

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

I think it is safe to say that 2020 was a difficult year for everyone. Covid-19 changed all our lives in ways we never thought possible. I do not know about all of you, but I am really looking forward to 2021 and putting this year behind me. At the end of every year, I find it essential to my personal growth to take the time to really think about what I want for myself in the upcoming year. What are my goals and priorities? When I envision my life, what does it look like? For me personally, my physical health is the area I want to improve on the most. I had a trying year regarding my health, having been diagnosed with a serious heart condition that resulted in surgery. I know that my weight is the root cause of most, if not all, of my health issues so, my biggest goal of 2021 is to lose weight. But I also want to become more financially stable, improve my emotional health and increase my social connectivity.

2021 is going to be my year, and a life-changing one. I know it, I feel it, and most importantly I BELIEVE it. I came across the concept of a vision board online and my interest was immediately piqued. I really liked the idea of having a visual representation of my goals and what my life would look like when I reach them. For a vision board to work, it must be placed somewhere that you are going to see it every day; I have mine hung in my kitchen. When I look at it, it evokes strong feelings of happiness, joy, and success, which in turn empower and motivate me. It is not difficult to create a vision board. Anyone can do it. Mine is an actual physical board. (I used a thick poster board, but many people have created virtual ones too. The important things are that you put a lot of thought into it and manually create it yourself. As far as what goes on the board, I used cut-out magazine pictures, motivational stickers and quotes. I am including a picture of mine for inspiration (see bottom of page 2). Not only do vision boards increase your chances of reaching your goals but also the act of being productive can help boost your confidence too. Walt Disney once famously said “if you can dream it, you can do it.” And he should know.

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

Nurturing Your Recovery: Quitting Smoking

BY AMY JOHNSON

With the New Year upon us, what better time than now to quit smoking? As the saying goes, “there is no time like the present.” And it really could not be truer, because the longer you put something off, the less likely you are to do it. I have been a smoker for over 20 years. Both of my parents smoked, and the habit was deeply ingrained in me. It is also the number one regret I have in my life. But I finally feel ready to start my own quit smoking journey. It took a long time for me to even get to this point, but I am more motivated now than ever. It was also important to come up with a concrete quit smoking plan that is attainable and makes sense for me. I am approaching this much in the same way I have any other addiction, because that is exactly what smoking is. Keep in mind that everyone experiences things differently and what works for one person, may not work for another. But there is one thing that stands true for everyone: It is never too late to quit.

Tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke are responsible for more than 480,000 deaths each year in the United States, according to the American Lung Association. Even though most people are aware of the many health risks associated with smoking, it continues to be the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. Smoking is extremely toxic and affects almost every organ in the body, especially the lungs and heart. Smokers are more likely to develop heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer. But there is hope. Because after just twenty minutes of quitting smoking, both your heartrate and blood pressure will begin to drop. After a few days, the carbon monoxide level in your blood will return to normal. Within two to three weeks, your circulation will improve and lung function increases. In one to twelve months, coughing and shortness of breath decrease. After one to two years, your risk of heart attack drops, and in five years, your risk of cancer and stroke decreases dramatically. Although smoking is one of the most difficult habits to quit, many people have succeeded, and you can too. Crucial to your success will be having the right attitude and developing a solid quit smoking plan that works for you. Here are some quit smoking tips that I found to be especially helpful.





HOT TOPIC OF THE MONTH

Helpful Quit Smoking Tips

BY AMY JOHNSON

1. Cold Turkey or NRT? This is really going to be a highly personal decision, but many studies have shown that only a small percentage of people who quit cold turkey will succeed for longer than six months. The key for many people to quit smoking successfully is to take advantage of the proven-effective methods, or nicotine replacement therapies (NRT), like nicotine patches and gum, that are available to you. I encourage anyone who wants to quit to discuss all the different options out there with your doctor.
2. Learn to Cope with the Withdrawals Symptom- withdrawal symptoms can often pose the greatest hurdles if you are trying to quit. So, having a plan in place when these symptoms inevitably arise can really make a difference. For instance, exercise is highly effective at crushing any nicotine craving. Instead of relying on the “feel good” response you get from smoking, exercise provides a natural high thanks to the endorphins it produces in your body. Even just taking a short walk can help. Also, keep in mind that although cravings can be intense during this time, they generally ebb and flow and only last around ten minutes.
3. Know the Myths Surrounding Mental Health and Smoking- Individuals with mental health and substance use disorders smoke at much higher rates than the general population. But do not let some of these common myths stand in your way of quitting. I believed for a long time that quitting would be impossible for me because I would not be able to cope with my anxiety, depression and PTSD. However, many studies show that people who have mental health issues report feeling better and improved anxiety and depression symptoms when they quit.
4. Seek Support- I recently joined the ExCommunity on BecomeANEX so I could connect with others who understand what I am going through. I have found this to be a useful tool and worthy of trying out. Also, consider telling at least one friend or family member for extra support and accountability.
5. Celebrate Often- many experts agree that recognizing and celebrating your accomplishments on your quit smoking journey can boost resistance to stress and decrease cravings. Just making it through your first 24 hours smoke free is a major milestone! I recently made a list of healthy ways I can reward and celebrate on my own journey.





LIFESTYLES

Yoga

BY AMY JOHNSON

For those of us in recovery, the path to a healthier life often requires a more holistic approach. Physical, emotional and spiritual growth are all important elements of the recovery process. Yoga is a mind and body practice that encompasses all three of these elements and can be a natural fit for someone in recovery. In fact, the practice of yoga is being used more and more in the recovery community to help treat substance use disorder; resulting in fewer relapses, and decreased withdrawals and cravings. Although I have never tried yoga myself, the more I learn about it, the more impressed I am. I always give advice about how important it is to try new things and really put yourself out there in your recovery, so I am going to take my own advice and give it a try soon. I will write about my experience in the future.

So, what exactly is yoga? According to the International Journal of Yoga, the term yoga comes from the Sanskrit word “yuj” meaning union, or to join, and to direct and concentrate one’s attention. Yoga’s origin is deeply rooted in ancient Indian tradition that goes back some 3000 years. Regular practice of yoga promotes strength, endurance, flexibility, and greater self-control, the latter of which makes it especially appealing to those in substance use recovery. In addition, yoga can create a sense of calmness and well-being as well as ignite a change in life perspective, self-awareness, and increase one’s desire to live a full and genuine life. One of yoga’s most impactful benefits for someone in recovery is its ability to help reduce stress. Stress is a major contributing factor in many illnesses, such as cancer, heart disease, and stroke, as well as a huge trigger for drug and alcohol relapse. In the western world, the most practiced form of yoga is Hatha yoga, which puts an emphasis on the pairing of poses, or “asanas”, with breathing techniques, or “pranayama.” Hatha yoga is a great place for yogis of all skill levels to start, especially beginners. If you are interested in giving yoga a try, you can start on YouTube or ask a local instructor for guidance.





COMMUNITY UPDATES & RESOURCES

COVID-19 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT HELPLINE

Project Hope is New York's COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline. NY Project Hope helps New Yorkers understand their reaction and emotions during COVID-19. Through an emotional support helpline, educational materials, and trusted referrals, NY Project Hope helps people manage and cope with changes brought on by COVID-19. Project Hope Crisis Counselors understand what you are going through. Talking to them is free, confidential, and anonymous. Talk to someone who is trained, knowledgeable and never judges. Sometimes it helps to talk with someone you don't know. Emotional Support Helpline: 1-844-863-9314

LOCAL RECOVERY RESOURCES

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

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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