

Behavioral connection between mental health and substance abuse

What influences the choices people make? Biological, social, psychological and behavioral aspects come into play.

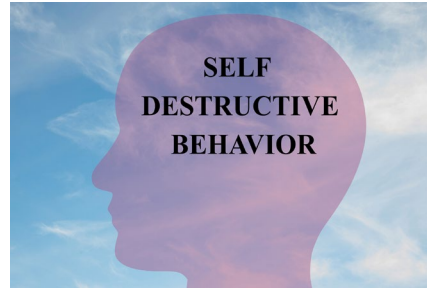
Ty Gregson, [Oklahoma State University Extension](#) opioid and substance misuse assistant specialist, said all behavior, even what most would consider to be an unwise choice, makes sense in context.

“It may sound unreasonable that behavior makes sense in context, but it actually means people don’t often do things that are destructive, unhealthy, unwise, risky or dangerous without reason,” Gregson said. “Behaviors are in response to something they don’t know how to resolve and often are destructive when people are the most at loss or overwhelmed. In other words, destructive behaviors are made as an attempt to solve a problem.”

There are three main issues people try to resolve through destructive behavior such as substance abuse: fitting in, finding relief and feeling wanted.

Gregson said relationships are a key part of development for teens and young adults. While discovering identity and relationships, individuals interact with other to try to discover this information while trying to fit in.

“When attempting to fit in, people may experience peer pressure. Do they succumb to peer pressure because they don’t know better, haven’t been taught other ways or are looking for help but haven’t found it?



This can be an issue when there’s pressure to engage in risky behavior as adolescents are still learning,” he said.

Those who experience anxiety, depression or physical pain are searching for relief. Because these are common uncomfortable experiences, Gregson said people often attempt to eliminate the discomfort as quickly as possible. While understandable, the choices for quick relief may come with unfortunate consequences.

“While they work initially, our bodies become tolerant of most substances. This creates an unhealthy pattern because the body requires a larger dose to feel relief,” he said. “This pattern can be scary and destructive in finding relief.”

Feeling wanted is a combination of fitting in and finding relief. People build attachments with others. Healthy attachments can lead to a strong sense of self, good social skills, reduced anxiety and improved cognitive development. When attachments aren’t as strong, there can be behavioral problems, difficulty forming/maintaining relationships, struggling to focus, anxiety and engaging in risky behaviors. Gregson said people want to be loved, seen and appreciated, and when that need isn’t being met, some

Wagoner County OSU Cooperative Extension Service

Address

30058 E 147th St S
Coweta, OK 74429

Phone

918-486-4589

Email

Virginia Stanley

virginia.stanley@okstate.edu

Social Media

Facebook:

@wagonercountyextension



Website

<https://extension.okstate.edu/county/wagoner/>



Virginia Stanley
FCS Educator & CED, Wagoner County

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people make poor choices to get relief or to be seen.

People must begin to recognize when and how they are using destructive or unhealthy behaviors to manage their feelings in order to find long-lasting solutions.

“Finding people who only want the best for you is important, along with finding people you can trust to share how you’re feeling,” he said. “It’s vital to have people in your life who are willing to help you make the choices that will help you reach your potential. Healthy relationships also allow you to be that kind of person for someone else. Our goal is to be the people who provide safety, acceptance and support so all people can feel like they can reach their full potential.”

For more information or training on these principles, contact Gregson at 405-744-3152.

Festive Turkey Rice Salad

Yield 6 servings

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons plain rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (extra virgin preferred)
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 3 1/2 cups cooked wild or brown rice
- 1 1/2 cups chopped, skinless, cooked turkey breast without salt
- 1/3 cup unsweetend dried cranberries
- 1 bunch chopped green onions (1/2 cup)

Directions

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, lime juice, oil, honey, and ginger
2. In a large bowl, stir together the rice, turkey, cranberries, and green onions.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad, tossing to coat.
4. Refrigerate, covered, until serving time.



Nutrition

Calories: 203 kcal,
Fat: 3.0g,
Carbohydrates: 30 g,
Protein: 15 g, Fat:12.2 g,
Cholesterol: 29 mg,
Sodium: 25 mg,
Fiber: 2 g

American Heart Association

Handle Holiday Stress

The holiday season can add stress to our daily routines. Atypical schedules, strained finances, family visits and challenging gift purchases for that extended cousin are just a few examples of the seasonal concerns that pile on top of us. This stress brought on by these seasonal “to-dos” can either be positive or negative.

Eustress, the name for “good stress,” can help us to focus and accomplish the tasks we need to get done. *Distress*, on the other hand, is the “bad stress” that overwhelms us, makes us tense and sometimes leads to physical illness.

The pressure that bad stress puts on us to engage in unhealthy activities should not be ignored. Bad stress can contribute to higher blood pressure, higher cholesterol and physical inactivity. When experiencing bad stress, we are also more likely to be tempted to turn to vices such as overeating and smoking.

So how can you mitigate the effects of bad stress this holiday season? Keep your mind and body ready. With some anticipation and positive thinking you can preemptively turn the negatives into positives. Indulge in the holiday activities you find the most relaxing. Keeping up with regular exercise, a healthy diet and ample rest can also keep your body ready to deal with the added tasks.

Learn to say no. It’s easy to be overwhelmed with many small tasks. Know your boundaries. Only say yes to things you want to do and you will feel less resentful, bitter and overwhelmed.

Manage your finances. Planning ahead to manage finances can go a long way in the holiday season. Decide how much you can comfortably afford before you begin shopping. Consider giving homemade and heartfelt gifts, which can be a cheaper alternative to a commercialized counterpart.

Seek support. The holidays provide a perfect opportunity to reconnect with friends and family. Having a caring ear to listen to you is an asset. If you feel overwhelmed, consider seeking professional help.

Psychologists and counselors can offer strategies to help you manage stress, change unhealthy behaviors and address emotional issues.

West Virginia Extension



Holiday Holdout Challenge



The Holiday Challenge is a healthy habits challenge. The Holiday Holdout Challenge inspires you to make good choices during the holiday season to better manage stress, feel good, and stay fit even while it is cold outside, and our activities are different than normal.

The goal is to complete one Holiday Holdout from the list below at least 5 days each week. Be healthy and have fun!

Holiday Holdouts (choose one per day):

1. Bring your own healthy snacks to a gathering
2. Make a healthy dessert
3. Skip a sugary treat
4. Make a healthy substitution
5. Say “no” to an invitation/obligation you can’t make
6. Pass on a libation
7. Talk yourself out of an impulse buy
8. Craft, upcycle, or repurpose a present
9. Reconnect with a friend or family member
10. Eat lunch or hang out after hours with a coworker
11. Write down 3 good things that happened today
12. Get 7-9 hours of quality sleep
13. Go on a social media “fast” for the day
14. Go on a 30- to 45-minute walk
15. Spend at least 15 minutes reading or listening to uplifting book or music
16. Spend at least 5 minutes in nature (walk, bike, play a yard game, work in the garden, visit a park)
17. LOL by practicing laughter and smiling, spend time with those that make you chuckle, or look for humorous blogs, YouTube videos, or other ways to tickle your funny bone
18. Practice positive lingo



Wagoner County OHCE Groups

IN-TOWNERS

2nd Tuesday of the Month, 10 a.m.
Yorkshire Village, Wagoner

SHAHAN

3rd Wednesday of the Month, 10 a.m.
Wagoner County Fair Building

STARLIGHT

1st Thursday of the month, 7 p.m.
Individual homes

Family & Consumer Sciences helps communities, families, youth and individuals address issues of health, wealth and well-being through research-based Extension education and programs that are proven to work.



Oklahoma Home & Community Education, Inc. is a local and statewide partner with Cooperative Extension which brings the best knowledge from OSU to its members. Join a local OHCE group and enjoy programs that help make Oklahomans be their best.

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Dates to Remember

December

24-25 - Office Closed Christmas

January

1 - Office Closed New Years Day
8- OHCE Executive Meeting/Officer Training
17- OHCE Craft Day
20 - Office Closed Marting Luther King Jr Day
22- OHCE Winter Council

February

12- OHCE Executive Meeting
17 - Office Closed President's Day
21 - OHCE Craft Day

March

25 - OHCE NE District Meeting
21 - OHCE Craft Day



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WAGONER COUNTY 30058 E 147th St S
EXTENSION Coweta, OK 74429