Introduction

Churches United for Fair Housing (CUFFH) is a grassroots organization working to achieve community empowerment through organizing, youth engagement, and by providing sophisticated social services. CUFFH organizes towards preserving and creating vibrant communities that are not exclusive and that are truly affordable to working families in NYC.

CUFFH believes that vibrant, healthy and resilient communities as well as the livelihoods of each individual member are created through a multi-disciplinary and cross-sector approach which prioritizes housing, health, and education among other community services.

This booklet was created to serve as a holistic resource about health education, and provide a range of community resources which can help overcome threats to health and personal development. We believe that distributing health education freely and equally to all will increase ability and access to services for all community members, regardless of race, immigration-status, socio-economic status, religion, or sexual /gender identity, and build resilience towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

What is health?

Health is an important part of our lives, oftentimes when we think of health, we limit our thinking to just diet and exercise. Health is so much more than that, it encompasses every area of our well-beings and livelihoods, and each area must be nourished in order for us to function to our fullest capabilities - our physical health, mental health, sexual health, financial health, and finally our environment, where we work, live and eat.

In this booklet you will find resources, facts, and tips for physical health, mental health, sexual health, financial health, and sustainability.

Physical Fitness

Participating in regular physical activity fosters normal growth and development, can reduce the risk of various chronic diseases, and can make people feel better, function better, and sleep better. Some health benefits start immediately after activity, and even short bouts of physical activity are beneficial. (CDC, 2019)

Finding the time to get active every day is very important, even for only 20 minutes. To improve your health and decrease risk of physical illnesses and ailments, it is important to regularly do muscle-strengthening exercises, balance-training exercises, aerobic activities, and moderate and intense aerobic exercises.

It is important to have an annual check-up or “physical” with your physician, and to routinely check out your body and your blood pressure and blood sugar levels for ailments like diabetes.

See the CDC’s website for immunization schedules to receive according to your age bracket.
Examples of free activities you can do in NYC:

For aerobic exercises, you can:
• Walk/jog
• Dance
• Swim
• Take water aerobics or other exercise classes
• Ride a bike

To strengthen muscles, you can:
• Work with exercise bands or hand-held weights
• Carry groceries
• Dig, lift or carry items while gardening
• Do pull-ups, push-ups, sit-ups or other resistance exercises

To improve your balance, you can:
• Walk backwards, sideways, on your heels and on your toes
• Stand up from a sitting position
• Take a tai chi class
• Practice yoga poses or take a class

Source: https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/physical-activity.page

Shape Up NYC offers dozens of free and fun fitness classes each day across the city, from zumba to cardio to yoga to kickboxing.

Source: https://www.nycgovparks.org/programs/recreation/shape-up-nyc

Nutrition Tips

The first step to embracing healthy eating habits is to know the benefits and risks of the food you can find in your neighborhood. Be aware that food marketing can influence your choices, but better information can help you make the right choices for your health.

Get informed and you can start taking small, concrete steps to adopt a healthier pattern of eating today.
**Eat Whole Foods From the Earth**

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables to lower your risk of heart disease and some cancers. Eat more proteins from plants, such as beans, seeds, and nuts. These protein sources have less saturated fat than many animal proteins and can help create a healthier planet.

**Limit Processed Foods and Drinks**

Avoid sugary drinks to reduce your risk for a variety of health conditions. Choose less sodium to reduce your risk of high blood pressure and heart disease. Avoid trans fat, which increases your risk of heart disease, and choose vegetable oils instead. Checking food labels is important! Be mindful of the ingredients you are consuming.

**Mental Health**

1 in 5 New Yorkers experience a mental health disorder. However, mental disorders are often silent and because so many people feel shame or fear, many do not seek treatment and cope with symptoms for far too long.

There are many ways to access support, but first let’s identify some common disorders.

If you don’t already have good eating habits making a change can be challenging. A good way to start making better choices is by increasing water intake (8 x 8 ounce glasses per day), and adding at least one vegetable or fruit per day until it becomes easier.

Source: [https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/eating-well.page](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/eating-well.page)
What is depression?

Depression is a common medical condition that affects many people. It can affect the body, behavior, and mind. It can interfere with a person’s life. Depression makes it hard to go through normal, daily activities such as sleeping, eating, or working. It can also hurt relationships with families and friends.

Symptoms: Feeling sad or anxious, Feeling bad about yourself, Feelings of guilt or feeling “empty inside”, Feeling tired, having less energy than usual, Loss of interest or pleasure in activities you enjoy, Problems with paying attention, remembering, or making decisions, Eating too much or too little, Gaining or losing weight, Trouble with falling asleep or sleeping too much, Thoughts of hurting yourself or death

If you have any of the above symptoms for at least 2 weeks, you may be suffering from depression.

You’re not alone

People who may be suffering from depression should know that they are not alone, it’s not their fault, and there is help. One in 12 adult New Yorkers suffers from depression. If you suffer from depression, you may feel embarrassed or afraid of what others may think of you. But you should not feel afraid to speak up and get help. Depression can be managed and treated.

Source: https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/services/depression/

What is Anxiety?

Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks).

These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time. You may avoid places or situations to prevent these feelings. Symptoms may start during childhood or the teen years and continue into adulthood.

Common anxiety signs and symptoms include: Feeling nervous, restless or tense, Having a sense of impending danger, panic or doom, Having an increased heart rate, Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation), Sweating, Trembling, Feeling weak or tired, Trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry, Having trouble sleeping

If you’re anxious, get help early. Anxiety, like many other mental health conditions, can be harder to treat if you wait. Stay active. Participate in activities that you enjoy and that make you feel good about yourself. Enjoy social interaction and caring relationships, which can lessen your worries. Avoid alcohol or drug use. Alcohol and drug use can cause or worsen anxiety. If you’re addicted to any of these substances, quitting can make you anxious. If you can’t quit on your own, see your doctor or find a support group to help you.

Source: https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961

All New Yorkers have free access to NYC Well. It provides support for mental health and substance use issues 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Contact NYC Well for free, confidential information and advice, 24/7.

Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355)
Text WELL to 65173

If someone is in immediate danger of harming themselves, or someone else, call 911.
Stay mentally healthy

by following these simple steps:

1. Connect with others. Develop and keep strong relationships with people who will support you.

2. Play! Plan something fun! – Make time every day to enjoy something you really like to do. Be silly and laugh – laughter can recharge you.

3. Ask for help. Everyone hits bumps in the road. Ask a friend, co-worker or teacher for help and advice. Call 1-888-NYC-WELL (1-888-692-9355) for suggestions. We all need help sometimes.

4. Take care of yourself. It’s easier to feel happy if your body feels good. Exercise. Enjoy a good breakfast. Drink water, have a healthy snack and eat a balanced diet.

5. Rest. Sleep restores both your mind and body. Aim for 7 hours of sleep at least. Go to bed and get up at a regular time each day.

6. Deal with stress. Pay attention to what makes you stressed, where you feel it in your body, and how you react to it. This will help you to better manage your stress. Learn to express anger when it’s “small” instead of allowing it to build. Relaxation breathing, yoga or meditation can help.

7. Think about today. Too often we are thinking about the past or planning for the future instead of living in the present. Focus on living “in the moment.”

8. Give back. Volunteer for a cause or an issue you care about. Help out a co-worker, neighbor, or friend. Find ways to contribute, it can help you feel good about yourself and who you are in the world.

9. Challenge yourself. Learn a new skill or set a difficult goal. Try something different, commit to fitness or a healthy eating goal, learn to cook something new, or learn a new computer skill. Learning improves your mental fitness. Drink less alcohol and avoid all other drugs. Sometimes people misuse alcohol and other drugs can make problems worse.

10. Close your eyes. Breathe in and feel your stomach muscles relax. Hold it for a moment. Purse your lips, and breathe out slowly as if you are slowly blowing out candles on a birthday cake. Feel your stomach muscles tighten as you empty your breath. Repeat, SLOWLY, 2 times or more as needed.

Source: https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/coping-wellness-tips/tips-for-staying-mentally-healthy/

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress. That is because breathing deeply tells your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. The things that happen when you are stressed, such as a fast heart rate, fast breathing, and high blood pressure, all decrease as you breathe deeply to relax.

1. Close your eyes.
2. Breathe in and feel your stomach muscles relax.
3. Hold it for a moment.
4. Purse your lips, and breathe out slowly as if you are slowly blowing out candles on a birthday cake. Feel your stomach muscles tighten as you empty your breath.
5. Repeat, SLOWLY, 2 times or more as needed.

Source: https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/coping-wellness-tips/take-a-deep-breath/

Every public hospital in New York has a clinic for mental health, and it’s worth checking your local hospital out for more information. Kings County Hospital’s Behavioral Health Center offers adult psychotherapy on a sliding scale.

Alternative Solutions

Some alternative treatments you can check out for overall health are acupuncture and reiki healing. Many wellness centers offer sliding scale fees and affordable options.

Acupuncture

Traditional Chinese medicine explains that health is the result of a harmonious balance of the complementary extremes of “yin” and “yang” of the life force known as “qi,” pronounced “chi.” If the flow of energy gets blocked, like water getting stuck behind a dam, the disruption can lead to pain, lack of function, or illness. Acupuncture therapy can release blocked qi in the body and stimulate function, evoking the body’s natural healing response through various physiological systems. Modern research has demonstrated acupuncture’s effects on the nervous system, endocrine and immune systems, cardiovascular system, and digestive system. By stimulating the body’s various systems, acupuncture can help to resolve pain, and improve sleep, digestive function, and sense of well-being.

Reiki

Reiki is an energy healing art with its roots in Japanese origin. The word Reiki comes from the Japanese word (Rei) which means “Universal Life” and (Ki) which means “Energy”. Reiki is not affiliated with any particular religion or religious practice. It is not massage nor is it based on belief or suggestion. It is a subtle and effective form of energy work using spiritually guided life force energy. Reiki is a great tool for stress reduction and relaxation. Reiki is not a cure for a disease or illness, but it may assist the body to facilitate healing. It is a great tool to use as a complement to traditional medicine and is practiced in many hospitals and medical care settings.
Sexual health

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are passed from person to person through sex, including vaginal, anal or oral sex. STIs are sometimes called sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Many people with an STI have no signs or symptoms. You can feel healthy and not know that you have an STI. The only way to know if you have an STI is to get tested.

If symptoms are present, they may include:
• Discharge from the penis
• Unusual vaginal discharge
• Burning during urination
• Intense itching
• Sores on or around the vagina, penis or anus
• Stomach cramps unrelated to menstrual cycle

Prevention

Sex is safer and more enjoyable when you and your partner(s) know that you do not have an STI. If you are having sex, here are some tips for preventing STIs:

• Use condoms as often as possible. Condoms are effective at preventing many STIs, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and HIV. Condoms can prevent STIs during vaginal, anal and oral sex.
• Consider PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to prevent HIV. PrEP is a pill you take daily to reduce the risk of HIV infection. Talk to your health care provider, or find one of the many clinics with experience providing PrEP in NYC.
• Take emergency PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) if you are exposed to HIV. PEP can stop HIV infection if started within 36 hours (but not beyond 72 hours) of exposure. Go to an emergency room, clinic or NYC Sexual Health Clinic and ask for emergency PEP to prevent HIV, or call the NYC PEP Hotline at (844) 3-PEPNYC (844-373-7692).
• Get vaccinated. Some STIs can be prevented with a vaccine, including HPV (human papillomavirus, a virus that can cause cancer and genital warts), hepatitis A and hepatitis B (viruses that can cause liver cancer).
• Get tested regularly.

When to Get Tested

Do not wait until you experience symptoms to get tested for STIs. Many infected people with STIs do not feel sick or experience any symptoms.

• Sexually active women under 25 years old should be tested annually for chlamydia and gonorrhea.
• Sexually active gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men should be tested annually for HIV, syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea.
• This group should be tested every three to six months if they have multiple or anonymous partners.
• Pregnant persons should be tested for syphilis, HIV and hepatitis B early in pregnancy.

For more information, see the CDC’s STI and HIV screening recommendations.

Source: https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/sexually-transmitted-diseases.page
**HIV**

(Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). HIV attacks the body's immune system and makes the person more likely to get other infections. If not treated, HIV weakens the body's immune system and can lead to AIDS. The only way to know for sure if you have HIV is to get tested.

**Why Get Treatment**

STIs can have lasting effects on your body. Some infections can cause damage to your vision, hearing, brain and cardiovascular system. They can make you more likely to get or spread HIV. Many STIs can cause infertility. Some infections can also be passed to a baby during pregnancy, leading to birth defects or stillbirth.

**Sexual Health Clinics**

You can get low- to no-cost services for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, at the NYC Department of Health's eight Sexual Health Clinics. The Health Department's Sexual Health Clinics provide low- to no-cost confidential services, including testing, treatment and prevention. Anyone 12 years and older who wants testing for HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis can receive these services at our clinics, even if they have no symptoms.

Source:

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**Domestic Violence Awareness**

Domestic violence is a regular occurrence experienced by up to 50% of people in the United States and an overwhelming number of victims are female. Abuse is not only physical, it can also be emotional and sexual, and anyone can be a victim.

https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/index.page
Does your partner ever

1. Criticize you, call you names or humiliate you?
2. Shove you, grab you, choke you or threaten you?
3. Force you to have sex or refuse to use protection?
4. Threaten to destroy your property or harm your pet?
5. Constantly supervise you, check your phone, or control who you can spend time with?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may be experiencing abuse, but you are not alone.

Call North Brooklyn Coalition at 718-302-4073 or email us at help@northbrooklyncoalition.org

Financial Health

Financial health is a very important aspect of our overall well-being, and addressing financial health can reduce stress and tension in your relationships, promoting overall resilience and strength. Financial capability looks at how someone manages their resources and addresses financial behaviors to build financial security. It focuses on the aspects of immediate and long term financial habits that we all need to achieve financial goals.

Other community based organizations like Grow Brooklyn can help by working with clients to achieve self determined financial goals, changing financial behaviors and facilitating decision making. This results in improved financial well-being.

Grow Brow Brooklyn Will Help You:
Build Savings, Repair and Establish Credit, Increase Income, Manage and reduce Debt, and Prepare for long and short term goals.

growbrooklyn.org
Environmental health

Environmental health is the science and practice of preventing human injury and illness and promoting well-being. Our planet can only produce a certain amount of resources – from food, to water – and can only withstand a certain degree of greenhouse gas emissions in order to stay healthy. We only have one Earth and are dependent on it for our survival and well-being. Both people and nature are facing severe consequences if our current consumption increases (that's the amount of energy we use and demand for resources to feed, clothe and house us, as well as materials that we want for pure enjoyment). Earth is borrowed from our future generations, it's important to do our part to keep our environment healthy.

The same way reading ingredients for our foods is important, start to be aware of the chemicals in the everyday products you use deodorant, soaps, makeup, house cleaners. Research ways you can create products affordably at home, for example did you know that lemon, vinegar and baking soda are great for cleaning?

Here are some additional tips to help the environment:

**Recycle**

Recycling is such a simple thing to do, but so many people don’t do it.

**Use a refillable water bottle and reusable lunch containers**

Bottled water and throw away packaging is wasteful. Landfills are over-filling with water bottles alone. It is also estimated that 3 litres of water is used to package 1 litre of bottled water.

**Skip the straw**

The average person uses 38,000 straws in their lifetime, that’s about 1.6 straws per day. This leads to a lot of waste and usually ends up in the ocean or landfills and in the bellies of fish, sharks, turtles other sea creatures and birds. Some alternatives are Reusable straws made of steel, glass. Disposable straws made of paper or bamboo.

**Bag it Yourself**

Before your next shopping trip, make sure you’ve got some reusable shopping bags with you. Plastic bags are a huge threat to marine life, and they’re an inconvenience to the environment. Reusable bags are the way to go!

**Save Electricity!**

Use energy-efficient light bulbs instead of regular bulbs. They last longer, which will save you some money. Make you turn off lights, the TV, and other appliances when you are not using them. Lower your air conditioning or heat when it's not necessary. This is especially true for between seasons. Open your windows in the early fall or layering your clothes in the early fall.

**Save Water**

Water is wasted more frequently than we can see. Turn off the faucet as you are brushing your teeth. Limit your water usage as you wash dishes. Don’t turn your shower on until you’re ready to get in and wash your hair. Shortening your shower by just 1 minute can help.

Source:

https://www1.nyc.gov/nyc-resources/categories/environment.pagepage
Our Work

If you have questions about health or any of the resources in this book, you can contact CUFFH.

CUFFH offers year-round affordable housing workshops where community members receive an introduction to our work and get training and assistance to navigate New York City’s affordable housing lottery application process. Residents receive expert, step-by-step advice on what to expect through the application process, including a review of the application and other required documents; information on financial empowerment and managing credit and debt portfolios; and additional support through the selection and interview process. In addition to larger workshops, CUFFH also provides One-on-One Application Assistance including information and training on the necessary interview skills and financial literacy needed to obtain an affordable housing unit.

In addition to Affordable Housing assistance, CUFFH offers a wide range of referrals for additional services such as credit repair, tenants rights, legal support, immigrant rights, ELA, job training, domestic abuse assistance, and more.

Access these weekly services by visiting www.cuffh.org and viewing our calendar of events.