

Chronic illness coaching shows significant benefits according to new study

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A long-term study done at [Stanford University](#) indicates that interactions with a chronic illness coach can significantly increase the health of people with long-term illness. Stanford's *Chronic Disease Self-Management Program* brought sufferers together with a facilitator who coached them through several aspects of dealing with chronic illness.

The coaching included techniques to deal with frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation. Communicating effectively was another core skill as were things like exercise and diet. Here is how Stanford summed up the results:

“Subjects who took the Program, when compared to those who did not, demonstrated significant improvements in exercise, cognitive symptom management, communication with physicians, self-reported general health, health distress, fatigue, disability, and social/role activities limitations. They also spent fewer days in the hospital, and there was also a trend toward fewer outpatients visits and hospitalizations. These data yield a cost to savings ratio of approximately 1:4. Many of these results persist for as long as three years.”

This type of self-management through coaching is so effective it has been endorsed by the [Surgeon General of the United States](#).

Nurse Catherine Welch talked about the study with the [Sierra VistaHerald/Review](#). The following is taken from that article:

A long-term study at Stanford University revealed a need for a coping mechanism for those with chronic illness and their caregivers, said Welch. Stanford results showed that the participants had significant improvements in exercise, cognitive abilities and communication when a self-help program was offered.

“Anyone who has a chronic health condition — heart disease, arthritis, respiratory diseases, fibromyalgia, cancer or depression — suffers through the same things. Fatigue, pain, discomfort, stress ...” added Welch. “They have to learn to live with it on a daily basis and learn to manage it.”

Sounds easier said than done, but the Stanford study indicated that through the use of coping skills, such patients become more active in self-management of their illnesses, which leads to a better life and considerable savings, she explained.