



## In The News

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, SAMHSA has been providing guidance and resources to assist individuals, providers, communities, and states across the country.

Peer Recovery Coaches assist individuals by making referrals for mental health and substance use disorder treatments. These include outpatient and residential treatment options as well as self-help groups. Because of the substantial risk of spreading coronavirus in spaces where individuals congregate, SAMHSA is advising that outpatient treatment options, when clinically appropriate, be used to the greatest extent possible. Inpatient facilities and residential programs should be reserved for those for whom outpatient measures are not considered an adequate clinical option, e.g.: for those with mental health disorders that are life threatening.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released guidance on the expanded use of telehealth services. SAMHSA strongly recommends the use of telehealth and/or telephonic services to provide evaluation and treatment of patients. During this time many SUD services have been modified or paused. As cities begin to release stay at home orders, services and resources will continue to be impacted. It is important to stay abreast of SUD services in your area to facilitate effective referrals to treatment.

*Source: SAMSHA, Considerations for the Care and Treatment of Mental and Substance Use Disorders in the COVID-19, March 2020*

## Self-Care Corner

### Road to Recovery: Transitioning after COVID-19

**It's important you keep a schedule related to your self-care.** "Get outside when you can, make sure you are not socially isolating, meditate, and most importantly be kind to yourself", says Thea Gallagher, assistant professor at the Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety at Penn Medicine.

Have compassion and be patient with yourself. Our old ways of socializing and navigating through life is gone. Be patient with yourself as you adapt to this new normal and be flexible", Gallagher stressed. "Things will change. Our new normal will not stay this way forever."

- 1. Control what you can.** Since the pandemic we have had to adapt to new health practices including wearing masks in public, washing our hands, wiping down counters frequently, refraining from touching our faces, wearing PPE in the healthcare settings, and social distancing. **Keep these practices up.**
- 2. Let go of what you can't control.** Engage in the present. Trying to control things you can't control just makes everything worse," Gallagher said. Try not to fast-forward your life in an attempt to answer questions the experts haven't answered yet."
- 3. Wait and watch.** This is a time to know your boundaries. Don't rush yourself back into activities that you don't feel comfortable doing, such as riding public transportation. Do what feels right for you.

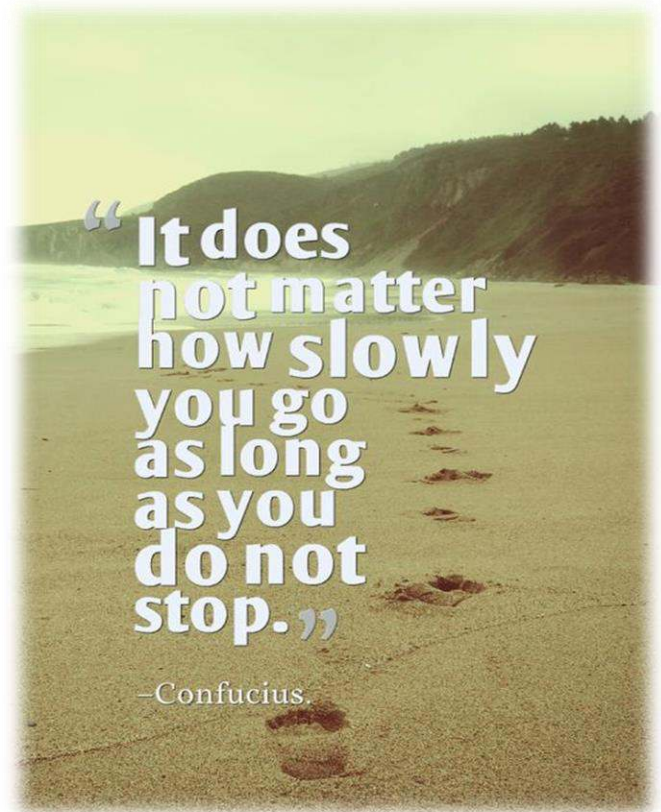
*Source: The Philadelphia Inquirer, "We have to go back into the world again. Here are solutions for how to deal with that". Elizabeth Wellington, May 14, 2020*

## **Coach-Connect**

Today we would like to highlight Keith Martin, an Overdose Survivor's Outreach Program (OSOP) coach at MedStar Washington Hospital Center. Keith has been working at MWHC since September of 2019. When COVID-19 hit the District of Columbia, Keith was required to stay in the emergency department and unable to support patients in the community. He was only able to communicate telephonically.



Despite this, Keith was able to successfully refer and link 5 patients to treatment during the month of March, which was significant, especially during unprecedented circumstances. There have been many modifications to workflows as a result of COVID-19. Keith continued to cultivate relationships with community treatment providers and recovery support services to evaluate appropriate resources for patients. He was able to follow up with patients at treatment facilities, assist with securing supports related to medical needs, and connect individuals to various recovery supports, including workforce development. Way to go, Keith!



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