



## Mental Strength

By Lindsey Laverty

While the word 'strength' is typically used to suggest physical strength, mental strength is also a characteristic that can be developed through habits, exercises, and a healthy mindset. While physical strength is about shaping the body, mental strength is about shaping the mind. The goal of mental strength is to balance emotions and thoughts with healthy reasoning that leads to positive action. It requires awareness of one's emotions and self-control, as well as a

strong will to keep moving forward. In short, **mental strength is learning how to manage one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to better navigate life.**

Building

mental strength takes time and effort. Just as with physical strength, mental strength requires consistent



practices that lead to better performances. Think of these as mental push-ups that build mental strength. For example, **practicing mindfulness**, or taking the time to be still, present, and self-aware, can help us understand what emotions we are feeling. We can then take these emotions and decide how to act on them. Another **practice is planning ahead**; if we know there is upcoming news or changes happening in our lives, we can prepare how to best react and manage our stress. When you regularly repeat these practices, they become habits. Habits are a sign that you are becoming more mentally strong.

While habits are important to mental strength, so is the mindset. People who are mentally strong have a

positive attitude, viewing life as a glass half full. Such persons see life's possibilities and they believe in themselves. These persons are also resilient, bouncing back from disappointments and setting new goals or action steps for themselves. The combination of both a strong, **positive mindset** and practicing habits that help to manage your emotions and behaviors makes you a mentally strong person.

Being mentally strong helps to improve your mental and emotional well-being. While it does not guarantee that you will never experience difficult emotions, thoughts, or experiences, it *does* mean that you feel less fearful and lost, as you remember habits that will help you stay calm and in control and ultimately engage in a positive mindset. There are many more ways to increase one's mental strength, and there is always room for improvement. Remember that you can always reach out for help from friends, family, and professionals, if you need support and encouragement! ■

*Being mentally strong helps to improve your mental and emotional well-being.*

# MENTAL STRENGTH & MENTAL HEALTH

By Lindsey Laverty



There is an important distinction that has to be made about mental strength. **Mental strength is *not* the absence of mental health issues or mental illness.** Rather, mental strength is a choice to develop your “mental muscles” by training your thoughts, managing your emotions, and choosing productive actions. People with mental health problems or mental illnesses are just as capable of developing mental strength, perhaps even more prepared and skilled than persons without mental health concerns.

Many individuals with mental illness or mental health concerns often are already working on improving thoughts, emotions, and behaviors through the help of their doctors and therapists. It is these individuals, who are accustomed to taking responsibility of managing their mental health, that have already begun to develop mental strength. These

*We celebrate all of you and your hard work as you improve your mental health and wellbeing through mental strength.*

individuals know how important it is to take one’s mental health seriously, and they see the direct benefits of focusing on improving one’s mentality. For example, a better mentality can lead to strengthening of relationships,

reaching personal goals, or asking for support in order to be healthier.

In addition, persons with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities know what it is to be resilient as they deal with the difficulty of having “invisible” disabilities that can significantly interfere with their ability to perform life activities like learning, working, and communicating. These persons commit to accomplishing life tasks and goals while facing obstacles; whether those obstacles are due to their disability or to accessibility.

**At Transitional Services, we understand that some of the most mentally strong people are those we serve.** Our persons served get up every day and engage with their mental health, choose to reach out for support, make positive decisions for themselves even when it is hard, and set goals to gain new skills, increase independence, and live life to the fullest. We celebrate all of you and your hard work as you improve your mental health and wellbeing through mental strength. We encourage you to keep pursuing mental strength and we commit to coming alongside you to give you our support and help. We too want to work on our own mental strength and we look to you for inspiration and have written this newsletter for further guidance and instruction for everyone. Be sure to **check out pages six and seven that features two of our persons served and their stories of mental strength!** ■

# Where Are Your Thoughts



## LEADING YOU

by Keisha Becoate

**T**here is an expression that says where the mind goes the body follows. This is a powerful statement because it determines the course for your life. Monday mornings are filled with people who woke up on the wrong side of the bed, wishing for Friday. If you wake up dreading the day, you have already conditioned your mind to believe you are going to have a bad day and because you expect it, you live it out. However, the only difference between Monday and Friday is mindset.

Mindfulness shapes mindset. According to *Psychology Today*, mindfulness is a state of active, open attention to the present. This state encompasses observing one's thought and feelings without judging them as good or bad.<sup>1</sup> Mindfulness helps us to pay attention to the present moment, listen to our thoughts, and begin to explore how our thoughts and feelings impact us.

Often the thoughts we think are a result of the unknown or past experiences. While we are not able to change the past, we can focus on the present and condition our thoughts to become the person we are meant to be. Just as we have allowed our thoughts to create moments of anxiety and restless nights,

we are able to train our thoughts to think on things that are good and true. This takes practice, effort and dedication. We must be patient with ourselves as change will not happen overnight. Below are some tips to help you begin to practice mindfulness. ■

<sup>1</sup> [www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/mindfulness](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/mindfulness)

### HOW TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

**1. Take a seat.** Find a quiet place to sit to calm your thoughts. Find an area that will not distract you. Take a journal or notebook to capture any thoughts that you want to change or include in your daily thoughts or reflections.

**2. Set a time limit.** If you are just beginning, set a time limit of 5-10 minutes. You do not want to overwhelm yourself with too many thoughts. Pick a topic to focus on during your quiet time. Reflect on ways you want to improve.

**3. Notice your body.** Make sure you are in a comfortable position. Notice how your body is responding to your thoughts.

**4. Feel your breath.** Follow the movement of your breath as you breathe in and breathe out. Develop a natural rhythm of breaths.

**5. Notice when your mind has wandered.** When you notice your thoughts are not focused on the topic you have chosen, take deeper breaths to refocus or calm your thoughts.

**6. Be kind to yourself.** Don't be hard on yourself for the thoughts you think, or if you are not able to concentrate. It takes time and practice to renew your thoughts. Just don't quit.

# Annual Holiday Luncheon

ON DECEMBER 12 2019, THE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS COMMITTEE HOSTED THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY LUNCHEON, encouraging all who attend to dress up in festive clothes and come prepared to eat and dance. The event was held at the Monroeville Double Tree and featured holiday music from TJ the DJ. Staff had the pleasure of serving the food to persons served, a meal of ham, turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, mac and cheese, salad, chocolate cake and pumpkin pie. Prizes were an added treat, as names were picked from a hat to declare the winners of gift cards and baskets, and even a giant teddy bear! Staff and persons served danced the afternoon away, celebrating the holiday season and the importance of being together. ■





# STORIES OF



“I didn’t have the support growing up, and that’s when a lot of your habits are set.”

~ CARSTEN

## *The Value of Receiving & Giving Support*

Carsten understands the importance of a support system when facing challenges, particularly at a young age. “I didn’t have the support growing up,” Carsten stated, “and that’s when a lot of your habits are set.” A graduate of Transitional Services Inc.’s Transition Age Youth (TAY) program, he notes how he developed skills that prepared him for adulthood, from budgeting to time management to utilizing public transportation.

Knowing what it is to not have support, he hopes to help others through his work at Concord Elementary School’s afterschool program. Here, Carsten’s love for kids and gift of creativity

comes out, as he assists kids from grades kindergarten to fifth grade with homework and organizes fun games during free time. “Besides seeing my girlfriend, this job is what I most look forward to in the day,” Carsten said.

Today, Carsten continues his mental health recovery with Transitional Services in a more independent setting. **“It helps having someone to talk to when I feel frustrated or overwhelmed,”** Carsten shared. ■

*by  
Lindsey Laverty*

# MENTAL STRENGTH

“I don’t want to rely on others so much. I want to be able to live like everyone else my age.”

~ CHANTEL



## *A Lesson in Goal-Setting & Resilience*

Chantel, who has mild intellectual disability, first moved in with Transitional Services Inc. (TSI) in 2013. “I did not like it at first but decided to give it a shot,” Chantel admitted, “Now, I am excited and am glad I stayed!”

Interested in being more independent, Chantel has learned to cook, do laundry, keep a clean apartment, and maintain employment at Wendy’s. She also does her own shopping and banking. Recently, she applied and was accepted into the Culinary Program at the Community College of Allegheny County. **“I wanted to do something hands on and learn more things to cook,”** Chantel explained, “I was interested in being a nutritionist or a pastry chef.” Chantel completed the

courses and graduated from the program on May 16, 2019.

Following this amazing accomplishment, Chantel had a setback a few months later when she was hit by a car. She took time off to recover from her injuries, however, she did not let this event stop her from her love of learning as she soon after registered to participate in the Computer Literacy Series at the Carnegie Library. With no remaining problems from the accident, she now has focused her attention on her long-term goal of living on her own in her own apartment. “I don’t want to rely on others so much, I want to be able to live like everyone else my age,” Chantel shared. TSI staff are working with her on budgeting and money management in order to reach her goal. ■

# Annual Recognition Dinner

ON DECEMBER 6, 2019, STAFF, BOARD MEMBERS, AND GUESTS GATHERED AT THE WESTWOOD GOLF COURSE TO RECOGNIZE STAFF FOR THEIR HARD WORK AND YEARS OF SERVICE. Transitional Services knows that the mission and vision of our agency is only made possible through the dedication of our staff, and we are so privileged to celebrate the many years of service of the persons named on these two pages. Thank you to everyone who attended for your continual support for the mission and vision of TSI! ■



## YEARS OF SERVICE

20 YEARS

Tracy Clark

15 YEARS

Moses Luemba

10 YEARS

Joyce Craddock,

Andre Glover, Dennis Herndon

5 YEARS

Ronald Abels, Frank Lovato,  
Deborah Jennings

3 YEARS

Richard Ulanowicz,  
Todd Daniels, Nikisha Hudson





**10 YEARS OF SERVICE**  
*Andre Glover*



**10 YEARS OF SERVICE**  
*Joyce Craddock*



**5 YEARS OF SERVICE**  
*Ronald Abels*



**5 YEARS OF SERVICE**  
*Frank Lovato*



**3 YEARS OF SERVICE**  
*Rich Ulanowicz*



# A Mental Spring Cleaning

by Johnnie Hicks

**C**lutter in our physical environment has been shown to affect our mental health and spring is often a time when people rid themselves of the things they collected during the winter months. With spring on the horizon, this is a good time to do some mental “spring cleaning” to remove what internal clutter is taking up space in order to improve our mental health. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. What we show on the outside or, our attitude, is directly impacted by how we feel on the inside. By clearing

our minds of clutter, we give time and attention to healthy habits and gain a more positive outlook in the process.

**1. Replace Negative Criticism with Positive Self-Talk.** When you look at yourself in the mirror, instead of a negative criticism, practice saying something kind about yourself or use a positive affirmation like, “I am a unique and worthy person” or, “I can do anything I put my mind to!”

**2. Quit Hibernating and Spend Time with Family & Friends.** With the sunshine and rain, comes a renewed opportunity to spend time with family, friends and

acquaintances who are going to give you positive messages about yourself that builds positive self-esteem.

**3. Substitute Junk Food for Fresh Food.** Get rid of the chips, pretzels, and sodas (maybe keep one bag/can for a rainy day) and buy fresh vegetables and fruits and make some lemonade or iced tea. Choosing healthy food options helps us feel better about ourselves and gives us the fuel to stay active and physically well.

**4. Ditch Bad Sleeping Habits and Develop a Bedtime Routine.** Having a consistent bedtime and developing a bedtime ritual increases your chances of having a restful sleep. A hot shower before bed is a great way to relax your muscles and get ready to rest! Feeling rested when you wake up helps you to be more focused and productive in your day.

**5. Feeling Empty Emotionally? Recharge with your Personalized Medicine (Pat Deegan).** Personal Medicine was created by Pat Deegan. While pill medicine is important, personal medicine is just as important. Your personal medicine is any healthy activity you do that makes you feel better, more energized, and that puts a smile on your face, giving you a reason to achieve your goals. This may be something like a walk in the park, playing a favorite game, or making a special meal. This gives a boost to your mood and to your determination! ■

# RECOVERY & RESILIENCY



noun. **The capacity to recover quickly from difficult life events.**

*By Renee Trotter*

“I can be changed by what happens to me.  
But I refuse to be reduced by it.”

- MAYA ANGELOU

“You may have to fight a battle  
more than once to win it.”

- MARGARET THATCHER

**R**esilient people learn to view a difficulty as a challenge, not a paralyzing event. They look at failures as lessons, to be learned from and seen as opportunities for growth. Resilience is like a muscle, it grows when we handle difficult life events. As we acquire the tools necessary to respond to stressful situations, the core of who we are is strengthened, our tenacity for living reinforced. Being grateful is one of the ways we stay both hopeful and resilient. Research further points to the fact that resiliency is built by attitude, behaviors, and social support. To the right are ways to build resilience as well as the four various types of resilience. ■

## WAYS TO BUILD RESILIENCE

CONNECTION

STRESS MANAGEMENT

SELF-ESTEEM

EMOTION REGULATION

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

SELF-CARE

## FOUR TYPES OF RESILIENCE

### 1. PSYCHOLOGICAL

Developing coping strategies and capabilities that enable you to remain calm

### 2. EMOTIONAL

Able to measure stressors as well as your emotions

### 3. PHYSICAL

Refers to the body's ability to exert its true power then return to a healthy resting

### 4. COMMUNITY

It is the sustained ability of a community to use available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations. This allows for the adaptation and growth of a community after disaster strikes.

# Making a Difference

**A**n essential employee is one who must continue to report to work despite the danger of the nature of the work they do. They continue in their role because the work they perform is valuable to society.

TSI employees are an example to never forget why we do what we do. Our employees are essential employees not just during a pandemic, but every

day. We help persons live better lives through our services and programming.

Thank you for your commitment to the mission and vision of TSI. We are all in this together, doing what we can to continue our good work while staying safe and healthy.

Thank you to all of the essential employees of TSI for Making A Difference.



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## MISSION STATEMENT

TO HELP PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES  
DISCOVER AND ACHIEVE THEIR HOPES  
AND DREAMS FOR A MEANINGFUL  
LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY.

## VISION STATEMENT

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE  
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE.



Transitional Services, Inc. has been accredited by CARF for the following programs and services:

- Community Services: Community Housing
- Community Services: Supported Living
- Community Housing: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)
- Supported Living: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)

## A Glimpse Inside This Issue...

*Examples of Courage  
& Resilience*

*Mental Spring Cleaning*

*How Resilient Are You?*

*Practicing Mindfulness*

*Holiday Highlights*

*Service with a Smile!*

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