



How To Keep Up With Recovery During A Pandemic

By Crystal Raypole

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And despite lockdown orders, dispensaries and liquor stores remain open as essential businesses, adding another layer of temptation.

Reminding yourself why you choose recovery can help.

Maybe your relationships have never been better thanks to the work you've been putting in. Or perhaps you're feeling physically better than you ever thought you could.

Whatever your reasons, keeping them in mind can help. List them off mentally, or try writing them down and leaving them somewhere you'll see them each day. Visual reminders can be a powerful tool.

Even in ideal circumstances, addiction recovery can be difficult. Add a pandemic into the mix, and things can start to feel overwhelming. Along with fears of contracting the new coronavirus or losing loved ones to its disease, COVID-19, you may be facing other complicated feelings, including financial insecurity, loneliness and grief.

It's understandable to feel challenged by these worries, but they don't have to derail your recovery process. Here are eight tips to help you navigate the road ahead.

Hold on to your goals

The uncertainty you're facing right now might make you wonder whether there's even any point to keeping up with recovery. Your social media feeds may be scattered with memes and posts normalizing drinking and smoking weed as ways to cope during isolation.

Remember: This pandemic won't last forever

It might feel especially challenging to maintain recovery when your process involves things that are currently on hold — whether that's work, spending time with loved ones, or hitting the gym. This disruption is unsettling and frightening.

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Thanks To All For Bloomsburg Cars for Kacie

Thank you to everyone who came out to Bloomsburg Cars for Kacie on Oct. 25.

Your support means so much. Cannot wait to see you this spring. I am keeping everyone in my prayers.

Andy

Funds from car shows help to provide recovery scholarships and the purchase of Naloxone.



Tips To Keeping Up With Recovery During Pandemic

CONTINUED from front

But it's temporary. It might be hard to imagine right now, but there will be a point when things will start to feel normal again.

Continuing the effort you've already put into recovery will make it easier for you to jump back into the swing of things once this storm passes.

Create a routine

Pretty much everyone is trying to find some kind of routine right now, but it's especially important for folks in recovery.

Chances are, a lot of elements of your pre-pandemic routine are off-limits right now. "Without structure in recovery, you might struggle," explains Cyndi Turner, LCSW, LSATP, MAC, an addiction recovery specialist in Virginia. "Anxiety, depression, and fear can lead to unhealthy coping skills that offer immediate relief, like alcohol and drugs."

If you can't follow your typical routine, you can regain structure by developing a quarantine routine instead.

It can be as simple or detailed as you like, but try to schedule times for:

- getting up and going to bed;
- doing work at home;
- meal prep and chores;
- essential errands;
- self-care (more on this later);
- virtual meetings or online therapy; and
- hobbies, like reading, puzzles, art, or watching movies.

You don't have to plan out every minute of your day, of course, but having some semblance of structure can help.

That said, if you aren't able to follow it perfectly every day, don't beat yourself up about it. Try again tomorrow and do the best you can.

Embrace physical distance, not emotional distance

Enforced isolation can cause plenty of distress, even without any underlying factors. Isolation can be a key issue for people in recovery, especially early recovery, says Turner.

"Stay at home orders cut people off from their support systems as well as normal activities," she explains.

Although physical distancing guidelines mean you shouldn't have close physical contact with anyone you don't live with, you certainly don't have to cut yourself off completely.

You can — and absolutely should — make a point of staying in touch with loved ones by phone, text, or video chat. You can even try virtualizing some of your pre-pandemic social activities, like a remote dance party.

A little awkward, maybe, but that might make it more fun (or at least more memorable)!

Check out virtual support options

Support groups are often a big part of recovery. Unfortunately, whether you prefer 12-step programs or therapist-directed group counseling, group therapy is currently a no-go right now.

It may not be easy to find a therapist who offers one-on-one counseling, either, especially if your state is on lockdown (though plenty of therapists are available for remote sessions and taking new patients). Still, you may not have to give up on group meetings.

Plenty of support groups are offering online meetings.

You can also check out virtual support recommendations (and tips for starting your own virtual group) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). "Help is just a phone call away," Turner emphasizes. She also recommends indirect support, such as listening to recovery podcasts, reading forums or blogs, or calling another person in recovery.

Make plenty of time for self-care

Feeling your best can make it easier to weather challenges that come your way. Self-care is especially important now, both for your mental and physical health.

The only problem? Your go-to techniques might not be available right now, so you may need to get a bit creative.

Since your gym has probably closed and you can't exercise in a group, consider:

- jogging in an empty area;
- hiking;
- following workout videos (many gyms and fitness companies are offering free videos for the duration of the pandemic).

You might also find it harder to hunt down your usual groceries, but if you can, try to eat balanced, nutritious meals with fruits and vegetables to boost happy hormones, fuel your brain, and protect your immune health. (Tip: If you can't find fresh, frozen is a great option.)

That said, if you're finding it difficult to eat, there's no shame in sticking with comfort foods you know you like (and will

eat). Eating something is better than nothing.

Explore new interests

At this point, you've probably heard this over and over again, but now might be a great time to teach yourself a new skill or take up a hobby.

Keeping your free time occupied with enjoyable activities can distract you from unwanted or triggering thoughts that might negatively affect recovery. Doing things that interest you can also make the time you spend at home seem less bleak.

Some things to consider:

- YouTube offers plenty of how-to videos for DIY projects, cooking, and crafting skills, like knitting or drawing.
- Have a few chapters of a novel outlined? It won't write itself!
- Want to go back to college (without the term papers and final exams)? Take one of Yale University's free online courses.

Sound exhausting? It's OK. Remember: Hobbies are supposed to be fun. If you don't feel like you have the mental capacity to pick up something new right now, that's totally fine.

Playing a video game or catching up on that one show you started and never got to finish are totally acceptable, too.

Practice compassion

Self-compassion is always a key aspect of recovery. It's one of the most important tools you have right now.

While it's often easy to offer compassion and kindness to others, you might have a tougher time directing those same feelings inward. But you deserve kindness as much as anyone else, especially during uncertain times.

You may have never experienced anything so stressful or life-altering as this pandemic and the physical distancing it's brought about. Life isn't proceeding in a usual way. It's OK to not feel OK right now.

If you do experience a relapse, offer yourself forgiveness instead of criticism or judgment. Honor the progress you've made instead of viewing relapse as a failure. Reach out to loved ones for encouragement and support.

Remember, tomorrow is another day. This situation is rough, but it's not permanent.

Words Matter: Change The Names, Remove 'Abuse'

The words that we use matter. Stigma has been identified as a barrier to treatment and recovery among individuals with addiction.

Research shows that the commonly used term, "abuse," increases stigma.

Now is the time to tell Congress that national government agencies with words like "abuse" must undergo a NAME CHANGE (e.g., National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA]), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA].

Change the Names, Remove "Abuse"

The term "Abuse" is embedded in the names of our national institutes on addiction, and gives rise to the term "drug abuser."

Saying someone is a "drug abuser" causes others to see them as needing punishment instead of treatment, compared to describing them as having a substance use disorder.

Research shows this to be true among both the general population AND clinicians.

"Abuse" has no place in the names of our national addiction institutes:

National Institute on Drug Abuse
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



#ChangeTheNames
#EndTheStigma



Parkesburg, Grief Support Groups Resume

The Parkesburg Support Group is back with a temporary location.

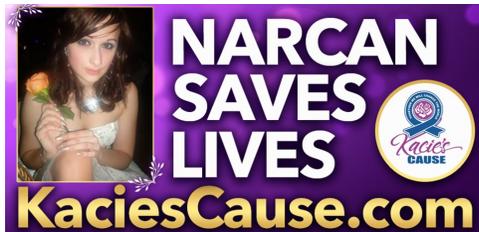
Join us Wednesdays from 7-8 p.m. in the round at the outdoor gazebo at Schneider Parish Center, 2995 Cemetery Road, Parkesburg.

There is an indoor plan in case of inclement weather. We follow all CDC guidelines by wearing masks and distancing ourselves. Please join us for support of families and friends of loved ones with substance use disorders.

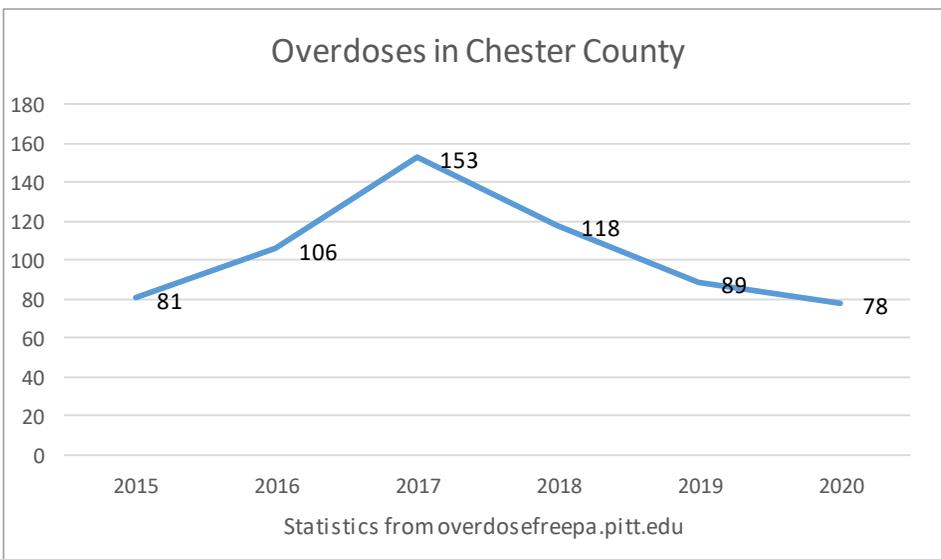
The grief support group is also resuming its meeting. The group meets on the first and third Tuesdays from 6-7:30 p.m. at 2 Station Way in Chadds Ford (across from Hank's Place).

Preventing Overdoses

Thanks to a partnership with the Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, Kacie's Cause has received doses of Naloxone (Narcan) that can treat opioid overdoses, and has distributed them in 2020 throughout Chester County and the Pocono area.



Fentanyl, an opioid pain medicine, has been found in more than 50 percent of overdose deaths statewide since 2015, according to state statistics. Heroin is the second-most common drug found in overdose victims. **If you are a Chester County resident and need Naloxone, please contact one of our chapters or Andy Rumford (andy.rumford@kaciescause.org).**



CHAPTERS

Each chapter of Kacie's Cause has a Facebook page with information relating to their group. To contact them, go to www.kaciescause.org and see the chapter listing at the bottom of the home page. Kacie's Cause has chapters in:

- Kennett Square**
- Parkesburg**
- Exton/Downingtown**
- Oxford**
- Collingdale**
- Southern Delaware County**
- Coatesville**
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania**
- West Chester**
- Poconos**
- Boyertown**

WHO WE ARE

Kacie's Cause is a nonprofit organization for parents, family and friends of those battling the disease of addiction.

It was founded by Andy and Donna Rumford on March 12, 2013 — the day their daughter, Kacie Erin Rumford, died of a heroin overdose.

The 501(c)3 organization is dedicated to Kacie Erin Rumford, her memory, her love of all of us and her desire to change this world to be a better place to live ... from her family and friends who love her.

To contact Kacie's Cause, e-mail andy.rumford@kaciescause.org or go online at www.kaciescause.org.

Newsletter prepared by First Baptist Church of Kennett Square and in partnership with Kacie's Cause

