



A Newfound Desire to Improve Myself

Newsletter Op-Ed

Written by Kevin McCullough

My name is Kevin McCullough, and I am a trainee and self-advocate for Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) who also works for the Nutrition is for Everyone (NIFE) program as part of my LEND rotation. When doing work for NIFE, I have found the activities I enjoy the most are the nutrition classes I attend, which NIFE has almost every Thursday. I also enjoy their Thursday workout sessions to a certain extent; though at times, I find them a bit too fast-paced. I also tend to enjoy writing and scheduling social media posts for NIFE, as they tend to be short and easy to write, while also letting me try my hand at creative writing, which is a style I have only very rarely explored.

During my time working with the NIFE program, I have learned numerous things about nutrition. Among other things, I learned what 170 grams of fat would look like (represented by 14 tablespoons of Crisco); at least half of my daily grain intake should be from whole grains; and regular cream cheese is not considered part of the dairy group, as it is mostly fat. I have also learned strategies for improving my own health, which I have implemented with a moderate amount of success (which is still quite good, comparatively speaking). For example, I have made turkey sandwiches with whole wheat bread, which, upon eating, I have grown to enjoy. In fact, throughout my time with NIFE, I have become a little more aware of what foods I should be eating, and what steps I can take to incorporate those same foods into my diet. The process is not an easy one, as is the case with things I have previously tried to implement, but I feel better for trying to change myself; both on a physical level, as well as an emotional one.

I believe the best part of working for NIFE, however, is not just that I am taking steps to become healthier, but that I am also gradually learning how to plan things; this is not a skill that comes easily to me, but I believe I am making progress towards managing my health, and am therefore one step closer to becoming a fully-functioning adult. I have learned many things during my time in NIFE, but the most memorable thing I have learned is that I possess the capacity to change the way I do things; I just need to start with something small, then work out a plan. However, I must also implement the plan I make; this is the part of the planning process where I often fall short, not so much due to a lack of trying on my part, but a lack of motivation to help me sustain my desires. Despite this fact, I believe there are areas where I am improving, and I also believe that NIFE is largely responsible for my newfound desire to improve myself.