

# Montana's Peer Network

Montana Youth  
Transitions  
Conference

[Click here](#)

November 5-7  
Missoula

Like us on

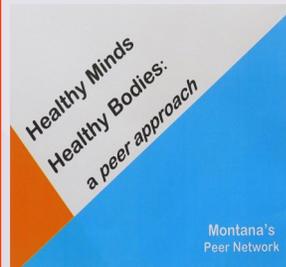


Member  
Count  
409

## Epigenetics and the Mind/Body Connection

(**Epigenetics** is the external modifications to DNA that turn genes "on" or "off." These modifications do not change the DNA sequence, but instead, they affect how cells "read" genes.)

The science of Epigenetics is quickly spreading throughout the literature addressing the effects of diet, lifestyle, stress, trauma, obesity, etc. To make sense of these articles it's necessary to have a simple understanding of Epigenetics.



It is stated that we cannot control 30% of our genetic makeup which means we can control 70%. Epigenetics refers to those external modifications that can be made to our DNA by turning on and off particular genes. We can do this through lifestyle choices, exercise, diet, reducing stress, etc. This a simple explanation for a very complicated process but we do play a huge part.

Another trend within the science of Epigenetics is for writers to emphasize the mother's role in passing these genes affected by stress, diet, trauma, etc. down to their children. The following article: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/13.7/2014/08/25/343121679/using-science-to-blame-mothers-check-your-values> cautions us to not forget that there are also "paternal effects" as well as other aspects of a child's environment that play a part in the genes' expression. All of these indications call for society's role in offering support, education, and a safe environment to adults and children alike.

There are also innumerable studies showing the physiological and metabolic changes in the body brought on by chronic stress, trauma, or the way we view life. See MPN's Facebook page for an article tying cynicism to the risk of dementia. The relationship between a healthy mind and a healthy body is being studied everywhere we look. It's very exciting to think we can have such an impact in our efforts to live longer, happier, and healthier lives!

**Robin Johnson**, Assistant Director MPN

[www.whatiseigenetics.com](http://www.whatiseigenetics.com)

**Psychcentral.com**

**Good resource!**

**SAMHSA NEWS online**

**[www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)**

*Hey Members*

*Are you interested in being more involved with MPN and the recovery movement?*

**Then consider becoming a peer advocate for MPN.**

**What is a peer advocate you say?**

**We need members do help spread the word about recovery, advocate locally and be the eyes and ears for MPN in your own community.**

**Training provided**

**Contact Assistant Director Robin Johnson 406-590-7822 or email her [robin@mtpeernetwork.org](mailto:robin@mtpeernetwork.org) to request a peer advocate program packet.**

**Activities of a peer advocate-**



**Provide peer support locally**

**Start a support group**

**Share your recovery story**

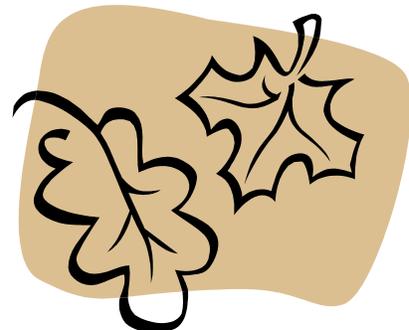
**Educate providers**

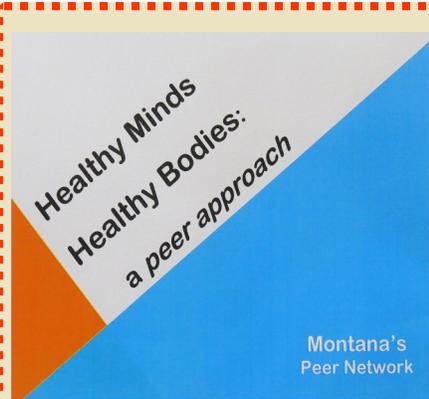
**Distribute literature**

**Wellness Tool of the Month: Meditation**



**October 6-8 MPN will be in Portland Oregon presenting on “peer support” and “How to build a successful peer organization” at the 2nd annual Peerpocolypse hosted by Peerlink or Oregon.**





Montana's Peer Network is currently working on a Healthy Minds Healthy Bodies workbook. The workbook is based on SAMHSA's 8 dimensions of wellness. It is filled with worksheets, goal setting plans and information around each dimension. It also includes articles on co-occurring, trauma informed care, peer support and whole health wellness. Publication is expected by years end.

## Q & A

*Dear MPN,*

*I am stressed! Stress itself stresses me out. Why am I so stressed all the time. No sooner do I get over one thing I am confronted with another. Stress its like the chewing gum on the bottom of your shoe on a warm day. You never quite get all of it off. You know what I mean? Can you help?*

Sincerely,

*Ms. Overwhelmed*

Thank you for the letter MS. Overwhelmed. According to WebMD.com "stress is the bodies reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental and emotional responses." and that "43% of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress." So you are not alone. One of the best ways I have found to reduce stress is through walking or hiking. But many people take up meditation or use a wellness tool like mindfulness to relax and quite the muscles and mind. Check out [stress.about.com](http://stress.about.com) for a list of the top ten ways to lower stress levels. Another option is a new trend called [LaughterYoga.org](http://LaughterYoga.org) I hear it's a blast!

Send your questions to MPN at [jim@mtpeernetwork.org](mailto:jim@mtpeernetwork.org) we will pick one each month to publish in the newsletter. Thank you, MPN staff

