

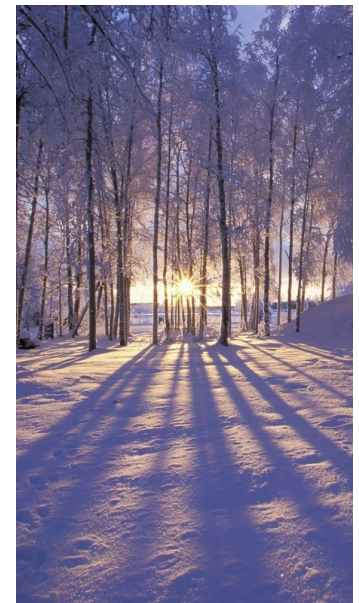


From the Executive Director

As we close out 2024, on behalf of the Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP) Board of Directors and myself, we would like to wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a safe prosperous 2025. If you are or know a pharmacist, student pharmacist,

or pharmacy technician suffering from substance abuse disorder (SUD) or mental health issue alone or co-occurring with SUD, please make a New Year's resolution to call OPHP for assistance, since left alone the problem will not go away and will get progressively worse. I challenge everyone to be aware there are some that struggle during this time of the year either due to loneliness or mental health issues and I hope you are willing to reach out and offer support during this difficult time for those struggling. If you are missing a loved one or someone close to you, please know that Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP) extends our heartfelt condolences. As those of us in the medical profession are considered essential and suit up and show up remaining on the front lines during this cough, cold and flu season, in order to take care of our patient's medical needs. As pharmacists we played and continue to play a vital role as the battle against the flu and other respiratory issues and I am very proud of my chosen profession and our contribution to this fight. We are all in this together.

Also, in this issue, Roy J DuPrez, M.Ed., CEO and founder of Back2Basics a residential treatment center in Flagstaff, AZ has offered an article to our readers "How do I Get Through the Holidays Sober?". Typically holidays can be difficult especially for those new in recovery, so it is important to have a plan of action and use these suggestions in this article at holiday parties or family gatherings where alcohol consumption is common. I hope you enjoy this article.



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From the Executive Director continued:

When a pharmacist, student pharmacist or pharmacy technician enters the OPHP program, and begins their road to personal recovery from a substance use disorder (SUD) and/or co-occurring issue often times the family, friends or colleagues may not understand the vital role they may play in the OPHP participant's recovery. They may even verbalize that they knew something was wrong but couldn't identify it and were shocked to find that their loved one, friend or colleague suffered from a SUD or co-occurring issue. In this issue OPHP will include an article "Identifying the Problem" in hopes to help loved ones identify the issues in those suffering and what they can do to support their loved ones. Also it is important for the friends, family members or colleagues to get assistance since they also are impacted by this insidious disease.

OPHP has a free standing website at www.ophp.us Please visit our website to learn more about services OPHP provides the pharmacy profession in regard to assistance with a personal substance use disorder and/or mental health issues. Contact OPHP if you have any questions or need assistance.

Don't forget, take time for self-care, and if you are struggling with SUD or other mental health issue, or you know another pharmacist or student pharmacist who you think maybe suffering call the (OPHP) Help-Line immediately. There are those who struggle or have a hard time dealing with life on life's terms on a daily basis. Can I challenge everyone to recognize these struggles either in themselves or others and reach out for help or be willing to help if needed? If you find yourself struggling don't hesitate to reach out to (OPHP) for help that is readily available if needed. If you know someone struggling during this time, I hope you will be willing to be available for them if needed. If you are a pharmacist or student pharmacist and you are struggling personally with the substance use disorder or other mental health issues, I would encourage you to call OPHP today and self-report your issues now. The advantages of self-reporting your own issues substance use disorder or mental health issues are that you are able to get well or get in recovery, and if there are no legal issues or complaint the Oklahoma State Board of Pharmacy does not get involved. This is a tremendous opportunity, so don't let it slip away if you are suffering from substance use disorder or other mental health issues call OPHP before it is too late, resulting in disciplinary action on your intern/pharmacy license or other legal consequences.

HOW DO I GET THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS SOBER?

In this issue, Roy J DuPrez, M.Ed., CEO and founder of Back2Basics a residential treatment center in Flagstaff, AZ has offered an article to our readers “How do I get through the holidays sober?”

This is a question we hear frequently. Holidays are stressful for everyone, let alone someone who is dealing with addiction. This time of year brings about many triggers that can lead to relapse. That's why it's important to have a plan going into the holidays. Know what is a stressor, who may cause angst and use the recommendations we've outlined here to help you get through these potentially difficult times.

The holidays can be a beautiful time of year, bringing families together and celebrating traditions. We want you to enjoy these moments without having a setback. Having a plan will allow you to do just that.

In this message, we have included tips and resources for preventing relapse during the holidays. We hope you find this information useful, and we wish you and yours a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

I hope you enjoy this continued article on page 4.



6 Tips for Staying Sober During the Holidays

For those in recovery the holidays can be one of the more difficult times of year. Many triggers take place during this time that can cause a relapse. Understanding your triggers and how to cope with them can prevent this from happening. Let's look at a few ways you can make sure you stay away from triggers and remain sober during this holiday season.

Create new traditions

The holidays are a time when people tend to overindulge in everything from food to drinking. These overindulgences, over time, become part of traditions. You may have an uncle who always makes the eggnog every year or a drinking game the family plays to loosen up. These don't have to be part of your sobriety. Instead create new traditions. Celebrate the fact that you are sober and are creating a new life for yourself. This year maybe you having a sober holiday party with other friends in recovery or host a dinner with sober friends. No matter if it's a dinner or game night it is a great way to start a new sober tradition to help you stay on your path to recovery.

Avoid triggers

One of the biggest triggers for people in recovery is emotions. Whether you are in recovery or not, the holidays are one of the more stressful times of the year. With all the shopping, dinners, parties and family obligations it can get to be a bit much. Understand you don't have to please everyone. Often people feel shame or guilt if they can't do everything everyone is asking them to do. It is ok to not reach these expectations. Know your limits and know when to say no. Keep your mental and emotional well-being in mind during this time of year. It will go a long way in helping you from being emotionally triggered.

Make your sobriety a top priority

All the parties and events are optional when you think about it. If you begin feeling overwhelmed with all the invites and obligations, take a step back. Take time for yourself. Do something you like to do away from the mayhem of the holidays. Take a walk, attend a meeting, spend some time with friends, go on a lunch date. No matter what it is just make sure it is something you enjoy and helps ease any anxiety you may be feeling.

Use props

When going to holiday parties everyone seems to have a drink in their hand. One way to avoid people pressuring you to drink or having to decline a drink and then answer questions about why you aren't drinking, grab a cup and put in your sober drink of choice as soon as you arrive. Having something in your hand will deter people from asking if you need a drink.

Know your limits around relatives

Every family has that relative that speaks out of turn, and this can often be triggering. You may also have an uncle who likes to make people drink during holiday parties. You may also have strained family relationships due to your addiction. Know your limits when it comes to family. Yes, you love them, but they can also be a lot to deal with. Understand it is ok to take a breather occasionally. If you need to go outside and get some fresh air then do it. Take a walk after dinner to give yourself a break. If it ends up being too much don't be afraid to politely exit the party and go home. Your sobriety is your key priority so make it so during this time of year.

Focus on serving others

When you focus on others, you will find more happiness and gratitude. Look for different ways you can serve others during the holidays. Make a family recipe for dinner one night, donate your time at a shelter or toy drive, spend time with someone who is going through some struggles. By serving others you are also serving yourself because you are building up your own well-being. Serving others is also one of the many benefits of being sober because you are no longer focused only on yourself as you were amid your addiction.

The holiday season is always tough to get through and for people in recovery it is often even more difficult. Understanding your limits and trigger points will help you stay on your sober path during this time of year. Remember your sobriety is the most important thing and you don't want to put that in jeopardy.



OPHP Helpline:
1-800-260-7574 (statewide)
405-557-5773 (local)
All calls are confidential
OPHP is readily available for help.

Identifying the Problem

Substance Use Disorder is a cunning, baffling, miserable disease. Denial is a major factor involved stopping those with this disease from seeking help for themselves. So often concerned family members, friends and colleagues, express knowledge that a problem exists, but are unable to identify it. The following *Impaired Pharmacist Symptom Inventory* may help to identify the problem, and get them the help that is so readily available before it is too late.

Impaired Pharmacist Symptom Inventory

- Overwork**
- Disorganized schedule
- Spasmodic work pace**
- Unreasonable behavior
- Inaccessible to patients and employer
- Prescription errors**
- Patient complaints
- Frequent absences
- Decreasing workload and tolerance
- Frequent days off for vague reasons
- Taking sexual advantage of coworkers or customers
- Filling illegal prescriptions
- Taking and/or using drugs from pharmacy without follow-up by physician**
- Taking/selling drugs to others or giving them to family or friends
- Often late, absent or ill
- Decreasing work performance
- “Pharmacy Gossip”
- Incommunicative/unavailable
- Alcohol on breath while in pharmacy

**early signs

What do you do if you suspect a colleague has a problem with substance use disorder?

Trust your instincts!!

Call Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP)

immediately OPHP Helpline 800-260-7574

Do not confront alone

Left alone the problem will not go away.

If you or a pharmacist you care about is suffering from substance use disorder

There is a solution

Oklahoma Pharmacists Helping Pharmacists (OPHP)

Is readily available for help

Call the OPHP Helpline 800-260-7574

All calls are confidential.



If you haven't already contributed to OPHP this year, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution. These contributions help OPHP continue to assist and provide scholarships to pharmacists, pharmacy students and pharmacy technicians during the recovery process. Please [click here](#) to make a donation online. For those who have made a contribution this year, please accept our sincere thanks.