

**NAMI Ask the Expert:**  
**Enhancing Immunity to Build Resilience:**  
*An Innovative Preventative Health Program*

Featuring Peggy Swarbrick, PhD, FAOTA and Dr. Jessica A. Jonikas, MA  
November 10, 2022

**Teri Brister** ([00:00:02](#)):

All right. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm showing that we are on the four o'clock hour. We typically have a lot of people that come in right on the hour, but I'm going to go ahead and get started with housekeeping so we can get into our presentation, which is what you all signed up for today. I'm Teri Brister. I'm NAMI's Chief Program Officer, and I want to cover a little bit of housekeeping before we actually get started with the introductions of our presenters. Most of you, if not all of you, are way more familiar than you ever wanted to be with Zoom, but just to be sure, we wanted to have this screen up for you and walk through a couple of the things that you'll have access to and the tools that you'll use. First of all, we want to let you know that all callers are muted except the panelists and the presenters, so don't worry about trying to find the mute button or making something like that work. All the participants are muted so you don't have to worry about us being able to hear you.

The other thing is that typically, for those of you who've joined NAMI's Ask the Expert before, you know we typically don't have the chat enabled. We've gotten reports throughout earlier webinars that it could be distracting, but our presenters today are going to engage you in some conversation, so the chat is enabled. Don't think that's a fluke. We did it on purpose. But we'd still like for you to submit your questions using the Q&A pod, if you will. The way our webinars work is that we will be capturing your questions while you submit those throughout the presentation, and then once the presenters conclude what they want to share with you, then I'll be sharing those questions with them. We'll get to as many of them as we can, and typically the questions fall into similar categories, so we'll try to get everybody's questions addressed.

We do want to let you know also that the call is being recorded. That's a question that we get all the time, and we will be posting the recording link on NAMI's Ask the Expert section of the webinar. I mean, I'm sorry, of our website, so you'll be able to go back and watch this one or even other webinars that we've done in the past if you'd like to. Following this presentation, likely early next week since tomorrow is a federal holiday, you'll get an email from us that will provide the link to the recording. It will also provide a certificate of attendance, and we'll also provide a PDF version of the slide deck that our presenters are going to be sharing with us today. That will also go out to anybody who registered except for the certificate of attendance, but the link to the recording will go out to anybody who registered in case they missed it.

Jessica, if you don't mind, if you'll advance the two slides, if you will. Okay, if you'll go to the next one. There we are. We do want to remind you that if you need any kind of support during the presentation today or at any time to remember that you're not alone, that that really is one of NAMI's taglines, and we want you to feel free to contact our helpline. Either call us or send an email or visit [nami.org/help](http://nami.org/help), and we do have a text feature now. We're able to chat with people live, so thank you for taking advantage of that when you do need it. On behalf of NAMI CEO, Daniel Gillison Jr. and NAMI's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Ken Duckworth, our board, our board president, Joyce Campbell, I'd like to welcome you to the November Ask the Expert which is focused on the topic of enhancing immune health and wellness, which is an especially important topic this time of the year.

**Teri Brister** ([00:04:05](#)):

This topic fits nicely also with the recent re-release of NAMI Hearts and Minds, and I say re-release, but it was a re-release of the thought, a first release of a lot of new content. That material was updated by NAMI's Director of Public Safety and Healthcare Initiatives, Christina Bott and her team, and this topic fits in perfectly with the information that is available through Hearts and Minds. Now, I'd like to introduce you to our presenters today. Dr. Peggy Swarbrick is the associate Director for the Center of Alcohol and Substance Use Studies and a research professor in the Applied Department of Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. She's worked for 25 years at the collaborative support programs of New Jersey Wellness Institute Director, and over the decades, and I just have to tell you guys, I knew she was going to be presenting. I didn't connect the dots on who she was, and when I did, I got really nervous about introducing her, but she is actually the force of nature behind the creation and development of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness, which many of you, if not all of you are familiar with through SAMHSA. We refer to it in our NAMI Peer-to-Peer program.

Again, just a great gift to the field. Dr. Swarbrick Brick has made other significant contributions to the body of literature and occupational therapy, nursing and community behavioral healthcare practice focused on topics such as the eight dimensions of wellness, wellness coaching, peer support, social determinants of health, financial wellness, employment and professional self-care. She's created self-care wellness programs for people in recovery, caregivers, families, youth and professionals, including training materials and intervention manuals. Dr. Swarbrick recently developed a program on wellness, self-care and peer support models for healthcare professionals and educators to help prevent burnout. Also presenting today is Jessica Jonikas. She's the Associate Director of the University of Illinois at Chicago Center on Mental Health Services Research and Policy, as well as Research Specialist in Health Systems Research for the UIC Department of Psychiatry. She holds a master's degree from the University of Chicago School of Social Services Administration and Center for Health Administrative Services. She's co-investigator or program director on federal federally funded projects to promote wellness self-management, holistic health and self-determination for people in recovery, as well as evidence-based practices and research translation in public mental health settings.

Ms. Jonikas is the senior author or co-author of research articles, book chapters, training guides, and other educational resources on recovery-oriented models for care. For over 25 years, she's contributed to preparing and mentoring the mental health workforce, and if you had any doubts, you should have none now about why these two wonderful individuals were invited to be presenters on the webinar today. And with that, I would like to hand it over to you to get us started. Jessica.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:07:39](#)):

Thank you so much for that wonderful introduction, and I will also mention that I'm a parent and a family member of people with lived experience of mental illness, so NAMI has always had a special place in my heart. You'll see that both Peggy and I are wearing our Immune Health Champion t-shirts here today, and she's going to tell you more later about our Immune Health Champions when she describes how she rolled out our program in New Jersey. Because my internet is really pretty unreliable, unfortunately, I'm going to just turn off my camera while I'm presenting, but I'm going to turn it back on whenever we're interacting with the audience, so just give me a sec here to turn that off so I don't freeze up as I've done many times.

**Jessica Jonikas (00:08:24):**

All right. Just want to take a moment to acknowledge our funder, the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research, without whom this work would not be possible. That said, the contents of our presentation and the program that we're introducing are not necessarily endorsed by, nor do they necessarily represent the views of the federal government, and I do not have any conflicts of interest. So before we dive in, we thought it would be helpful to connect the dots between mental health, immune health, and needed self-care. With so much on our plates right now, why should we also attend to immune health for ourselves and those we support or serve? Well, there are many ways to view this, but perhaps the most compelling is that the skills we need to regulate our mental health are also the skills that can enhance our immune health, and the reverse is also true. Consistently applying immune health behaviors also helps to regulate mental health.

These key strategies are similar, so we don't necessarily need to take on a whole new set of skills. We'll just be recognizing that supporting our immune health to avoid viral and bacterial illnesses can also improve our mental health, and this is true whether we deliver or receive supports and services or do both. So you may be wondering, if the skills are so similar, why start a conversation about immune health? What's the value of highlighting immune health literacy and behaviors? Well, very few people like being sick, which often makes it easier to discuss immune health than mental health or psychiatric crisis. As we face multiple waves of COVID and other viruses while also in the cold and flu season, avoiding viral illness is a concern for many people, so this can make it easier to start a dialogue. Focusing on immune health also helps supporters and providers to bump up their own self-care. As Peggy will highlight later in our presentation, immune health literacy and behaviors ignite a sense of personal investment in wellness, increased personal agency with practical skills that can enhance one health, and it provides hope during hard times.

So with all that in mind today, Peggy and I hope to accomplish three main goals. First, we'll review what is known about immune health risks and disparities among people with lived experience of behavioral health disorders. This will include the serious impact of these disparities, which often result in a more severe disease course and unfortunately even death. But we'll then turn to what we know about immune health since there is a lot of unreliable information that circulates on mainstream and social media and the internet. And we'll introduce our new immune health promotion program and discuss how it reinforces health literacy and the acquisition of practical health promotion skills. Finally, Peggy will showcase some of the inspiring ways that this program is being used in peer run crisis respite, peer led wellness centers, and other settings. I will say that when we worked together over the course of a year to develop these materials, our team could not have anticipated the impact that this program would have on people's health and emotional wellness, nor the side benefits that it would bring, and we'll be sharing all of this with you.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:12:01](#)):

So, I want to pause for a moment to hear from you all with a little Zoom poll. It's going to pop up in a second, and I'm going to ask you which of the strategies you use the most to strengthen your own immune health, especially during the past few years. You might use more than one of these. Hopefully you do, but please choose the one that you use the most and I'll give everyone just a minute to answer for everyone who wants to. All righty, and hopefully we can pop the answers up here in a second. All righty. Look at that. Look at everybody trying to get enough good sleep. That's wonderful. Managing stress and eating a healthy diet. Your screenings and your vaccinations. Some people using immunity supplements and some people using health information. That's wonderful. Those are all immune enhancing behaviors, and we're going to be talking about each of them throughout the course of our webinar.

So, let's dive in now to talk about the immune health risks and disparities that are caused by viral illnesses among people with lived experience. Some of this can be disturbing, but there is hope because learning more and using simple skills can really make a difference, and Peggy's going to talk about that, too. I'll start here. Peggy and her colleagues at the Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey launched a needs assessment of people with lived experience in New Jersey and in New York, and invited us to partner with them on analyzing and interpreting the findings. This assessment was conducted to better understand changes in people's lives right after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. So just quickly here, 272 people completed this survey ranging in age from 21 to 80 years. 57% identified as female. 53% were white, 25% were black or African American, and 3% were Asian and 13% identified as Latinx.

People reported considerable disruptions in their daily routines and activities, not surprisingly. They shared having trouble sleeping, being exposed to COVID during their regular daily activities, lacking access to needed healthcare, struggling to get their medications and changing where they were living. As we'll see later in our pre presentation, all of these disruptions are ones that can weaken both immune health and mental health. You'll see that 35% of our participants screened positive for generalized anxiety disorder and 30% for major depressive disorder. Those with anxiety were more likely to say they had changes in their eating habits and sleep routines. Those with depression had these same challenges and also found it harder to get their medicine, and these issues and disruptions are known to reduce the strength of one's immune response and of course one's overall mental health.

So there are many ways to look at how the pandemic disrupted people's lives, and we wanted to be sure that our immune health program connected the dots between pandemic disruptions, overall viral risks, and reduced immune health. So what do we know about the health disparities caused by viral illnesses among people with psychiatric disabilities? Unfortunately, as I mentioned, the findings can be disturbing. Research suggests that they're more likely to get the flu, especially if they smoke cigarettes. They also are more likely to contract multiple forms of pneumonia. Most recently, studies show that they are more likely to contract COVID-19 and long COVID as well. All of these viral risks are higher due to the higher prevalence of medical comorbidities including chronic pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and chronic inflammation.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:16:38](#)):

Finally, research has documented that they are also more likely to experience adverse outcomes from viral illnesses, including having severer symptoms, being hospitalized, spending time in an intensive care unit, and even dying. So, this cycle of risk is the one that we wanted to interrupt, hoping to improve both immune health and overall health for people with psychiatric disabilities. All right, so here comes one of our chat activities. Hopefully we're going to be good at this. Peggy's probably better at it than me, so jump in, Peg, at any point. But we would like you to add to the chat now any new strategies or habits that you've been using in your life to improve your immune health?

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:17:21](#)):

Yeah, what have you done for your own health?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:17:24](#)):

Your own immune health.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:17:25](#)):

Yeah.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:17:26](#)):

I'm going to start. I added prebiotics to my diet.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:17:33](#)):

Yeah, so Jessica put prebiotics. I do a lot of walking. A lot of walking. What was the exercise. Vitamin D. Walks. Good walkers. Yay, walkers.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:17:42](#)):

Yay. Sleep therapy, meal planning.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:17:43](#)):

Meal planning. Turmeric drink. Diary. Meditation. Gola berries. Oh my goodness. I love this.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:17:52](#)):

Gosh, you guys are great.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:17:53](#)):

[inaudible 00:17:53] dog. Listening to music. Exercise and walking. Great. Research the website for knowledge, good knowledge. Look at this. Bird watching. Time for yourself. Six days a week workout. Exercise, meditation, exercise. Extra virgin oil. Eating more [inaudible 00:18:08].

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:18:08](#)):

Oh, interesting.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:18:10](#)):

Supplements. The dog. The dog is helpful for the walk for a lot of people.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:18:14](#)):

Yeah.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:18:14](#)):

Hand washing. Chair yoga. Strength training. Healing teas. Monitoring negativity. Wonderful. Got vaccinated. [inaudible 00:18:24]. Oh, I love it. We had that one time at our job. Chiropractor. Excellent. Look at all these amazing things.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:18:30](#)):

Oh my gosh. You guys should do this webinar for us.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:18:34](#)):

Yeah.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:18:34](#)):

You're doing great.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:18:35](#)):

But we're doing so many things, which is really important, which is really what we're going to see at this piece is you doing a lot of this time, quiet time at the park. This is great. Maybe we could even save some of these chats and share them. We've done that in the past because you get ideas.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:18:51](#)):

Yeah. That's true. Right. That's a good idea to share them maybe with the transcript. So, thank you everyone. I'm really super impressed with all the things people are doing.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:19:00](#)):

[inaudible 00:19:03].

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:19:03](#)):

As we think about enhancing immune health, it's important to remember that it is a we thing. We all can experience challenges when working to strengthen our immune health and our wellness, and it can be even more difficult when living through hard or stressful times, but working together and supporting one another can really help, as Peggy will highlight later. Also, we'll see that there are ways to address immune health risks and disparities from viral and bacterial illnesses. So, let's talk about some of that. So first of all, we want to look at what research suggests about enhancing immune health and wellness. We know there's a lot of unreliable health information out there, and sometimes personal stories and anecdotal information are more strongly emphasized than what research and science suggests, so we wanted to be sure that our program was based on evidence for what works to enhance immune health and wellness.

So, let's take a quick look at some of the key facts that we learned. So first, one of the foundational elements of enhancing immune health is increasing health literacy in this area. The more science we know about immune health, the better equipped we are to strengthen it. In the same vein, when we help people identify specific immune health behaviors that they already are doing or would like to strengthen or would like to start doing, they are then more likely to use them. There are many claims in the public sphere for health habits, supplements, or foods that can quote unquote "boost" the immune system. In fact, the only proven strategy that actually boosts immunity specifically to fight diseases is vaccination. There are a number of things we can do to enhance or improve our immune health for sure, and we're going to talk about those. But the only way to boost immunity to fight disease is vaccination.

We also know that regular health screenings across the lifespan are very important because many medical conditions are known to weaken immunity such as diabetes, liver or kidney disease, cancer, COVID and HIV. When we identify any medical conditions we might have, we can then work on managing them, which can also help our immune health. The beneficial impact of sleep across multiple domains is striking, so it was great to see how many people are working on their sleep. We've always understood that lack of sleep can reduce emotional and mental health, and it's also the case that poor sleep is one of the most harmful things to our immune health. When we sleep, our bodies produce proteins that are needed to target infection and inflammation. Also, our bodies produce T-cells during sleep, which are the white blood cells that play a critical, sorry, that play a critical role in our body's immune response to infectious disease, so while we sleep, our immune system is regenerating itself. Sleep problems are very, very common in the U.S. and among people with psychiatric disabilities in particular. This is likely one of the reasons that they can be at higher risk for adverse outcomes from viral or bacterial illnesses.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:22:20](#)):

The good news is that there are evidence-based strategies to improve the quality and length of sleep, which we offer in our manual and you'll hear about shortly. We all know that ongoing stress reduces emotional wellness and can increase mental health symptoms. Unfortunately, chronic stress also significantly reduces immune health. When we have continuous unresolved stress, our body continues to produce a hormone called cortisol. High levels of cortisol make it harder for our bodies to fight inflammation, which then makes us vulnerable to infection and repeat infection. Also, chronic stress reduces our infection fighting white blood cells. All this means that chronic stress puts people at risk for contracting illnesses and for having adverse outcomes from them. Stress also is all too common in the US and certainly these past few years have been uniquely challenging. Again, the good news is that there are evidence-based strategies to reduce the impact of ongoing stress, which we cover in our manual.

Entire industries are built on the notion that foods, vitamins or supplements will again quote unquote "boost" immunity, and this is often based on poor information about what it means to boost immunity. But that said, there are some foods and immunity aids that can be helpful to improving the immune response, including prebiotics, probiotics, and vitamins D, C, B9 and zinc. Interestingly, recent studies have shown that people who have a plant-based diet, which also can include some fish, have lower odds of experiencing moderate to severe COVID symptoms. Plant-based diets did not make people more or less likely to get viruses, but plant-based diets did help people to have a milder course of the illness, so this is likely related to the association between a diet rich in vegetables, fruits and beans with lower bodily inflammation.

However, in general, we still found that relying only on foods and supplements to improve immune health can be a slippery slope. Also, many supplements can be dangerous if overused and could interact with other medications that people take, so even though it seems like all natural immunity aids must be safe, it's important to check them out first with a healthcare provider. All this goes along with the fact that many people rely on inaccurate health information. It is understandable and it is really human, but it can be harmful, especially to people who already have health risks. Thus, it's important to learn and use strategies to assess both the sources of health information and the content for accuracy and evidence as part of improving health literacy.

So, our program also teaches people to look at who is sponsoring the online health information, who actually wrote it to make sure it's a medical expert, its purpose, and whether it is over-claiming the benefits of what is being promoted. Let's pause for a few minutes to hear again from the group about what you found most interesting or surprising about this research, and you can type it into the chat now. Doctors aren't very educated regarding nutrition. That's true.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:25:52](#)):

[inaudible 00:25:56].

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:25:56](#)):

Anything about the research I just presented that you thought was interesting or surprising?



**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:26:05](#)):

Sleep. Sleep. Yeah.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:26:07](#)):

Mm-hmm. And the thing about T-cells, that was new to me, too.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:26:19](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Made a lot of diet affecting sleep. The sleep. Diet, the sleep. Zinc. Plant-based diet.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:26:29](#)):

Right. And I will say that that research wasn't saying that you couldn't eat any meat. It was just saying having a lot of vegetables, a lot of fruits, a lot of beans reduces inflammation, and so then people had less severe COVID symptoms. But that doesn't mean you have to go out and necessarily give up meat. That's a personal choice.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:26:45](#)):

[inaudible 00:26:48].

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:26:48](#)):

It's just more adding fruits and vegetables and beans to the diet.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:26:52](#)):

Yeah. Stay tuned on the topic, right? You got to stay abreast of what's out there.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:26:57](#)):

Yeah. Yes. Yeah. Yes. Good reminders of things we already know. I agree.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:27:03](#)):

Yeah. Sleep is such a issue, prevalent overall, so this is so timely and important.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:27:09](#)):

Mm-hmm.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:27:14](#)):

Yeah.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:27:14](#)):

Interesting little tidbit about Steve Jobs there.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:27:19](#)):

Yeah. Oh God.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:27:26](#)):

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:27:27](#)):

Yeah. Just all these simple. I always think about, these were the things my mom, my mother, I love my mother.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:27:33](#)):

So true. Me, too.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:27:36](#)):

I miss her so much, but these were what she told me to do.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:27:37](#)):

Same. Same with me.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:27:39](#)):

These basic things that can be so helpful for us. They were so helpful. For physical health, for mental health, she was very helpful in all those ways.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:27:47](#)):

Mm-hmm. Well, one of the things I liked about the research too is just, and I think someone said this in the chat, that these are things that we already are doing or that we know, and it just verifies that it's important to do them. It's nothing surprising. You don't have to do big complicated things to improve your immune health. Somebody asked about the not having an emphasis on exercise, so that's a great one, and surprisingly we found there wasn't direct connections between increased exercise and enhanced immunity, but there is a connection between sleeping better and exercising, so it's kind of an indirect pathway, so definitely physical activity is important and it helps people reduce their stress and improve their sleep, and those are the things that work for immune health

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:28:37](#)):

And defining boost.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:28:39](#)):

Yes. So, boost, what we found is if you, in terms of fighting specific diseases, so not getting the shingles, not getting whooping cough, not getting pneumonia, the one thing you can do is take a vaccine. That's going to boost the immune system to fight that specific disease. Eating a plant-based diet or sleeping better isn't going to help your body fight a specific disease, but it is going to help you improve your immune health and response, so hopefully that makes sense.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:29:12](#)):

Avoiding alcohol is so important, and then there's also the idea of sleeping, so important for our mental health as well, as we know, or our brain.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:29:21](#)):

Mm-hmm.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:29:22](#)):

Yeah. And then again, the financial benefits of the food. We mentioned about black beans. Excellent. Yeah. A lot of different... Yeah, thank you. And then walking, sleep, then other intents. That's all different kinds of things, and that was one of the things, as we put this together, how much do you put and everything?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:29:43](#)):

Yes, I know, right? You could really make the manual really long.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:29:46](#)):

Yeah. Because I was always, as we will talk later, in the social support, we were really wanting to put a thing about social support in it, and again, we didn't, and then the social support happened naturally when I'm going to talk later, but we know the value of the kind of support that you all are involved in, which is so powerful.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:30:06](#)):

Yes, agreed. Well, thank you. That's wonderful. It's really good questions and responses. So, let's turn to the program that we developed and then we can talk more about the information in it, too. So this is freely available to the field. You can download it at the link here, and you're going to be getting that after the webinar, and the program is called Enhancing Your Immune Health. Here are the authors, including myself and Peggy and several colleagues at UIC and CSPNJ, and I want to note we partnered with Dr. Charles Santos who works both in internal medicine and psychiatry to ensure that we're sharing evidence-based information. So if anyone has technical kind of medical questions about immune health, you can send them to me and I can give them to Dr. Charlie to answer.

Peggy's going to go through each of the modules so you can see what's in them, But I want to just talk a little bit about some of the foundational information about our manual. So first of all, in terms of foundational concepts, we want to teach people in simple terms how the immune system actually works in terms of natural and learned immunity. We also offer practical skills to improve immune health literacy and behaviors such as lessening vulnerability to infection by adopting a healthier lifestyle and using simple risk reduction strategies like hand washing, sneezing or coughing into the elbow and wearing a mask when needed. We also emphasize the importance of evidence-based immunity aids, age-specific vaccinations across the lifespan, so you'll see that people get a chance to talk about all the different vaccinations that adults need and they can talk about whether or not they want to get them, and annual health screening, same thing. We talk age specifically about what are the screenings you're due for and then you as a person decide whether or not you want to get them. And we promote setting and working on small achievable goals to enhance immune health.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:32:07](#)):

Our manual can be used in several different ways. We offer it as a five session manual for those settings that can offer educational groups, but we also offer each module as a standalone session to make it easier to use during one-on-one learning. This way people can take the content that they need either for themselves or for those they're supporting without having to introduce all five sessions. There also is a packet of handouts for participants. Again, the modules are free to the public for programmatic or personal use, and the link is on slide 23 and again on slide 52 when you get the slide deck later.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:32:46](#)):

Yeah, I think we'll put the link. Someone asked to go back to slide 23, but the link will be available if that's what you're looking for. Somebody asked to go back.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:32:55](#)):

Yes. Yeah. And actually later when Peg's presenting, I could also put it into the chat.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:32:58](#)):

Yeah.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:33:01](#)):

So, we believe, in terms of our learning philosophy here, we believe it's important for each of us and those we support to identify science informed ways to take control of our own immune health, and this should be based on what we're already doing well and what inspires us to try something new. It's not news to anyone on this webinar, but we want to empower people to work on their immune health as feels best and achievable to them personally. We're all more likely to succeed when we choose what we want to do based on our strengths and existing skills.

We developed a learning framework for this material called the three E's. The first E is explain, so we explain as simply as possible the key information to know in each area about immune health. The second E is evaluate. Using exploration and activities, we evaluate what participants already know about immune health. We do not judge people, of course. We just take note of what they do and don't know and then we work on developing a deeper understanding of immunity over time. And then our third E is engage. Each module includes a lot of engaging activities to help people support their immune health literacy and behaviors, so we also try to make it fun, and Peg's going to talk a lot more about that, so I'm going to turn it over to her now and she'll talk about each of the modules and then how she rolled it out.

**Peggy Swarbrick (00:34:29):**

Great. Thank you, Jessica, and thanks everybody for your participation. What I'm going to do now is spend just a little time giving you a taste of what each module has and then also kind of help you understand what's in the module, the material, and I'll also talk about some practical implications. Later I'm going to go into a lot more detail, but as I go along, I think it's going to be useful to know. So, this material's laid out, as Jessica had said, it was explaining information and then it built on people and there was a lot of activity, so the first module was just one that would just give people of like what is immune health? Just some real basics almost of anatomy and physiology type things. Real, real, real basic, particularly understanding natural versus learned immunity, so it was like some just general information about what is my immune system and what is this difference between natural and a learned immunity, and some of the basics of the fundamental of infection and inflammation.

So it was just some real try to look from a health literacy basis, understanding at a very more basic level to help people to understand these things about ourself. Because we are human. We think about we have our head, we have our eyes, our ears, our hands and feet and nose, but what's inside of us, our understanding, our lymph system and other body systems that aren't so apparent. And so in understanding about what goes on inside of us in a very basic level to understand what we can do to avoid the infections or viruses getting in our body, and particularly how do we protect ourselves? So we know, and really this was what that first module does, some basic understanding of this and starting to think about what is the learned versus the natural immunity, but then also what can we do to avoid? And then why do putting a mask on, how does that prevent things from getting into that part, our mouth and our nose, like understanding how that works.

And then in that module, some basics of learning, some of how to track your immune health habits, and that's a big piece of it is there is the science of this behind this, but really was based on things people could do in learning to do very, very basic levels. So, the material was there to share, read it aloud, discuss it, and then I loved what people said. You wanted to personalize it, and that's when we implemented. You really can't personalize this if you're doing it in a group, you're doing it with an individual as a, and we did it in individual and group with people. You could really meet people where they're at, whether you're doing it in a group format or in the individual. Because some people have a lot of knowledge about these things. Some people have a little bit of knowledge about these things, but it just really gave some basics to get it started about our immune, what is that immune health.

The second module went into the basics of vaccination and health screening. So just understanding what are vaccines and understanding a little bit about them generally about vaccines, what are particularly age specific vaccinations in general, and then also how to avoid spreading of infection again. But the biggest piece in this that is also really, really important, which we do a lot about, is annual health screenings, helping people to kind of start to be aware of the different kind of health screenings. Just even going to the doctor for various physicals and getting different kinds of blood tests. Really just giving some basics of that and really related to module one in terms of how this really can help our immune system at that biological level. So, it was some basic information there highlighting the vaccinations, highlighting particularly the screenings and understanding how they work so people could make an informed decision.

**Peggy Swarbrick (00:38:48):**

I'm going to tell you, people have all different opinions about this, and that was really important to respect that as people were using this and as we implemented it. Was lots of different people understanding, sharing, and people coming to their own decisions based on their many different facets about who they were and their life experiences and their understanding and comfort level. So, that's in module two. Module three is really the fun one, which we really get back to a lot of what a lot of you talked about, the sleep for immune health. Just giving some best evidence and some understanding about how sleep can be so important. Again, we always heard you prevent a cold, you treat a cold, you sleep. Getting good night's sleep helps us to prevent getting sick or minimizing the impact of the sickness or helps us to get through that sickness, so teaches how poor sleep can really affect that, our immune system.

Really spends a lot of time in this module, tips, a lot of general tips are shared, and then if you're doing this in a group, you can get people to really help one another to look for some good tips and strategies. And then there's a really nice tracking tool around sleeping. It's something on the CDC website that's really, really, really wonderful, that is helpful for people who maybe are having challenges with sleep or want to get a better understanding of what's interfering with the sleep. It's a good sleep tracking tool. And again, as we start to move into these other sections, we start to help people setting goals around this because most people, some people have really, really great sleep, good sleep habits, but this was a big challenge for a significant number of people.

So, just really helped you see some of this evidence about a strong immune system, also a good night's sleep. People who got less than five hours got more likely just to catch a cold, and so just thinking about that, people who slept less than six hours were four times more likely to catch those colds, so just the power of a good night's sleep to prevent that cold that comes about during different periods of time, so just has a powerful, powerful, powerful impact of sleep, and that's really one of the things that this module as we went through these different five, the five, this is the three of the five. On the fourth module, it was another one that's really practical strategies. Thinking about stress. I know that's probably something in many of your curriculums around for mental health. Stress management is always a topic.

Again, it was just a good reminder about the stress and the different kinds of stress and understanding different things around helping people to be aware of stress and the kinds of stress and really showing the relationship of how especially long-term effective stress can weaken our immune system. So, this is with some basic information about that, and then in the manual it gives a lot of just generally ideas about stress relieving strategies. So, that was a big piece in that piece, and also stress goals, so a lot of people started to set sleep goals for module three, stress goals for module four, and this is part of what in the materials is in there, just some basic material about that, but it also then helps people to really wrap their mind around it themselves. That's one of the nice things when you read through the materials.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:42:26](#)):

Before, I just want to, in the chat, I love to hear what has worked for you to improve your own sleep habits? What's been something you, have you ever had sleep challenges or you do to keep your sleep challenge? What works for you to improve your sleep or keep a good sleep? So, less coffee. Watching the caffeine. Keeping the routine. Reading for the bed. Somebody said, how do you suggest I use the manual of patients. I'll get to that in a little bit. I'm going to go into a lot of detail about that. Nothing. Meditating. Meditating while laying down. Just good hydration. Getting rid of the phone. Caffeine. CPAC machine. Great things. No electronics. Keeping the routine. Reading. Music. Warm bath. Instrumental music. Hot tea. Excellent. Jessica, are you noticing any themes here? And stretching. Listening to... Yeah. Tea. Meals. Watching your meals. Caffeine. Really, really great ideas.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:43:30](#)):

Sorry, I was muted there. Yes, you guys all have really... So it sounds like people really are attending to their sleep and their immune health, which is great. I love some of these ideas. It'd be fun to add them to the manual.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:43:43](#)):

Yeah, sleep, yeah.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:43:46](#)):

Playing with your Yorkies. Love it.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:43:47](#)):

Yeah, calm.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:43:48](#)):

Oh, the calm app. I use that.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:43:50](#)):

Yeah. Sleep hygiene. It's really, that's a big piece of that connection is understand, so people do meditation. Definitely using the bed only for sleep. Excellent strategy that is known in sleep hygiene strategies. Excellent. Yeah, so definitely people music, meditation [inaudible 00:44:11].

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:44:10](#)):

Exercise. Yeah.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:44:12](#)):

Mm-hmm. Excellent. We have a lot.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([00:44:16](#)):

Yeah, great. Be fun if we could share these strategies somehow with the transcript. I don't know if that's possible, but people have really good ideas.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:44:21](#)):

Yeah. The darkness. Yeah. Yeah. Yes. It's hard. Yeah. It's hard to get through the night and using these things, the temperature of the room, excellent. Meditation. Yeah. These are a lot of the things that are discussed and as what you can find out in the, as you do this material or you do the, there's so much great exchange just like this exchange here. Yeah. That's great. The reminder. Yeah, setting that plan, those habits and routines. And then really the other piece that we went into is the food supplements and health information, so this one really got into just understanding some of the foods, understanding, and the big thing that people find was the interesting thing, the difference between the pre and the probiotics that people, understanding about that and kind of what those foods are and then trying them out in a sense. Talking about some immunity age and just aids and just being, making sure you do work with your doctor. Even with the food things, it's something you always want to be contacting with your healthcare professionals.

So, those were some things that people that are in there, that people were learning about and can decide if that's something they want to try. And then really a big one in this section was the credibility of health information. We have a strategy in here to help you start to think about how to be critical, even be thinking critically about how we're presenting this today, right? So, go to our manual and look through. Just be more mindful of trying to find information and being more thoughtful about looking at it, the source, and understanding is it relevant for me? Is it backed by science that's maybe relates to, that's been done with people like me? You know, understanding the relevance of it to you and the rigor of it and then really being able to find the information that's useful for you.

So, this was a big one too. I think that is important for immune health, but also for mental health, for all kinds of health, using this strategy to get good information, to make informed decisions. So, that's the five modules, and so what I want to highlight next time and the next slide we'll go out is just to kind of help you understand that this is so important that we wanted people to use this, right? So last we started to use it and try it out because we wanted to just see, especially this time of year is a good time of year to use it, and we found that it was used, we'll tell you a little bit about, we used it with people in peer run centers. We used it in respites, and also in wellness centers around the state and also, no, housing programs as well, their residential homes.

So what we did at Collaborative Support Programs in New Jersey is I basically said we had worked on the material, got some piloting of it, and then I just said to a handful of people, this is just a few of the people, "Would you be interested in trying this out in your wellness center, in your supportive housing, in your respite program, peer run respite?" And a bunch of people said, "Okay." I said, "Well, what's going to happen is between now, for the next month, two and a half months, I'm going to meet with you. Could be every week, every other week, but I want to try to help you to implement this in your setting. Let's see who will benefit, who'd be interested, and I'm going to help support you." So, we met regularly with this group where we called the champion team. These are some of the champions, and said, "Okay, so how are you going to roll it out in your wellness center? Are you're going to do it in a group? Are you going to do it virtually? Are you going to do it in person?"



**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:48:22](#)):

We all did problem solving and planning, and then we met with each other regularly. It was just short, either 30 or 45 minutes, whatever people could do to just talk about it and then share ideas with one another about how they were implementing it in the settings, basically. In the wellness centers, in the respites, in the supportive housing. So what happened was this team, the next slide, next slide will highlight for you what we did. We became the immune health champion team, and this was funny. Towards the end they were like, "We need a t-shirts," so they created their t-shirt. Keep calm, I'm an immune health champion. They basically, again, the stress management was a big thing, but championing this, being role models for one another really helped and people brought their own creativity to this text in this book.

It's really nice stuff, the nice visuals, but people brought it alive, and I'm going to tell you a lot there. People will really, like when they went, for example in the wellness centers or groups that you're thinking about doing it, people, we shared. They went out to the members and said, "Do you want to be part of this? Do you want us to do these five modules?" They came to agreement whether they're going to do it in person. Some places they either, they got the material to people, whether it was handed out at the site. Some of the sites that were still a little virtual delivered it to people at home. They shared little, they created these goodie bags with some immune health items. You could see like eye masks, foods, things like that. They started to really bring it alive to make it practical.

They did it in reading it together, they discussed it as facilitators. People had to do, if you're going to facilitate this, like have to read ahead of time, sometimes understanding the definitions yourself. Even if we have the information in the manual, people sometimes had to do a little homework ahead of time, and then our champion team was helping them a little while, and then people did it anywhere from 60 to 75 minutes. As for the group format, they did it that way. In the individual, it was all different size. What we found when people were implementing it, so example, say they did this over in a center in Gloucester County, New Jersey. They started the groups at the time, the facilitator asked people to take notes. That was a big thing, too, because they found out what they needed to go over the next time. Sometimes the group didn't always go the full one module. They took a little longer, so they even went more than five sessions because people were really applying this to themselves. Sometimes the people did it in the five session. They would check it in again at the beginning of the end and really get that feedback to tailor and customize it to the other group members.

They did choose either whether it was an open group versus a, had to start on 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Most people did come through all of them, but they did keep it open for the most part. But they did pretty much in most centers have people coming pretty regularly. They did some other additional booster sessions, particularly the sleep, the eating, and then even the stress. There was some other booster sessions and people brought in some creativity, just like you guys shared some different ideas for people to try. They would help [inaudible 00:51:52], and the diary became something. Once they started doing that, that became a check-in, and that still is a check-in with people checking in on each other's sleep and some of the other goals. They really, we did emphasize a lot talking with healthcare providers about what they're doing. That was a big influence we did. A big thing that we said that was very important, especially when you want to customize this to individuals.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:52:15](#)):

Really cool was all the food that got made. Oh my god. People started making snacks and soups and sharing all kinds of, making recipe books. They put together a recipe piece about some healthy, these kind of foods that people were sharing with each other and shared it with each other, and that just really added so much to this event, to this whole implementation of it that I think was really powerful because we made it really alive for people. It wasn't just this information about this. But they said, "Okay. We'll do this together. We'll prepare this together. We'll learn together." Really was really, really powerful. Just some reflections on some of the impact of the program. Somebody said, on the next slide it highlighted, is the person said, "This manual on building our health is more important now more than ever." There was a real focus like, wow, I really didn't think about this before. Wow, this is so important.

Particularly, you can think about all... Getting just colds. I was someone who hated colds, didn't like colds, didn't like to get sick physically, and just knowing that you could do these things for your stress, you could do these things for your sleep, so important for people to be empowered for this. The materials provide information, education and tools that support us for ourself, and we found that the staff, whether they were peers or non peers, mostly peers, found it really, really helpful for themselves as well, so that's something to be important. And again, these were just feedback that we got for people. So really, a lot of people benefited a lot from this. In terms of the next, I don't think it's... We had a lot of impact on the sleep. We found people really found that the sleep benefited a lot for people and a lot of people made a lot of good benefits of their sleep, learning about the importance of sleep and the value of that and really how that impacted.

And again, the practical strategies that people either discovered through the material or learned through the dialogue with others was really, really important. And again, what they did with some of the tools that you'll see and the checklists and things in there, they were able to create their own schedules. As we saw, schedules is very important, and were able to really keep a way of developing their own tracking systems for getting better sleep, so really was really important. When we did it, now we run this peer run respite. There's a respite program that we do run that's anywhere from three to seven days, and most all of the people who come to the respite have some sleep disturbance, and so this was really powerful when they implemented in the respite, because the sleep was such an important piece. Really, many of the guests identified. They could really help them with their sleep habits and started to, again, this person said started stretching and meditation before bed.

This is a crisis. This is where you go. It's a psychiatric crisis, right? They go to this respite instead of the inpatient. Sleep is impaired, for so many people are impacted, so getting this immune health material was so powerful for them. Someone said, I'm feeling angry and sick when not fully rested. Choosing to add meditation, eating on a schedule and participating for my sleep is going to be so important, so this was really important for the guest. Another guest who had many, many times sleep, was other psychiatric crisis with anxiety and depression, said they were so not aware of the different barriers to their sleep, so this really helped them understand it. Others really were using the handouts, were following the plans and many, many, the guests continue, they continued to use it. But when we were gathering these, this diary, many said, so we encourage you to go look at that.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([00:56:25](#)):

Setting the goal. Setting the goal things and the handout for the goals. We're saying the alarms, setting the alarm on the phone. Some of you wrote that into the chat. And then the environment, just [inaudible 00:56:38], using some of the ideas in the environment. The respite environment itself is really conducive to sleep, so the sleep actually does, the environment actually helps promote that. As well as many of you talked before, the physical activity and limiting the time with using the devices was really, really an important piece. So, this was some of the things. They also just did a lot of stuff like there was a lot of food prep, doing things with food, doing things with helping people to prepare things together. Really, the community building, the sharing of it, and then the practicality was really important where people started to bake things, make things, eat things together, share things with one another.

We just know food is just such a powerful connector and makes us feel good, but learning about this information and then learning about how to prepare things, prepare together or share it with people really, really reinforce the practicality of the information, and then helped with the social support component that I think is strong about this curriculum. The goody bags. There was a couple places where they literally sent foods into the bags. They put together some different things. They would share different weeks. Some of these little things, not only the tissues and the wipes, but they got V8 Juice. They got almonds. They got different foods that they would share with people before. Then one of the members had a sweet potato recipe that they shared and they prepared it for each other and they tried it together. So, they created these goody bag sharing along with the curriculum that people would receive or the materials they would receive each week in between.

So for some of the site, the people that were on site, they got it, but for some of the people who were doing this through Zoom delivery, it was delivered to them, so that was just a thought. I mean, these are all things I'm sharing with you to think about how you might implement it, right? In one of our, we have a garden outside at one of the respite, so there really was starting to be more mindful of just the gardening and linking to the gardening and basically basically finding out ways to really use the gardening to have fresh vegetables and reinforcing that, and then they started to expand their focus on that garden. So, that was another thing just again. I don't know if you know some places. This was a fun one where one of the... This is the champion, and these are all [inaudible 00:59:16] me doing this with me working with this champion team.

Instead of happy birthday washing your hands, everybody was doing that. Chris, one of them facilitators at one of the sites went online and found a make your own lyrics for a hand washing poster, so she found a song. She found Penny Lane was the one she did. But you could find all these hand washing songs to these famous songs that you might like, so it makes it more interesting than just the happy birthday one that many people, which is a good one, but this was a fun thing that they were able to kind of be creative as facilitators. And if any of you are doing, and we love to have the feedback from you, we want to have your feedback of how to use this. These are just some tips around doing this. We want to do some questions, right? Is that where we're at? Or Jessica, do you want to comment on anything before we move to the questions?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:00:17](#)):

Yeah. I think I'll just say a couple things before we move to questions. One was, one of the things I noticed in the chat was just a lot of ideas about what about this aspect of immune health or that aspect or this thing that works or that other thing that works, and it struck me as so much the process that Peggy and I and the authors went through ourselves. There's so much that we wanted to put in the manual and we had to keep drawing ourselves back to, we wanted to keep it very simple. We wanted to focus on the primary, primary things that impact immune health according to the literature with multiple, multiple studies so that the manual wouldn't be too overwhelming. So we could just help people get started with some simple behaviors and knowledge to improve their immune health and then let them go ahead and explore more and learn more and share more with each other outside of what we provided in the manual.

So, we just didn't want it to be too long or too complex because we worried people wouldn't use it, particularly in community mental health centers where they're so stretched for time and staff. Then I did notice in the chat, someone wanted to know what a prebiotic is. So a prebiotic, there are bacteria, healthy bacteria in everybody's gut, and prebiotics are the foods that feed those bacteria, so almost like fertilizer, and that's things like kimchi and pickles and some other things that feed those bacteria. A probiotic is something you take to add more of those bacteria into your system. That's the difference between those two.

**Teri Brister** ([01:01:56](#)):

So Peggy and Jessica, are you guys ready to take questions?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:02:03](#)):

Sure.

**Teri Brister** ([01:02:04](#)):

Terrific. If you will advance the slide. There we go.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:02:11](#)):

Trying to find where, yeah, here we go. The Q&A slide.

**Teri Brister** ([01:02:13](#)):

Perfect. Perfect. Perfect. Okay, so a couple of questions, and Jessica, you got to some of those already. The prebiotic was one of the questions that came up. They kind of fall into two categories. Some are about specific things people can do and some of the science that you presented. Nothing too complicated, and if it is too complicated, again, we may follow up with you when they check in with their medical director. But some are also about the materials specifically, accessing the materials and how to use those.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:02:47](#)):

Okay.

**Teri Brister** ([01:02:47](#)):

So let me start with some of the general questions first if I can, and then I will come back to the ones about the materials and the curriculum and the manuals.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:02:57](#)):

Sure.

**Teri Brister** ([01:02:58](#)):

So one of the first questions, and either of you feel free to take this, I won't direct them to one of you specifically, is rheumatoid disease related to psychiatric disorders? That's really kind of separate from what you presented, but I'm just curious if either of you came across anything in your research about a correlation between rheumatoid inflammatory diseases and psychiatric disorders.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:03:26](#)):

I did not, and Peggy might have. I'm happy to ask Dr. Charlie who works with us about this. It wouldn't surprise me because there is a lot of correlation between inflammation and depression and inflammation and dementia. I mean, there's a lot of things that-

**Teri Brister** ([01:03:44](#)):

Interplay, yeah.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:03:45](#)):

Yeah, interplay with inflammation, so it wouldn't surprise me, but I didn't see the specific research on it. But I'm happy to ask. You just have to email that to me so I remember.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:03:52](#)):

There is a bunch of, there's definitely research on this and I definitely think we can supply you some things on this. It wasn't really for this manual [inaudible 01:04:02].

**Teri Brister** ([01:04:02](#)):

Right, right.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:04:03](#)):

But is important, yeah.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:04:04](#)):

But it's an important factor. I think very important.

**Teri Brister** ([01:04:08](#)):

So another question that came in were asking about what factors can help optimize our diets or have a big, the biggest... That was the word that was in the question, but I'm wondering if there they're meaning having biggest impacts on our diets. Stages of life was one of the things that come out. Other than what you buy and what you eat. You talked about a lot of socioeconomic pieces, but just are there specific things and food costs? Somebody just typed that in there. Are there other specific things that you wanted to mention that people need to be aware of?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:04:52](#)):

I guess we can both take that. I would say what we emphasize first of all is doing, starting small and doing simple things to add to your diet so that you can keep it manageable, and we do emphasize trying to add more fresh fruits, more fresh vegetables, although they can be frozen because that's cheaper. But more fruits, more vegetables, beans, nuts, things like that to year diet as you can. I know Peggy can talk more about this, but there was a big emphasis too on let's go to the dollar store and find things that are affordable that are supporting immune health and make smoothies and make soups, so we really did try to keep in mind what people could afford and what they had access to in their own neighborhoods. But a real emphasis on trying to add more healthy foods because you don't want to make it so overwhelming that people won't do it or can't do it. I don't know if that answers the question and Peg, if you had anything else to add.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:05:47](#)):

Yeah. People have to start where they're at in a sense, I always see it as like, so try to figure out what's the best for you. Someone pointed out there's so many different things about our culture, our ethnicity, our body type [inaudible 01:05:59].

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:05:58](#)):

Right, for sure.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:05:59](#)):

So those are definitely things you just work with. Knowing your own diet, your own consumption is and then adding in things and trying things out small for yourself and having, I would say, I mean, this is basically just from personal observations and experiences, sort of a balance, a little bit of a balance of it. You can't get too caught up in the food because that could make you very overwhelmed or that could in of itself could cause a lot of anxiety for people, so it's kind of keep that balance of a little bit of trying something new.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:06:32](#)):

I agree. Also we found if, we didn't want to tell people what not to do because that also can just turn people off and make them overwhelmed and avoid it, so we focused more on what you can do. So, can you add an apple once a day? Can you add sweet potato? Can you add things like that? What can you add that would help your immune health versus what should you stop doing?

**Teri Brister** ([01:06:55](#)):

Those are both sets of comments from each of you, and for me personally. It's helpful to hear because one of the questions I had, where do you start? Where do you begin? And what I'm hearing both of you say is you start somewhere, you start small and look at what's going on in your life already. I heard Peggy speak to that. What's going on already that you can begin to address and like so much, and I heard one of you during as you were talking say, "Well, this sounds like something my mother would say." So much of this is themes that we know naturally. They seem like common sense, but we don't do them, so it sounds like a big part of this is paying attention to what's going on and think healthy and start somewhere. Someone had asked the question early on in the presentation about whether or not moderate exercise has a different impact on our immunity than high intensity. I'm sorry, on sleep. On sleep.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:08:07](#)):

Oh, on sleep.

**Teri Brister** ([01:08:08](#)):

There was a lot of conversation going on about sleep and what people do to help them sleep, so someone posed the question, if exercise helps sleep, is there a difference in the impact of moderate exercises versus high intensity exercise, or is it just any exercise?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:08:26](#)):

I don't know the research on that. I certainly could look into it. I'm not sure. I think it might be individualistic. I do know I saw there was some research on high intensity exercise can increase cortisol, so if you're sick, you don't want to do high intensity. You want to wait until you're feeling better before you start up with a huge exercise regimen. So, I do know it can increase some things in the body that can make it harder to recover if you're exercising too hard, so it kind of depends how you're feeling and then your own personal body makeup and your own strength. But in terms of the research, I need to look into that, so hopefully you can email me that question and I'm happy to.

**Teri Brister** ([01:09:08](#)):

I would think also and want to hear from you as well, Peggy, but I would think also that it's, like so many other things, this is our health, so doing anything that we do in consultation with whoever our healthcare providers are.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:09:24](#)):

Right, for sure. Right. Absolutely.

**Teri Brister** ([01:09:25](#)):

If you're concerned or if something's going on. Peggy, was there anything else you wanted to add to that one?

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:09:30](#)):

Yeah. No, that's exactly. Yeah, you want to work with whoever your supporters are, your family, whoever your supporters are in your healthcare, including with your healthcare providers and supporters, just work together because that's really, I think that makes it helpful. Because this is a we thing. The thing about this is this is something that helps caregivers, it helps family members. I see some other questions here about should we do this with children or whatever. I think we haven't tested it with children or anything, but some of this information could be used for many different groups, or pieces of it potentially could be just helpful information and you just have to tailor it to what's useful for you.

**Teri Brister** ([01:10:15](#)):

So why don't we, with that, why don't we move on into some of the questions about the actual materials themselves, and let me just give you, and you probably saw some of them coming through on the chat, but the things people want to know is how do we get this? So if you can tell people that again. Is there a cost? So, let's start there. Where do people access the materials? And we may need to back up to one of the slides.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:10:45](#)):

Yes. So let me, I'll do that. I was going to put it in the chat, but I'd have to stop sharing the slides to do that, so I put it-

**Teri Brister** ([01:10:51](#)):

That's okay.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:10:52](#)):

But let me get back there. This is free. You can download it right now. Our only caveat is if you were going to use it for research purposes or try to change it significantly in any way, that would require permission. But if you want to start using it for yourself or in a program or for family or any other thing that helps improve a life, just download it right here and start using it.

**Teri Brister** ([01:11:15](#)):

So that was one of the other questions that somebody had. Could it be used individually?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:11:23](#)):

Yes.

**Teri Brister** ([01:11:23](#)):

Does it have to be done in groups?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:11:24](#)):

No.



**Teri Brister** ([01:11:24](#)):

Is it something I can do, and I think what I heard you just say is, yes, I can go in as a person, download this and start going through the materials on my own.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:11:34](#)):

Yes. So we make it available as a five session thing and then we make each module available separately. Also, you could just go in and say, "Oh, I'm meeting with somebody today who's having a hard time sleeping. I'm just going to use parts of the sleep module to help this person." You don't even have to use the whole thing, right? You could just use, I want to try the sleep diary with this person, or I want to try setting a sleep goal with this person. So you can also pick and choose from the modules what you think would help yourself or somebody else.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:12:03](#)):

Like in our respite, it wound up being the sleep and the stress were the bigger ones, because the people were there for shorter days, so the peer supporters worked closely with them on those things because that seemed the most useful. And then also in our supportive housing, actually the module two was big with them because a lot of it was about them getting health physicals and things like that. We had the people did it individually and then the others did it in these kind of group formats.

**Teri Brister** ([01:12:37](#)):

I remember early on being in a conversation with Dr. Cook as you guys were beginning to map this out, if you will, and her saying that it really was going to be a suite of resources, and that's what it sounds like you've developed, because I can literally, or anybody else, can go into it and pick and choose what do I need, what's relevant to me right now, which goes along with what you were saying earlier about start somewhere.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:13:03](#)):

Yes.

**Teri Brister** ([01:13:04](#)):

Pick something and start somewhere.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:13:05](#)):

Yeah, and start small. So just like this person I'm working with or me myself, I'm not going to change my diet. It's just too hard, and I don't like plants. I hate vegetables. They taste like crap. It feels like eating dirt. So that's not where you're going to start, right? You're going to start maybe with your stress or your sleep or maybe I just need to go get my annual physical this year. So, you'll start where you feel you can do it and you're interested in doing it. So, that's a big focus. I do want to mention, somebody had said early on, just questioning about the vaccine information. So just want to emphasize again, we only present that vaccinations do these specific things and you decide for yourself whether or not you want them, so there's literally no pressure to get any vaccination if somebody doesn't want it. We just present the information about what they do in terms of immune health and then people decide.

**Teri Brister** ([01:13:55](#)):

People make their own decision.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:13:56](#)):

They'll make their own decision. That's right.

**Teri Brister** ([01:13:58](#)):

That's very much in line with NAMI. We want you to know what to think about and the questions to ask and then you decide what's best for yourself. Someone just popped a question into the pod that goes along with one that someone had earlier. The question that just got popped in is can you speak one more time to who the target audience is for the curriculum? And you just talked a little bit about how it could be used by whoever's using it, and during the presentation you talked a lot about presenting it in groups to it sounded like people who were living in recovery.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:14:33](#)):

Right.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:14:33](#)):

Yes. Yes.

**Teri Brister** ([01:14:35](#)):

What about their family members? What about, are there things in there that are helpful for family members? I heard you say, Peggy, that it hasn't been tested with adolescents, with children, but what about family members?

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:14:49](#)):

Yes.

**Teri Brister** ([01:14:50](#)):

Is there information in here that can be helpful for them?

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:14:53](#)):

Absolutely, and it did have family members. Many of the people in the centers are probably both potentially family members. More likely they identify in recovery, but they're also family members, so we did have a mix. We didn't fully roll it out with these cohorts that we had, but it's definitely applicable to family members or caregivers and people in recovery. Yeah.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:15:21](#)):

I will say, so our center at UIC is funded to help improve the lives of people in recovery, so that's generally what our materials are geared towards. But many of the materials we make available, this immune health, but we also have a lot of materials for journaling and wellness and diabetes management. We have a lot of stuff and anybody can use that. You can have lived experience. You can be a supporter of someone or family member. You can be a teenager. We've had high schools use this just for all the teenagers. Doesn't matter what their needs are. So it's adaptable to anybody, but the center itself really is geared toward people in recovery.

**Teri Brister** ([01:16:02](#)):

I'm a huge fan, not a paid endorsement, just a personal endorsement. I'm a huge fan of the resources that are available through the center. I mean, there is such a wealth of information there, and we've had Dr. Cook on presenting before.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:16:16](#)):

I'm going to scroll down to the link while you're saying that.

**Teri Brister** ([01:16:19](#)):

Perfect. There is, so I encourage people to go and explore a little bit more. I loved seeing one of the questions that came in, which still ties into the audience. Someone asked suggestions for using this in individual therapy sessions, and what I love about the way this webinar NAMI Ask the Expert has evolved is we do have more healthcare professionals that join us and behavioral healthcare professionals. So, thoughts that you have about using the materials in therapy.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:16:52](#)):

Yeah. I think it would be the same thing, so if you were working with someone in therapy who's struggling with sleep or stress or has barriers to getting to the doctor, you could use some of this framework we have where you can simply explain the information, you can assess where you are with it and what do you want to try to do and then engage in what can we do together. So, there's a sleep diary. There's a way to set a sleep goal. There's a stress goal that you can set. So, there's lots of different activities people can do based on what you're working on in therapy.

**Teri Brister** ([01:17:27](#)):

Excellent. Peggy, anything that you wanted to add?

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:17:29](#)):

No, I think it's a nice that a lot of the people who, they worked work on one and one in the supportive housing programs, they definitely worked with people more individually on some of the things, and like I said, they maybe didn't go through all five of the modules. They went through two of them because that was the immediate issue for the person, so it was nice the way it could be unpacked.

**Teri Brister** ([01:17:50](#)):

Great. Here's an easy question and I'm guessing the answer is yes. Does the manual include a bibliography so that people can do further study?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:17:59](#)):

Yes. Yes. Yes, so each module-

**Teri Brister** ([01:18:00](#)):

[inaudible 01:18:01].

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:18:00](#)):

Yes. So we provided the main studies for each module. It probably could be updated again. There's so much research that comes out every day, right?

**Teri Brister** ([01:18:10](#)):

Exactly.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:18:10](#)):

But it's the main research we use to develop the manuals.

**Teri Brister** ([01:18:14](#)):

Terrific. Any suggestions? Because this was a question that popped up, too. Anything that you've learned about what not to do with the materials or things that you tried that you thought, "This is such a good idea," and it really didn't work. Anything like that that comes to mind?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:18:33](#)):

I can't think of anything yet. I will have the caveat that this just came out. This is a very new manual, so we don't have tons and tons of experience yet. Pegs rolled it out in New Jersey, but it is a relatively new manual, and actually we just got funded by the federal government to study its effectiveness as an evidence-based practice, so over the next few years we'll be studying it.

**Teri Brister** ([01:18:53](#)):

Congratulations.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:18:54](#)):

Thank you. But I can't think of anything. I think because we really do focus on what do you want to do and then let's fill that in, right? So we don't come in and say you got to stop eating this and you absolutely have to get vaccinated and you better get to the doctor. Right? We don't start in that way. We start with, where are you at with your immune health and what do you feel like you'd like to do to improve your sleep or your stress or your access to annual health screenings? I think when you start with what the person's interested in and build on their strengths and what they're already doing well, you can't go too far wrong.

**Teri Brister** ([01:19:28](#)):

It goes back to those wellness [inaudible 01:19:32]. It's all person centered. It's all the person's choice. It's how does it fit into your lifestyle? That's super helpful to hear. I'm going to ask this question again. Think I know the answer, but I want to hear both of your responses. Someone posed the question, what about people who have eating disorders? I guess I would like to hear your responses if y'all have had any experience with sharing the material with people who had eating disorders, but also reminding everybody on the webinar, there's so much more in here than just the diet and just the food piece. But I'm just curious, has that come up in any of the centers where you've shared the materials so far?

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:20:20](#)):

Well, I think there's probably some people who've had some, maybe identify with eating disorders. But I think what the good thing about it, it reinforces healthy eating, like being more mindful of the health promotion value of eating, so if you have challenges in whatever variation of an eating disorder, it's going to potentially help reinforce the positive health promoting aspect of the eating. Not restricting. It's trying to help you understand that... It's the kind of thing that can have a positive benefit if someone has, depending on the kind of eating disorder that they have and depending on other things. But I think it can just almost have a really positive impact on someone who might struggle with weight, or one way or the other they're restricting and things like that.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:21:11](#)):

Yeah. I would say I agree, and I would say also, so had a very, very severe eating disorder, and I would say that probably if I use this material with her, I would do a very light touch on the eating aspect. I think I'd avoid talking about what are you eating or not eating because the obsessiveness with diet and what she was doing. I think I probably would've started with let's deal with maybe your sleep and some of your stress because I think those things were related to her eating disorder. So, I probably would do a light touch on focusing on anything around diet depending on where they are in their journey of eating disorder.

**Teri Brister** ([01:21:54](#)):

Well, and almost all of your responses, and this certainly came through in the presentation, a couple of common themes. Start somewhere. It very much is about what do you do. What can you do, what can you think about doing differently? And that it's not prescriptive. It really is kind of like a menu. Look at this and see what would be helpful for you. You're probably seeing it in the comments that people are really appreciative of the information that you've shared, the fact that the materials are available free and the fact that that it can be self-directed, that it's not something you have... A lot of NAMI's programs, you have to wait until they start one so that you can participate. The idea that you can download this and access it as you need to I think is tremendous, and want to thank you both for sharing this with us. Any closing comments from either of you before I wrap us up?

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:22:52](#)):

Jessica, so on the landing site there's the manual, but there's also a little podcast there. You want to mention about that, Jessica?

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:23:00](#)):

Sure. So for this manual and for all of our tools and our solution suite, and there's the link right here, there is a podcast that describes the material and then there's a how-to training webinar that accompanies it, so each material has also kind of visual aids and podcasts and webinars on how to use them and it's all for free. We want people to go ahead and use them. Well, free in the sense that it's the taxpayer's dollars, right?

**Teri Brister** ([01:23:26](#)):

Free to the user.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:23:27](#)):

Because we're federally funded, your taxpayer's dollars is allowing you to have all of this stuff for free as you should.

**Teri Brister** ([01:23:33](#)):

Free to the user.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:23:35](#)):

Free to the user. I think Peggy and I just, and Teri, you've said it too. We want to emphasize that we're all about empowering people to do the things that feel right for them and work for them and consider what they want to add to start improving their immune health and not prescribe anything or tell people what to do or what not to do. I think that's what has made it really popular in terms of just, let's work on what you can do to start improving your immune health and your overall health for that matter.

**Teri Brister** ([01:24:04](#)):

I'm thinking about my primary care appointment just this past Monday where my doctor said, "I'm going to give you this list one more time of the healthy things you need to be doing, and I invite you to consider it."

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:24:15](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

**Teri Brister** ([01:24:17](#)):

Yeah, there's a lot to be said for that approach.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:24:19](#)):

Yeah.

**Teri Brister** ([01:24:20](#)):

So again, thank you. Thank you, both.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:24:21](#)):

Well, thank you all. Thank you. You guys had great ideas. Everybody's doing so many wonderful things. I love it.

**Teri Brister** ([01:24:26](#)):

Great. And if you will, Jessica, if you don't mind, if you will forward to the next slide, please.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:24:34](#)):

Oh, yes. Yes.

**Teri Brister** ([01:24:34](#)):

It's a couple up. Thank you.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:24:36](#)):

Absolutely.

**Teri Brister** ([01:24:36](#)):

Since you are driving. One more. There we go. We want to encourage all of you to save the date for Thursday, December the 8th, which is our next installation of the NAMI Ask the Expert, and it'll be the last one for 2022, and we are going to have something unique. We are going to be hearing about the biological mechanisms of how music can affect our emotions and moods. We thought this was a very timely presentation for the holiday season, but also interesting and something different to think about that can impact the way we feel about ourselves and about others. So again, December the 15th, that one will be coming up. And if you'll go to the next slide? NAMI's written a little book. You may not be aware. That's why we don't have Dr. Duckworth with us today.

NAMI's first book, *You Are Not Alone*, has now been released and encourage you to go to [YouAreNotAlonebook.org](http://YouAreNotAlonebook.org). Learn more about it. Many of you are in here. If it's not you personally, it is your story because that very much is what it's based on is people with lived experience talking about how they got through what they got through and then experts in the field commenting on some of the best practices. So, wanted to remind people that it's out there. And then if you will go one more slide, that would be terrific. Want to give a huge shout out before we close out to the folks behind the scene, behind the curtain, as Dan Gillison would say. Jordan Miller is the senior producer of these episodes. We also had Leticia Enos, Chelsea Kavanaugh, Divanna Eckles and Christina Bott on the call with us this afternoon, helping with the chat and with the Q&A, and these could not happen without our wonderful staff behind the scenes.

And last but not least, speaking of free to participants. Jessica, you did a perfect segue for me. This series is not produced for free, but it's certainly made available for free and it's possible cause of donations from our wonderful sponsors, so just want to make you all aware that they exist and there are people that are making this happen for all of us. I hope all of you have a wonderful Thanksgiving, which almost seems kind of counterintuitive after we've been talking about good healthy diets, right?

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:27:11](#)):

Oh, but sweet potatoes.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:27:13](#)):

That's right.

**Teri Brister** ([01:27:14](#)):

There you go.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:27:15](#)):

Turkey is associated with sleep, right? Turkey and good sleep.

**Teri Brister** ([01:27:18](#)):

There you go.

**Peggy Swarbrick** ([01:27:19](#)):

You saw all the healthy banana bread they made and stuff. You got to have balance.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:27:25](#)):

Yeah. You'll be fine. I think also-

**Teri Brister** ([01:27:26](#)):

See, you give us hope. You give us hope, so thank you. But everybody have a wonderful Thanksgiving. Thank you for joining us this afternoon. And again, Jessica and Peggy, thank you for a wonderful presentation.

**Jessica Jonikas** ([01:27:35](#)):

Thank you.

**Teri Brister** ([01:27:36](#)):

Good evening, everybody.