

# ROAD TO RECOVERY NEWSLETTER

Created by Dual Recovery at Warren Washington Association for Mental Health  
to support individuals in recovery

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

### A Woman in Recovery

BY AMY JOHNSON

A common misconception for people in early recovery is that the most difficult part of the journey is the withdrawal process. Many people leave a 28-day rehab program thinking their life is going to be automatically better. I know I did. But recovery is a journey and you have to be in it for the long-haul. Maintaining sobriety and a healthy recovery is all about changing the way you think and creating a whole new healthy lifestyle. It stands to reason that if the only thing you do is stop using, but continue to hang out with the same people, go to the same places, and resume the same unhealthy habits you will pick back up again. I am going to share a few tips with all of you that have helped me create the sober life I always wanted.

First and foremost for me was creating a routine. My life was in utter disarray from using for so long so, and I wanted to plan out my daily routine and set expectations for myself. I started waking up at the same time every morning and writing in my journal or meditating for 30 minutes each day. I went for a walk after dinner every night. And before bed, which was around the same time every night, I practiced some form of self care. I really thrived having a routine and it felt good to know I was setting small goals and reaching them daily. It did a lot to boost my self-esteem and confidence too. The next thing I tackled, which was crucial to my recovery, was to distance myself from all the toxic people in my life. This meant that I was left with no friends and barely any family, but doing this was a matter of survival for me. I dealt with this by putting myself out there and attending as many support groups as I could. I was able to get the social connectivity I craved and create a support system at the same time. My last tip is to stop being so hard on yourself. Recovery has a lot of ups and downs and you can become frustrated easily. It will be ok, and if you do slip up, just try harder the next time. Beating yourself up is counterproductive to the positive, healthy life you are trying to create.

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# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Staying Sober During the Holidays

BY AMY JOHNSON

'Tis the season to be jolly, but for those of us in recovery, the holidays can be an especially difficult time to stay sober. Unrealistic expectations, unhealthy eating, over-commitment, loneliness, financial stress, and fatigue; all can play a huge roll in increasing anxiety and the possibility of relapse. If you are in recovery, I know from personal experience how much courage and strength it took to get there, so here are a few tips that really helped me maintain my sobriety during the holidays:

Have a sober plan in place- strategize and plan on how you will maintain your sobriety during a holiday party or event ahead of time. This could include attending a support meeting before or after, bringing a sober friend or sponsor with you, and having transportation set up in case you want to leave early. A big part of relapse prevention is being aware of people, places, and things and planning as much in advance as you can.

Be of service- the holidays provide a compelling time for personal growth by sharing your gratitude and happiness with others. There is an abundance of ways you can be of service to others, both big and small. You can give back and pay it forward. One year I volunteered to feed the homeless for Thanksgiving and it was such a rewarding and humbling experience; one I will likely not forget.

Practice self-care- celebrate both the holiday season and your recovery by being good to yourself. By practicing self-care, such as meditation, exercise, or just taking a relaxing bath, you will feel better mentally, physically, and emotionally. Good self-care will reduce stress and make it easier for you to stay sober over the holidays.





# HOT TOPIC OF THE MONTH

## The Opioid Crisis

BY AMY JOHNSON

128 people die every single day in this country from opioid overdose. And it is no wonder, with the United States leading the world in opioid use; consuming roughly eighty percent of the world's opioids. Substance Use Disorder, which includes opioids, is more prevalent than common medical diseases, such as diabetes, and is one and a half times more prevalent than all cancer diagnoses combined. More people use prescription opioids than use tobacco in this country. Drug overdoses have become the leading cause of death for Americans under fifty. There are effective treatment interventions for opioid dependence, such as medication-assisted treatment (MAT), like suboxone, that can help decrease the risk of overdose, yet only ten percent of people are able to access services and get the help that could save their lives. The abuse and addiction to opioids, such as heroin, morphine and prescription pain relievers, is a serious global problem that affects the health, social, and economic welfare of all societies.

The consequences of this are devastating and on the rise. These numbers are truly staggering and beg the question, "how did this happen?" The opioid epidemic was caused by a drastic increase in the number of prescription pain medications, greater social acceptability, and the aggressive marketing of pharmaceutical companies, creating the perfect storm. In the early 1990's, pharmaceutical companies began reassuring the medical community that prescription opioids were both safe and non-addictive, subsequently causing healthcare providers to prescribe them at greater rates. But it was in 1995 that pharmaceutical giant Purdue Pharma introduced Oxycontin, and opioid prescriptions skyrocketed, causing opioid use to become widespread. The consequences have been dire. The economic burden of opioid use is a staggering 78 billion a year, including healthcare costs, lost productivity, addiction treatment and criminal justice involvement. Due to the use of opioids during pregnancy, one baby is born every fifteen minutes suffering from withdrawal. Opioid abuse is not any one person's problem, it is all our problems and the biggest public health crisis of the twenty-first century.



I recently attended a Narcan training and it really hit home regarding how important it is for everyone to be educated about opioid overdose. I have also been with someone who was overdosing before, and it can be terrifying, especially if you do not know what to do. Knowledge is power, as they say, so understanding the signs and symptoms of opioid overdose, who is most at risk, and the crucial steps to take, can save someone's life. Overdoses are most often witnessed by other drug users and friends or family of drug users. In twenty-six states, New York included, Good Samaritan Laws have been enacted to protect people who call for medical assistance, and access to Narcan has been facilitated in thirty-four states. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Narcan, which is a drug that reverses opioid overdoses, has been responsible for saving 27,000 lives. Are you prepared?



## Opioid Crisis (Cont. from page 03)



Opioids are in a class of drugs that are known as Central nervous depressants and include prescription pain medications, such as oxycodone, fentanyl, and morphine, as well as the illegal drug heroin. Upon intake, opioids produce an intense euphoric effect, which is why they are so popular, but they also cause slow and shallow breathing that can quickly lead to overdose. And anyone can overdose on opioids but there are certain individuals who are particularly at-risk. Individuals who have detoxed or been recently released from incarceration are often lulled into thinking that they can go right back to using the amount of opioids they were previously using, however their tolerance would be severely diminished and the consequences can be deadly for them. Those who take opioid with other substances, especially alcohol or benzodiazepines, can face a similar fate. Sometimes it can be difficult to discern if someone is just high or overdosing, but when in doubt it is always best to air on the side of caution.

Some important signs and symptoms to look-out for during an opioid overdose include: extreme sleepiness or unresponsiveness, slow or absent breathing, slow heartrate and low blood pressure, cold and clammy skin, pinpoint pupils, blue nails and lips, and a choking or gurgling sound (known as the “death rattle”). So, what do you do if you think someone is overdosing? First and foremost, call 911 immediately. If you are in possession of Narcan, administer it, then lay the individual on their side to try and prevent choking. Also, try the keep the person awake and breathing while you wait for emergency workers to arrive.





# COMMUNITY UPDATES & RESOURCES

## CHRISTMAS PAJAMA PROMISE

As the Holiday's approach we wanted to send out this invitation for you all to participate in our 4th annual drive to support children and families in Warren and Washington county. Every child should have something special to wear while dreaming of what's to come on Christmas Morning. SHIP PAJAMAS DIRECTLY TO or drop off at: (1) Slate Valley Automotive, 7311 State Rt 22, Granville NY 12832- contact Lori Bishop (2) WWAMH, 3041 State Rt 4, Hudson Falls, NY 12839-contact Mary Sullivan (3) WWAMH, 230 Maple St, Glens Falls, NY 12801-contact Lori Bishop (4) Nu You Hair Salon, Main Street Salem, NY 12865-contact Stacey Loya or call 518-793-2352, ext. 229 to schedule a pickup. Donations need to be collected by December 14th

## LOCAL RECOVERY RESOURCES

Hope & Healing Center, Hudson Falls | Website: [www.facebook.com/HopeAndHealingRCOC/](http://www.facebook.com/HopeAndHealingRCOC/) | Peer Support: 518-812-5813  
Healing Springs, Saratoga | Website: [www.sararecovery.org/healing-springs/](http://www.sararecovery.org/healing-springs/) | Peer Support: 518-306-3048  
AA Meeting Schedule: [www.district13.aahmbny.org/](http://www.district13.aahmbny.org/) | AA Hotline: 518-793-1113  
NA Meeting Schedule: [www.abcdrna.org/](http://www.abcdrna.org/) | NA Hotline: 888-399-5519



## THE DUAL RECOVERY TEAM



*Amy Johnson*

Amy began her journey with Warren Washington Association for Mental Health as a resident in treatment housing. Amy's experiences on her road to recovery led her to her current position as a Peer Specialist and she now celebrates over two years in recovery. Amy is very passionate about her role in supporting her peers in their recovery journeys and is excited to express some of that passion here within each newsletter. Amy has her bachelor degree in Childhood Education from SUNY Plattsburgh and she is also a Certified Recovery Coach. If you would like to get to know her more, or are in need of peer support, please feel free to reach out to her via email or phone.



*Rebecca Ryan*

Rebecca is a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and has been working for Warren Washington Association for Mental Health since 2014. Rebecca became the Director of Dual Recovery in September of 2019 and has been eagerly exploring new ways to serve and support not only members, but the community at large. The purpose of this monthly newsletter is to provide you with some fun articles, personal stories, seasonal updates, and more that can hopefully help in each of your recovery journeys. Please feel free to reach out to Rebecca with any thoughts or ideas for future newsletters, or if you are interested in learning more about Dual Recovery. Happy reading!

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PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO FIND A COPY OF OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER AND GROUP SCHEDULE FOR DUAL RECOVERY: [WWW.WWAMH.ORG](http://WWW.WWAMH.ORG)