

New Year. Realistic Goals. Healthier Futures

As we start the new year, many people set goals with the hope of becoming healthier, happier, and more fulfilled. While ambition is powerful, setting realistic goals is what leads to lasting change. Small, intentional steps taken consistently can create meaningful progress over time. Give yourself grace, stay patient, and remember that growth doesn't have to be perfect to be impactful.

Knowing Your Numbers

What is BMI?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a screening tool that uses height and weight to estimate whether a person is underweight, at a healthy weight, overweight, or obese. While BMI does not measure body fat directly, it can help identify potential health risks and open the door to important conversations with your healthcare provider.

Why BMI Matters

BMI is one piece of the overall health picture. It should be considered along with factors like physical activity, nutrition, family history, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels.

Higher BMI: What You Should Know

A higher BMI may increase the risk of:

- Heart disease and high blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Joint pain and mobility issues
- Certain cancers
- Sleep apnea and breathing problems

Managing weight through balanced nutrition, physical activity, and regular checkups can significantly reduce these risks.

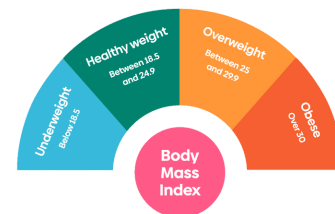
Lower BMI: What You Should Know

A lower BMI may be associated with:

- Nutritional deficiencies
- Weakened immune system
- Fatigue and low energy
- Bone loss or fertility challenges

If BMI is too low, it's important to speak with a healthcare provider to ensure the body is receiving adequate nutrients and support.

BMI measurements fall into 4 different weight categories



📌 **Remember : BMI is a guide not a diagnosis. Your health is personal and multifaceted.**

Mental Health & the New Year

Finding Balance in a Fresh Start

The beginning of a new year often brings excitement, reflection, and motivation but it can also bring pressure, stress, and emotional fatigue. Prioritizing mental health is just as important as physical health.

Advocate for Mental Health

Mental health matters at every stage of life. Speaking up, seeking help, and supporting others helps reduce stigma and strengthens our community.

Welcoming a Fresh Start

A new year offers:

- A chance to reset habits
- Opportunities to reflect and realign priorities
- Motivation to care for yourself in new ways

When the New Year Feels Heavy

- Financial stress after the holidays
- Seasonal depression or isolation
- Pressure to “do more” or “be better”
- Feelings of grief or loss

You are not alone in these experiences

Choosing Peace in the New Year

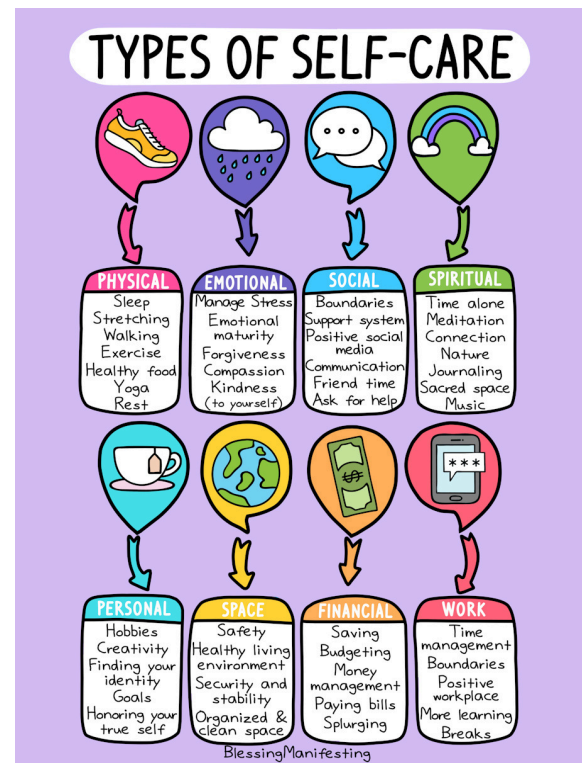
Instead of resolutions, consider intentions

- “I will give myself permission to rest”
- “I will ask for help when I need it”
- “I will say NO and honor my boundaries”
- “I will protect my peace”

Nurturing Your Mental Health Daily

- Establish a consistent sleep routine
- Practice daily gratitude through positive self-talk and affirmations that build confidence and self-esteem
- Move your body in ways that feel good
- Limit social media when it becomes overwhelming
- Stay connected with supportive people
- Protect your peace by stepping away from negative environments

Self-care is not selfish, it's necessary!



I CHOOSE PEACE.

Perimenopause & Menopause: What No One Prepared Us For

A message From Me to You

Ladies, I am 48 years young, and let me tell you, perimenopause and menopause are no joke. This is a season of life I honestly wasn't prepared for. The changes came quickly, quietly, and in ways I didn't always recognize at first. From hot flashes and night sweats to weight gain and skin changes, I found myself asking, "Is this really happening to me?"

You're Not Alone and You're Not Imagining It

Perimenopause and menopause are real life transitions that affect our bodies, minds, and emotion yet so many women feel unprepared when the symptoms begin. This phase can look different for every woman, but one thing is certain: you are not alone!

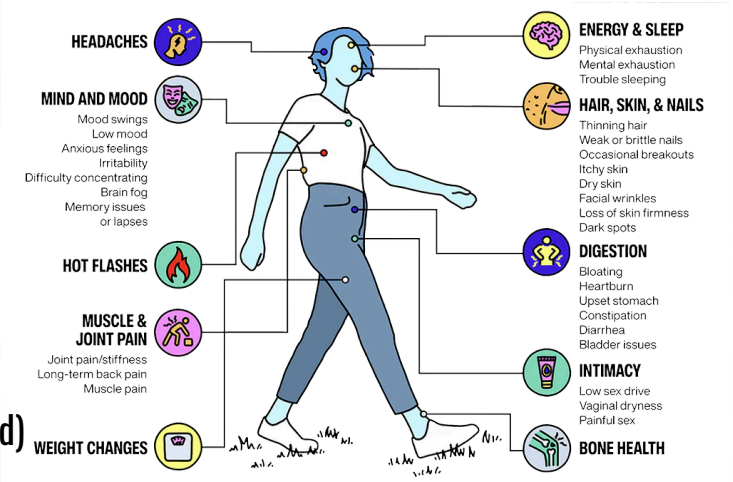
When Does it Happen

- It usually begins in your 40s but can start in your 30s or extend into your 50s, lasting anywhere from a few years to a decade or more.
- The entire phase ends when you've done 12 consecutive months without a period, signaling menopause.

Common Symptoms to Look Out For

Women may experience one or several of the following:

- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Weight gain (especially around the midsection)
- Itchy or dry skin
- Fatigue
- Mood changes
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia)
- Brain fog
- Increased sensitivity to foods or stress
- Irregular periods (shorter, longer, heavier, or skipped)
- Joint pain



My Personal Experience

I want to be transparent and share my journey because I know so many women are silently navigating the same thing.

I've personally experienced:

- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Itchy skin
- Weight gain
- Brain Fog

I also notice certain foods trigger my symptoms, especially:

- Fried and fatty foods
- Chips and sweets
- Fast food
- Spicy foods

Something as little as a few M&M's will trigger a hot flash

Natural Lifestyle Tips That May Help Manage

While every woman's body is different, these approaches may help reduce symptoms and improve overall wellness:

- Stay hydrated throughout the day (drink water)
- Eat balanced meals with more whole foods
- Reduce processed, fried, and sugary foods
- Manage stress (deep breathing, walking, journaling, prayer, meditation)
- Prioritize sleep and rest
- Dress in breathable layers
- Move your body regularly - light to moderate workouts such as walking, strength training, yoga, stretching, dance, or low impact cardio.
- Exercise can help with weight management, mood, sleep, and reducing hot flash intensity

Natural Herbs & Teas (Some Women Find Helpful)

- Mushroom teas (such as Reishi or Lion's Mane)
- Wild yam root
- Black Cohosh
- Ashwagandha
- Herbal teas like chamomile or peppermint



! Important Reminder

Always consult with your physician or health care provider before starting any herbs, teas, supplements, or lifestyle changes to ensure they are safe and appropriate for you.

Let's Build This Together

I also want to put this out there - are you willing and ready to start a lifestyle change journey? Because I am.

For me, I've decided that I would rather try changing my lifestyle, how I eat, how I move my body, and how I manage stress before jumping straight to prescribed medication. That may not be everyone's path or goals, but it's the one I'm choosing for myself right now.

I have a gym membership at the Richard W. & Eugenia C. Atkinson Recreation Center, and I'm looking for a few workout partners who want to move with purpose, consistency, and grace. Nothing extreme just showing up, moving our bodies, holding each other accountable, and doing what we can to feel better from inside out.

This isn't about perfection. It's about progress.

It's about choosing ourselves.

And it's about not doing this alone.

If you're ready to make small changes, learn as you go, and support one another through this phase of life, I'd love to connect with you.

Email me: jmurphy@youngstownohio.gov

Let's walk this journey together one workout, one meal, one honest conversation at a time.