



HEADWAY  
OF WESTERN NEW YORK, INC.  
AN AFFILIATE OF PEOPLE INC.

## STAY BRIGHT AS THE DAYS GET SHORTER!

*Quick tips for  
boosting your  
mood & energy as  
daylight fades*

Try to get outside  
for even 10-15  
minutes during  
daylight. If you  
can't get outdoors,  
sit near a window.



Gentle daily  
movement like  
stretching or  
walking boosts  
both mood &  
energy.



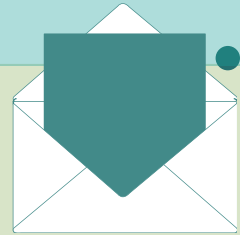
Rest! We are  
entering  
hibernation season  
and it's extremely  
important for our  
minds & bodies to  
rest.



Connect with  
others. Human  
connection is so  
important for our  
well-being.



# FALL 2025 Newsletter



WWW.HEADWAYOFWNY.ORG

## SHEDDING LIGHT ON SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER



Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a form of depression tied to seasonal changes. It can show up in the form of emotional or physical impact. Symptoms may present as: persistent low mood; anxiety; losing pleasure or interest in previously enjoyed activities; irritation; reduced self-esteem; stress; reduced activity levels; lethargy and sleepiness; problems concentrating; or increased appetite. SAD is more common than people realize, so if you notice these changes, it's normal and nothing to be ashamed of.

It's theorized that the decrease in sunlight during the fall and winter months affects our brains, specifically, the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus's main job is to keep our bodies in a stable state of internal balance. When we receive insufficient sunlight exposure, our hypothalamus may not function correctly, reducing or increasing the melatonin we produce. Melatonin is a hormone associated with sleepiness. Serotonin, a hormone that impacts mood, sleep, and feelings of hunger, may be affected too. Reduced serotonin is strongly linked to feelings of low mood and depression.

If you find yourself feeling SAD, be patient with yourself and others during these colder, darker months. People can feel better during this time, and it's really about taking the small steps to do so. See the left side tips to help boost your mood. You're not alone.

[Openmentalhealth.org](https://openmentalhealth.org)

## **A WORD FROM OUR DIRECTOR,** **RON FERNANDEZ**



**We're thrilled to kick off this edition with some wonderful news:** Headway has been officially renewed as the Regional Center for both the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waiver and the Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) Waiver serving Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Orleans, Wyoming, and Cattaraugus Counties! Since these vital waiver programs began, Headway has proudly served as the Regional Center. This renewal ensures we can continue to serve our region as the administrator of both programs across our six Western New York Counties.

### **Welcome to Our Newest Team Members!**

After an extensive search, we're delighted to introduce **Jocelyn Grimaldi**, our new Community Relations Coordinator! This is Jocelyn's first newsletter with us, and she is responsible for our brand new look. Inside you'll find a feature story highlighting her background, and passion for our mission.



Director of Headway of WNY, Ron Fernandez

We're also shining the spotlight on two of our newest team members:

**Maylin Osario-Vinales**, one of our dedicated Nurse Evaluators, who brings expertise, compassion, and valuable bi-lingual (Spanish) skills to Headway, and **Issabella Shannon**, who joined us in August as an Assistant Regional Resource Development Specialist (RRDS) and has already become a valued part of the team.

### **Become involved through Headway:**

Headway is a community-driven agency, and we deeply value your support and input. If you'd like to stay connected and help us continue making a difference, please consider becoming a ***Friend of Headway***. [Just visit our website and sign up for our mailing list today!](#)

# NEW HEADWAY HIRES 2025

## BELLA SHANNON, ASSISTANT RRDS

My name is Bella Shannon and I am an Assistant Regional Resource Development Specialist at Headway of WNY. In my role I support applicants throughout the referral process and guide individuals through their paperwork and documentation. I have a professional healthcare degree from D'Youville University with a minor in psychology and sociology and I am currently earning my master's in health administration at Roberts Wesleyan University. I strongly believe in holistic patient-centered care and am passionate about supporting others through advocacy and accessibility. Outside of work I enjoy spending time outdoors, connecting with friends, and going on little adventures that bring joy and balance to my everyday life. An inspiring quote Bella loves is, *"To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."* -Bessie Anderson Stanley, often misattributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson



## MAYLIN OSORIO-VINALES, NURSE EVALUATOR, TBI

Maylin is a Registered Nurse at Headway. She graduated as an LPN in 2015 and worked long term care, rehab, and assisted living. She went back to school to complete her associate in nursing in 2022 and worked on a mobile mental health team before joining Headway. Maylin was born in Cuba and moved to the US when she was 7. She's very passionate about her family which includes her children and husband. She's very involved with her church as she works with the Women's Society and leads the Children's Society there. Her favorite way to spend a weekend is with her family, often enjoying dinner, puzzles, or board games together. Maylin loves to sing, too! An inspiring quote she shared is a bible verse, *"For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, Fear not, I will help you"* - Isaiah 41:13





# NEW HEADWAY HIRES 2025

## JOCELYN GRIMALDI, COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR

My name is Jocelyn Grimaldi and I'm so excited to help support our community as the Part-Time Community Relations Coordinator at Headway! Before joining the team, I was a nanny for 2 wonderful kids and worked for another non-profit in Marketing & Public Relations. I graduated from Kent State University in 2014. On the side of my job at Headway, I have my own part-time cleaning business; I sing for a local band around Buffalo called Saving Waves (come check us out!); and I love helping others find peace and purpose through coaching sessions, sound healing, and meditation. I'm passionate about music, nature, hiking, friends, my two kitties, and swimming in the ocean. A quote I always love to lean on is one by Michelangelo, "I am still learning," for I believe we always have more to learn and grow from no matter what.



# DECEMBER 3, 2025

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Together, we celebrate the strengths, resilience, and contributions of persons with disabilities, today and every day.



## FROM A BRAIN INJURY SURVIVOR...

*There are so many misconceptions about people living with brain injuries. People often assume we're fragile or incapable, but they don't see the daily strength it takes to live, to smile, and to hope. They don't see how much courage it takes to face the world when your body and mind sometimes betray you.*

*If I could speak to someone newly injured, I'd tell them: You are not your injury. You are still enough, still capable, and still deserving of love. Healing takes time. There will be good days and dark days both are part of the process. Take your time, and don't let anyone rush your recovery or define your worth.*

*I didn't choose this path, but I'm choosing to make something out of it. I'm choosing to tell my story. To encourage others. To keep showing up. Because even when life changed everything I'm still here. Still fighting. Still me.*



Nadia Turay, Brain Injury  
Association of America

# **PEER & CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP**



**First and third Wednesday of the  
month from 2 to 3 p.m.**

To sign up, email  
**[support@headwayofwny.org](mailto:support@headwayofwny.org)** and leave a call  
back number or call **716-408-3110**.

Headway offers a Brain Injury Peer Support Group that meets every **first and third Wednesday of the month from 2-3pm** EST through our telehealth online platform. The support group offers a vital space for individuals navigating the challenges of brain injury to connect, share experiences, and find strength in community. Through shared stories, members can gain valuable insights, reassurance, and encouragement to persevere through the ups and downs of their recovery process. Within this safe environment, participants find community in knowing they are not alone in their journey.

# BRAIN EXERCISES TO IMPROVE MEMORY, COGNITION, AND CREATIVITY

## 1. Visualizing More

Visualization involves creating a mental image to represent information. The mental image may be in the form of pictures or animated scenes. A [2018 review](#) notes that visualization **helps people organize information and make appropriate decisions.**

People can practice visualization every day. For example, before going shopping, you can visualize how you will get to and from the grocery store, and imagine what you will buy when you get there.

It's important to imagine the scenes vividly and in as much detail as possible.

## 2. Playing Games

Playing card games or board games may be beneficial for the brain. A [2023 article](#) found a correlation between playing games and slowing down cognitive decline in older adults.





# BRAIN EXERCISES TO IMPROVE MEMORY, COGNITION, AND CREATIVITY

## 3. Playing Brain Training Games

Brain training games can exercise a person's memory and ability to remember patterns. They're a simple and fun way to engage the brain and ignite areas related to pattern recognition and recall.

According to a 2021 study, brain training games may help improve cognitive performance in older adults.

## 4. Practicing Crossword Puzzles

Crossword puzzles may stimulate the brain.

A 2022 study found that computerized crossword puzzles could help improve cognitive function in people with mild cognitive impairment. The study suggests that crosswords may be more beneficial for the brain than computerized games.



# **BRAIN EXERCISES TO IMPROVE MEMORY, COGNITION, AND CREATIVITY**

## **8. Exercising Regularly**

Regular physical activity or exercise is beneficial for both the brain and the body. A [2023 review and meta-analysis](#) found that exercise may help improve cognitive function in older adults. Regular moderate-intensity aerobic exercise and resistance exercise may be specifically useful.

## **9. Listening To Music**

A 2018 study found that listening to music you enjoy engages and connects different parts of the brain. The researchers propose that this may lead to improvements in cognitive function and overall well-being.



## **10. Taking Up Engaging Hobbies**

Taking up a new hobby can be mentally stimulating and exercise the brain in new ways. A [2023 article](#) suggests that engaging in hobbies can help promote healthy aging and improve mental well-being. Hobbies that require coordination or dexterity will activate a person's motor skills. Such hobbies may include: knitting, embroidery, drawing, painting, dancing, learning a musical instrument

