



# OCFS Youth Newsletter

May 2015  
Volume 5

## Mind Over Matter

By Raven P.

Discovering that you have a learning disability is not easy and it can be very scary and discouraging. Learning disabilities are problems that affect a person's ability to receive, process, or store information. Some of the most common learning disabilities are Dyslexia which can affect a person's ability to understand the relationship between sounds, letters and words, Dyscalculia which affects a person's memorization and organization of numbers and Dysgraphia which affects a person's ability to form words and letters. Having a learning disability can be challenging but people with learning disabilities have the potential to overcome mental health challenges and barriers and accomplish their goals.

"Learning Disabilities and Disorders.": *Types of Learning Disorders and Their Signs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

"Learning Disabilities." *KidsHealth—the Web's Most Visited Site about Children's Health*. Ed. Arcy Lyness. The Nemours Foundation, 01 Oct. 2013. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

## "I Have a Learning Disability" True or False Questions True or False?

- 1. I cannot attend college because I have a learning disability.**  
**False.** In fact, you can attend college with a learning disability. Many colleges and universities have specialized services and service centers to support students with learning disabilities.
- 2. Young people with learning disabilities are less intelligent than their peers.**  
**False.** Having a learning disability does not mean you are less intelligent or incapable of performing the same intellectual functions as your peers.
- 3. People with learning disabilities aren't able to live life to the fullest extent.**  
**False.** Although having a learning disability may be challenging, it should not inhibit your ability to live your life to the fullest extent. Be sure to seek out supports that will help you along the way.
- 4. Learning disabilities only affect people who are poor or grow up in poverty.**  
**False.** Learning disabilities affect people from all different walks of life regardless of race, creed, social economic status, etc.
- 5. People with learning disabilities shouldn't go to college or enroll in post-secondary vocational programs because they will not be able to succeed.**  
**False.** People with learning disabilities are just as capable of being successful in college, post-secondary institute, or vocational program, etc. You can be successful and accomplish your goals.

## May is National Foster Care Month

Each May, National Foster Care Month provides an opportunity to shine a light on the experiences of the more than 400,000 children and youth in the foster care system throughout the country. The campaign raises awareness about the need for foster families. New York State recognizes that every child has the right to grow up healthy and safe with love, protection, and stability of a permanent family. Visit the OCFS website or the Foster Care Month website for more information <http://ocfs.ny.gov> and <https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth>

“Learning Disabilities.” *KidsHealth—the Web’s Most Visited Site about Children’s Health*. Ed. Arcy Lyness. The Nemours Foundation, 01 Oct. 2013. Web. 15 Mar. 2015.

## Foster Club All-Star Program

By Raven P.

The 2015 Foster Club All-Star application period closed on February 20, 2015. Applications that were submitted prior to the closing date are now under review. If you are interested in learning more about Foster Club and how you can potentially be the next NYS Foster Club All-Star, please visit <https://www.fosterclub.com/content/2015-all-star-application>

The Foster Club All-Star Club program is a national network that provides 12 young leaders across the United States with an opportunity to participate in an internship and earn a stipend while learning how to reframe their foster care experience. The selected young leaders are current and former youth in care who are active in the communities they live in. Young leaders are selected from all over the country to be involved in this initiative every year. The internship allows youth leaders to participate in skill development workshops, raise awareness about foster care, advocate for system-change and network with other participants.

For more information on the All-Star program and the youth who were selected, visit [www.fosterclub.com/groups/2014-all-stars](http://www.fosterclub.com/groups/2014-all-stars)

## Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention

February was Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month and the Region 3 Youth in Progress (YIP) group met at William George Agency to discuss healthy relationships. The Region 3 YIP group discussed privacy, the

importance of communication, cyber dating abuse and more. The group took a pledge to speak up against any acts of dating abuse whenever they see it and you can too! With your help we can continue to spread awareness, if you or someone you know is experiencing dating violence you should discuss this issue with a trusted adult such as a parent, guardian, teacher, caseworker.



## Relax, Recollect and Regroup: 5 Steps to Help You Overcome Test Anxiety

By Raven P.

### 1. Write, rewrite, highlight, retype and repeat!

Repetition is key. Developing good study habits will help you to remember the concepts taught to you in class. Consider reviewing and rewriting your notes after every lecture, highlighting key concepts, retyping your notes and reading them aloud to yourself. Rewriting your notes shortly after the information is provided to you while the information is still fresh in your mind, may help you retain the information better. The more time you dedicate to learning the concepts taught to you, the more inclined you are to remember, understand and increase your chances of earning a higher grade on your test.

### 2. Namaste: Meditation, relaxation or a cup of tea

Studying for long periods of time can be exhausting and can take a negative toll on your body. Consider taking a break, even if it's for five minutes, to meditate in silence to clear your mind. Meditation can increase self-awareness, increases nitric oxide (a compound that opens your blood vessels and is found to play a role in lowering blood pressure) and most importantly, decrease your anxiety levels. Consider meditating before an exam or every morning before you start your day. Meditating can help you develop healthier habits that can lead to a healthier lifestyle. Always remember to put your health first. Maintain a healthy, balanced diet, exercise regularly and drink lots

of clear fluids preferably water to optimize your health. Namaste.

### **3. Mind, body and soul: Eating a healthy breakfast the morning of your exam**

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Eating a balanced nutritious meal the morning of your exam will help to improve your cognitive abilities, set the tone for the meals you will eat throughout the rest of the day and provides the fuel your body needs to increase your concentration. A balanced breakfast includes foods that are high in fiber and protein, whole grain, fruits and vegetables. Great healthy breakfast foods include whole grain cereal, oatmeal, unrefined bagels, whole wheat toast, yogurt, and peanut butter. All of these things are packed with the nutrients your body needs to function at its full potential.

### **4. Take a break: Creative hobbies and extracurricular activities**

Creative hobbies and extracurricular activities could help increase your work performance. Take your mind off of your studies for short intervals of time doing something you enjoy. Creative hobbies can be anything you like to do when you aren't studying such as reading, drawing, singing, playing an instrument, solving puzzles, writing poetry, cooking, baking, painting, video games, watching your favorite television shows and more. Hobbies can provide an outlet for you to express yourself creatively and encourage your inner capabilities.

### **5. Get a good night's rest**

Avoid going to bed late the night before your exam. Try to get between seven and a half and eight hours of rest so you feel refreshed and alert during your exam. Try to

avoid staying up the night prior to study by studying for exams at least two weeks prior to the day of the test. This will allow you ample time to master the concepts and build on existing knowledge. Adequate rest is essential in order to have energy to perform regular daily activities throughout the day, safety and overall physical, mental and social well-being.

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## **“A Roof Over My Head”: Exploring Housing Options to Prevent Homelessness**

By Raven P.

Some young people may experience hardship upon exiting care. These hardships may be due in part to a lack of readiness to exit care, which can lead to homelessness, but this does not have to be the case. Young people have the potential to exit foster care successfully by tapping into existing resources and establishing a support system. In an effort to spread awareness about youth homelessness, the following information has been provided:

### **What is public housing?**

Public housing was established to provide low-income families, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities and others at risk of homelessness or housing instability with safe and affordable housing. Individuals and families are eligible based on their income, citizenship status and other factors. To learn more about public housing visit: [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/new\\_york](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/new_york).

### **What is subsidized housing?**

Subsidized housing is a form of housing that is offered to low or moderate income families and individuals to help alleviate some of the cost of housing expenses. Subsidized housing includes housing subsidies, public housing managed by the government, cooperative apartments, private sector housing, non-profit housing such as churches and other community organizations, rent supplements, etc. To learn more about subsidized housing options visit the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development website at: [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov).

### **Are you in college? Are you interested in living on campus?**

If so, consider residing in a college dormitory (dorm). A college dorm or residence hall is a living quarters provided by most colleges and universities for students who wish to live on or in the vicinity of the college campus. Student housing options can be anything from a single occupancy room, to an apartment occupied by more than one person. The types of student housing options available vary in cost depending on the institution. Some schools may offer year-round campus housing for their students to reside when school is not in session and during the holidays and some do not. If you are interested in living in a college dorm, you should contact the office of residential life at the college you wish to attend. To learn more about paying for your education, applying, financing your education and other helpful resources, please visit: [www.youthincare.org](http://www.youthincare.org).

## Submit Your Work to the OCFS Youth Newsletter

Do you have ideas for the newsletter? Do you want your story, artwork, or poem featured in our next newsletter? Submit a reflective essay about your experiences, challenges, and inspirations in foster care! To submit material or ask questions, email Kenneth Kirton: [Kenneth.Kirton@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:Kenneth.Kirton@ocfs.ny.gov)

Next deadline:  
7/13/15



## Youth Creativity Corner



I am a cat, a cat who is smart, without my hat. A cat who doesn't need any extra machines to help me clean up the mess I made. I have paws to clean up the mess in my bedroom. I have a heart to wipe away the tears and scars that stay hidden or shown on my skin. I am a cat. A cat who is smart without my hat. A cat who doesn't need any extra machines to help me clean up the mess I have made. I am not a furry cat but I do have fur to cover up my skin although I can show my skin just as well as cover it. I am pretty well dressed. I am a hybrid a cat of two sides—one mean and one nice. I know my way around the alley. Makeup is not my cover up nor is my skin or fur. You see I don't really have one because I like being myself. — *Najhiah H.*

In January, residents from St. Anne Institute brought a crock pot of Buffalo Ranch Chicken to the post-holiday party for the Region 4 Youth in Progress (YIP) group, hosted at the Charlton School. This is the recipe they followed, but the girls say before you serve it, “add the heat you want!” This was their first attempt in using a crock pot and it was a big hit!

### A Recipe for you

#### Buffalo Ranch Chicken



**Ingredients:** 1/2 cup hot sauce  
1 tsp each salt & pepper  
1 cup ranch dressing  
2 pounds chicken breast

**Directions:** Clean chicken and cut it into bite sized chunks and place in a crock pot. Season with seasoning salt and pepper and rub in well. Add hot sauce and continue to mix well. Add ranch until pinkish in color, mix well. Add hot sauce until desired sauciness. Cook for four hours on high or eight hours on low. Have hot sauce and ranch to serve with to taste. Serve on small rolls.