April showers do bring us May flowers, but the weather isn’t always kind and gentle with us. Knowing what precautions to take can help keep you and your loved ones around to enjoy the blossoms.

Unlike gentle rain showers that lull us to sleep and make us feel warm and cozy, thunderstorms are capable of producing violent weather events. The bulk of these events cause property damage only, but they are capable of causing serious injury or death to humans and animals.

Lightening. This weather phenomenon is a product of all thunderstorms. The best precaution if you know a storm is approaching is to stay in a safe place until the storm has passed. If you get caught outside, find the lowest, driest place and crouch there. Avoid close proximity to other people, trees, or canopied picnic or rain shelters. If you are indoors, avoid water, windows, and doors. Do not be near or use any device that is powered by electricity, including phones, headphones, appliances, etc. About 400 people are injured each year by lightening and about 60 are killed. It is safe to handle a person who has been struck, so provide whatever assistance he/she might need; call 911 immediately. Remember that even if the person appears to be okay that most of the damage will be internal.

Tornadoes/Straight Winds. Tornadoes are nature’s most violent storms with swirling winds that can exceed 200 miles per hour. Straight winds can also include gusts of 100 miles per hour or more. Having a safety plan in place is the best way to deal with these phenomena. If you are caught at home and have no storm shelter, get to the lowest, most central space in the house. If possible, get under a sturdy table, put on a bicycle or motorcycle helmet, and put on sturdy shoes.

Evacuate a mobile home and go to a shelter or sturdy building. Lie down in the lowest space of ground possible and cover your head with your hands if no sturdy structures are nearby. Do not get under an overpass or bridge as the air pressure can suck you into the tornado. Flying debris causes most injuries and fatalities, so take steps to avoid these.

Floods. Flooding causes more damage in the U. S. than any other severe weather phenomenon, and it is responsible for the most storm related deaths annually. NEVER walk or drive into moving water. Currents move at deceptively fast speeds, and as little as 6 inches of water can sweep you off your feet. Remember that flood waters may be contaminated by sewage, oil, gasoline, or infectious agents.

Hail. Hailstones can vary in size from very small to baseball size or bigger. However, regardless of size, the force from strong winds and gravity can make even small ones dangerous and destructive. If possible, cars need to be put into a garage or under a carport. Bring pets inside or put them in a covered shelter area. People should stay indoors until the storm passes. Close blinds or drapes to minimize broken glass entering your home and then move away from windows.
A Downside to a Mild Winter

Mild winter weather can seem like a blessing since there’s no ice hazards to survive and no exorbitant heating bills. Unfortunately, people are not the only creatures who benefit from mild temperatures. There’s another life form that is already out and about. If it stared in its own horror movie, it would be tagged an arachnid vampire! This toxic, eight-legged, blood-sucking parasite is the tick.

Ticks lay their eggs in the ground each year, and a hard freeze helps control the number of eggs that will hatch in the spring. When winters are mild, fewer eggs are destroyed, and baby ticks hatch and emerge from the ground earlier in the season. Once hatched, the ticks cling to blades of grass and wait for a host animal to come along. They may remain attached to the host feeding on blood for several days if they are not noticed and removed.

Ticks carry a variety of pathogens including Lyme disease, babesiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and anaplasmosis. Pets that spend time both inside and outside of the home should take medications to repel ticks, but they should also be checked frequently to insure that none have actually attached to the animal. People who frequent the outdoors or who live on or near wilderness areas should check themselves regularly for these parasites.

If possible, avoid grassy and wooded areas where ticks might be waiting for a host. Wear light-colored clothing so that ticks can be seen more easily seen and brushed away. Tuck pants into boots or socks so that it’s harder for the ticks to latch on unnoticed. Apply an insect repellent that is designed specifically to repel ticks.

You should see a doctor as soon as possible if you experience any of the following symptoms after a tick bite: fever, flu-like symptoms, numbness, a target-shaped rash, pain and swelling joints, nausea and vomiting, shortness of breath, confusion, weakness, or heart palpitations.

Strategies that Combat Boredom

We’ve all had experiences, either at work or in class, where time seems to stand still and we find ourselves bored beyond belief. One contributing factor to boredom is not having enough stimulation to keep the brain engaged. Having too little to do at the time is also problematic. The following are some strategies to help get you through those rough patches.

- Focus on a task and not on the time. If you can get yourself engaged in a project, it will be easier to stay alert and be productive.
- At work, take some ownership of tasks that don’t really belong to anybody (such as watering plants or feeding the fish). In class, be a full participant and ask questions, offer comments, etc.
- Stay busy. Doing something is better than doing nothing.
- Be creative. Think about ways to improve the processes already in place. In class, jot down notes about how the information might be useful on an assignment or in your future career.
- Show up on time. This helps remind you that what you are doing is important. We tend to pay better attention to those things that are important to us.
Learn to Coexist with Difficult People

Whether they are related to us, work with us, or sit in classes with us, difficult people are everywhere. Too often, their behaviors push us out of our zen and into an emotional cauldron. A good strategy for handling such situations is to anticipate that you will encounter certain behaviors and attitudes that bother you at some time, and plan in advance how to insulate yourself from the harmful effects.

One reason that people behave badly is that they have been reinforced for doing so. They whine, throw tantrums, or bully people because they get a reaction. Resolve not to reinforce them by not reacting the way they expect you to. Some of the motivation behind bad behavior is for the person to show superiority over others or to exert power over them. If they find that you don’t react as they want you to, they will move on to another target.

Sometimes, the difficult person really does have some power over you. If the person is your boss, your professor, your parent, or even a significant other, it may be very hard not to respond if the person says or does something demeaning to you. Try speaking to the person to let him/her know how the behavior makes you feel. If the person ignores your feelings, you will have to make some decisions about what actions will be in your best interest. This might include looking for a different job, putting some distance between yourself and the other person, or even leaving a relationship.

It may also be necessary for you to toughen up. Some people just seem to lack the social skills to control what they say or do. Unless you specifically are the target, then don’t take the words or behavior personally. You’ll be much happier for it.

Eating Tips from Dr. Michelle May

Dr. Michelle May is a reformed yo-yo dieter and award winning author. She encourages people to consider why they eat as much as what they eat in their journey to weight loss.

1. First, people must let go of the idea that they will ever find a “perfect” diet. Along those same lines, it isn’t possible or necessary to be perfect. Freeing ourselves of these unreasonable expectations can help us take control of and manage our behaviors.

2. Determine whether you’re really hungry when you feel the urge to eat. Some motivators for our eating involve head hunger and not a physical need for food. It is important that we learn to tell the difference.

3. There are no good or bad foods. If you are physically hungry, eat. If you don’t feel deprived of your favorites, you are less likely to overeat.

4. Our mothers might have encouraged us to “clean our plates” as children. If so, you may still feel guilty about not eating everything on your plate because there are starving children around the world. World hunger is a problem, but we can’t make it better by overeating.

5. If you know that you eat when you’re not hungry, take time to examine your environment so that you can identify the trigger for your behavior. Maybe you need to put the cookie jar in a cabinet so it’s not sitting on the counter in your view.

6. Recognize emotional triggers to your eating, and find relaxation strategies to help distract yourself.

Do you have ideas for a story or recipe? Please send them to Mary Turner at mturner@occc.edu or to Alta Price at aprice@occc.edu.
Chicken and Spinach Calzones

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 10 ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- 8 ounces part-skim ricotta cheese
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 4 teaspoons Parmesan cheese
- 2 egg whites, divided
- 1 16 ounce frozen whole wheat bread loaf, thawed, not risen

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly coat a baking sheet with cooking spray.

In a large, nonstick frying pan, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and sauté, turning occasionally, until brown, about 10 to 12 minutes. Allow to cool, then cut into cubes and set aside.

In a small bowl, combine the spinach, ricotta cheese, garlic, parsley, Parmesan cheese, and 1 egg white. Mix until well-blended; set aside.

In another bowl, whisk or fork beat the remaining egg white lightly.

Cut the bread into 6 equal-sized pieces. On a floured surface, press each piece into a circle. Using a rolling pin, roll each piece into ovals 8 inches long and 6 inches wide. Brush the edges of the dough with the beaten egg white.

Place 1/6 of the chicken cubes in the center of each oval. Add 1/6 of the spinach mixture to each. Fold the dough over the filling, pressing edges together. Crimp edges with a fork and place on the prepared baking sheet. Bake until browned and crispy, about 15 to 20 minutes. Serve immediately.

(For a vegetarian version, substitute the cubed chicken with a pound of sliced mushrooms and 1/3 cup chopped onion, sautéed in a teaspoon of olive oil).

377 calories
34 grams protein
40 grams carbohydrates
9 grams total fat
56 milligrams cholesterol
625 milligrams sodium
449 milligrams potassium
172 milligrams calcium

Student Support Services houses a variety of services designed to enhance the performance and well-being of students at Oklahoma City Community College.

- Services to Students with Disabilities, including providing accommodations for documented disabilities, interpreting and captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing students, and assistive technology.

- Professional counseling by licensed providers.

- Learning support specialists to assist with academic needs such as learning styles, study skills, test-taking, and general health and wellness issues.

- TRIO Grant Programs (Upward Bound and Trio Student Support Services) designed to help first generation college students learn more about college before they arrive and how to be more successful once they are here.

For more information about our services and how to access them, please visit our website at http://www.occc.edu/support/ or call us at 682-7520. We are located on the first floor of the Main Building near SEM Entry 3.

We in Student Support Services, are here if you need us.

Sometimes when I say I’m okay, I want someone to look me in the eyes and say ‘I know you are not’.

You’ll have plenty to crow about when you serve your friends and family this healthy alternative to restaurant calzones.