed space, further contributing to brain tissue injury, consequences are to be expected. What’s interesting is that for many years, the medical field did not fully acknowledge the connection between mood and food. Today, fortunately, the burgeoning field of nutritional psychiatry is finding there are many consequences and correlations between not only what you eat, how you feel, and how you ultimately behave, but also the kinds of bacteria that lives in your gut.

How the foods you eat affect how you feel

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that helps regulate sleep and appetite, mediate moods, and inhibit pain. Since about 95% of your serotonin is produced in your gastrointestinal tract, and your gastrointestinal tract is lined with a hundred million nerve cells, or neurons, it makes sense that the inner workings of your digestive system doesn’t just help you digest food, but also guides your emotions. What’s more, the function of these neurons — and the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin — is highly influenced by the billions of “good” bacteria that make up your intestinal microbiome. These bacteria play an essential role in your health. They protect the lining of your intestines and ensure they provide a strong barrier against toxins and “bad” bacteria; they limit [inflammation](#); they improve how well you absorb nutrients from your food; and they activate neural pathways that travel directly between the gut and the brain.

Studies have compared “traditional” diets, like the [Mediterranean diet](#) and the traditional Japanese diet, to a typical “Western” diet and have shown that the risk of depression is 25% to 35% lower in those who eat a traditional diet. Scientists account for this difference because these traditional diets tend to be high in vegetables, fruits, unprocessed grains, fish and seafood, and contain only modest amounts of lean meats and dairy. They are also void of processed, refined foods and sugars, which are staples of the “Western” dietary pattern. In addition, many of these unprocessed foods are fermented, and therefore act as natural probiotics.

This may sound implausible to you, but the notion that good bacteria not only influences what your gut digests and absorbs, but that they also affect the degree of inflammation throughout your body, as well as your mood and energy level. This theory is gaining traction among researchers.





Established 1915

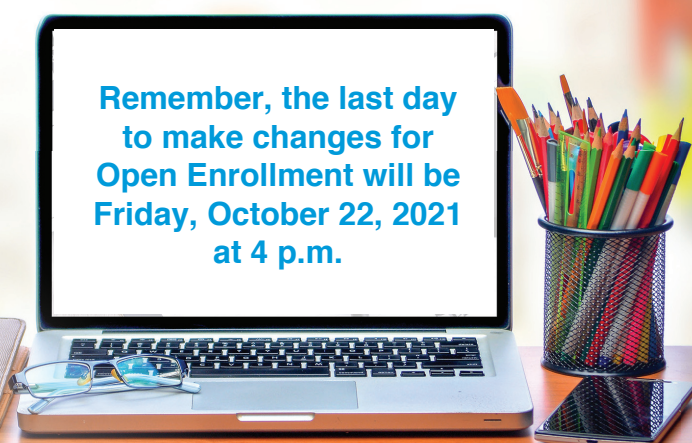
BROWARD
County Public Schools



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR 2022 OPEN ENROLLMENT

Open Enrollment for 2022 will begin Friday, October 1, 2021
and will end on Friday, October 22, 2021.

- The benefits that you select during the Open Enrollment period in October, will take effect on January 1, 2022.
- If you would like to add new unverified dependents (spouse, children, or domestic partner) to your Medical, Dental and/or Vision Plan(s), you will be required to complete the Dependent Verification Process prior to or by Friday, October 22, 2021, with the Benefits Department, by presenting the required dependent verification document(s) to a Benefits Department Staff Member or emailing the official documents to benefits@browardschools.com. Some of the required documents include, but are not limited to Marriage Certificate (for spouse), Birth Certificate, Adoption, or Legal Guardianship Records (for children). Documents written in languages other than English **MUST** be translated into English by a certified Translation Company. For further information regarding the Dependent Verification Process, please log-on to the Benefits Department's website at browardschools.com/benefits, click on the Open Enrollment link, then select the Dependent Verification FAQ Document.
- Premium deductions, if applicable, will begin with your December 2021 paycheck(s) for 2022 coverage. The per paycheck deduction will be noted on your Benefits Confirmation Form, which you can print by accessing Cloud Benefits. Please refer to the 2022 Open Enrollment User Guide for information. It is located on the Benefits Department's website at browardschools.com/benefits, by selecting the Open Enrollment link. In addition, your per paycheck deduction is based on the number of deduction checks you earn per year, in accordance with your assigned payroll calendar.
- To assist you, there are many useful resources, phone numbers and links on the Benefits Department's website at browardschools.com/benefits. The Benefits Department, in addition to the District's benefits carriers, will be available for questions through the Virtual Open Enrollment Meetings online through the month of October. A listing of the scheduled online meetings can be found on the Benefits Department's website by clicking on the 2022 Open Enrollment link. Should you have any questions, you may call the Open Enrollment Hotline at 754-321-3230, or email us at benefits@browardschools.com.
- Open Enrollment **MUST** be completed online through Cloud Benefits. A Benefits Confirmation Form should be printed and kept as proof of enrollment and coverage for you and your dependent(s), if applicable. Please note that Cloud Benefits is NOT AVAILABLE on Saturdays from Noon until Sunday at 1 p.m. and on Mondays, if your paycheck is being processed for that particular week. For Technical Support Assistance, please contact the ETS Help Desk at 754-321-0411, Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- As a reminder, please keep in mind that while Open Enrollment takes place on Friday, October 1 through Friday, October 22, 2021, the benefits you select will go into effect on January 1, 2022.



Remember, the last day
to make changes for
Open Enrollment will be
Friday, October 22, 2021
at 4 p.m.

 The School Board of Broward County, Florida Dr. Rosalind Osgood, Chair • Laurie Rich Levinson, Vice Chair • Lori Alhadeff • Patricia Good • Debra Hixon • Donna P. Korn • Sarah Leonardi • Ann Murray • Nora Rupert • Dr. Vickie L. Cartwright, Interim Superintendent of Schools

The School Board of Broward County, Florida, prohibits any policy or procedure which results in discrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation. The School Board also provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Individuals who wish to file a discrimination and/or harassment complaint may call the Director, Equal Educational Opportunities/ADA Compliance Department & District's Equity Coordinator/Title IX Coordinator at 754-321-2150 or Teletype Machine (TTY) 754-321-2158. Individuals with disabilities requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, (ADAAA) may call Equal Educational Opportunities/ADA Compliance Department at 754-321-2150 or Teletype Machine (TTY) 754-321-2158. browardschools.com

Chicken Enchiladas

Total Time: 10 Minutes
Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS

Enchilada Sauce:

- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1-2 tbsp chipotle chilis in adobo sauce
- 1-1/2 cups tomato sauce
- 1/2 tsp chipotle chili powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 3/4 cup reduced sodium chicken broth
kosher salt and fresh pepper to taste

Chicken Preparation:

- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 9 oz cooked shredded chicken breast, from 2 small breasts
- 1 cup diced onion
- 2 large clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup cilantro
- kosher salt
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp chipotle chili powder
- 1/3 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce

INSTRUCTIONS



RECIPE

NUTRITION INFO

(per serving)

Calories kcal	168
Carbs g	17.5
Fat g	6.5
Protein g	17.5
Sodium mg	441
Sugar g	3

Source: [The BEST Chicken Enchiladas Recipe - \(skinnytaste.com\)](https://www.skinnytaste.com)

1. In a medium saucepan, spray oil and sauté garlic.
2. Add chipotle chiles, chili powder, cumin, chicken broth, tomato sauce, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil.
3. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5-10 minutes. Set aside until ready to use.
4. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
5. Heat the vegetable oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat.
6. Sauté onions and garlic on low until soft, about 2 minutes.
7. Add chicken, salt, cilantro, cumin, oregano, chili powder, tomato sauce, chicken broth, and cook 4 to 5 minutes.
8. Remove from heat.
9. Spray a 13 by 9-inch glass baking dish with non-stick spray.
10. Put 1/3 cup chicken mixture into each tortilla and roll it.
11. Place on baking dish seam side down, top with sauce. Then top with cheese.
12. Cover with aluminum foil and bake in the oven on the middle rack for 20-25 minutes.
13. Top with low fat sour cream or scallions if you wish.
14. Makes 8 enchiladas



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.