



THE HEALTHIER LIVING WORKSHOP Chronic Disease Self-Management Program

In November 2004, Vermont began offering the Healthier Living Workshop (HLW), a program designed to assist people with chronic disease develop the skills needed to effectively manage their own health.

The HLW is the outcome of a 5-year research project at Stanford University involving over 1000 participants living with chronic conditions. This study found that people who took the workshop when compared to those who didn't improved their healthful behaviors (exercise, cognitive symptom management, coping and communication with physicians), improved their health status and decreased their days in the hospital.

The HLW empowers individuals as self-managers through education, support and skill-building exercises, notably, goal-setting and problem-solving skills. People living with diverse chronic conditions such as asthma, heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, experience many of the same symptoms – fatigue, anger, frustration, depression and isolation –are able to come together in a group to address their common experiences.

The workshops are co-facilitated by leaders with chronic conditions who have been trained in a 4-day program by Stanford-certified master trainers. Groups meet once a week, 2.5 hours per session for 6 weeks.

Some of the topics covered are:

- Techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation
- Breathing techniques and guided imagery to reduce stress
- Exercise for improving and maintaining strength, flexibility, and endurance
- Taking medications and lessening their side effects
- Communicating with family, friends, and health professionals
- Healthy eating
- Evaluating health treatments