

Holiday Tips



Regardless of our life situation, one of the most difficult times of the year is the holiday season. With competing demands for time and unrealistic expectations, we find ourselves overwhelmed. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands — parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, and trying to afford it all, to name just a few. During this time, we strive to stay grounded in our health and recovery. We've offered some practical tips to help think about the holidays and plan ahead.

- 1. Maintain your healthy habits:** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties; continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.
- 2. Take a breather:** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, can refresh you and help you handle demands. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.



- 3. Create a list:** Make a list of people you can call if you feel like drinking or using. This list must consist of people who will support you and prevent you from drinking/using; it might be your sponsor. If you have a cell phone, and most of us do, carry it with you at all times. This tip applies anytime of the year. Don't tough it out. Don't give yourself an excuse to do something to jeopardize your sobriety.

God grant me
the Serenity
to accept the things
I cannot change
Courage to
change the things I can
and the Wisdom
to know the difference

- 4. Steer Clear.** Stay away from all the slippery places you once drank or used. Be selective about what invitations you accept. If your family members are big drinkers or have other addictions, it stands to reason that you may wish to steer clear of celebrations on those days. Kindly and confidently reminding your family and friends that your health and safety is the most important way to show them you love them can ease the challenge of bowing out of holidays. If you are going to be in a situation where alcohol and other are present, mentally rehearse your actions; what you might fill your flask with.
- 5. Have an attitude of gratitude.** One of the best ways to turn the holiday blues around is to write a list of blessings. Write it each morning. It might seem silly at first, but by time you hit ten you'll be much happier. You might give thanks for your recovery days; counting up the days can afford a measure of comfort and peace. This is a big achievement, and one that you've worked hard for.
- 6. Have back-up plans ready.** If you're prepared with a reasonable response when you're at a party and getting ready to leave and someone asks you to stay, it's not only less stressful, it's also essential. You've got an easy out, no one's feelings are hurt, and you've been true to your recovery.
- 7. Spend your time with your recovery community.** These friends will understand the impact of the holidays better than anyone. The truth is that those in recovery aren't any more immune to depression and loneliness than someone who's never had a problem with alcohol. Thousands of people of all ages experience loneliness and depression during the period from Thanksgiving to New Year's. But the difference is that you, since you are in recovery, have an automatic support network of your recovery community and 12-step sponsor and group members.



Remember, the holidays are a stressful time but they can be filled with great wonderment. Be a part of the joy and not the sorrow. A successful recovery maintenance effort is based on good preparation. Being aware of some of the warning signs that could lead up to relapse can make all the difference in maintaining recovery through the stressful holiday season and throughout the year.



WARNING SIGNS

1. Urges: Identify your thoughts or self-talk that support these feelings and behavior. Don't ruminate on the urge... acknowledge the craving and move on.

2. Feelings: When feelings of anger, resentment, or self-pity start to dominate your thinking...remind yourself that these feelings, although real in the moment, will pass if you don't act on them.

3. Boredom: An area of high risk is boredom and lack of energy; *nothing seems fun anymore. 12-Step groups often offer marathon meetings, meals, fellow-shiping, and sobriety inspired activities.*

4. Isolation: Often people who experience negative feelings and thoughts around the holiday season turn to isolation and don't reach out to supportive individuals. Consider, when these thoughts and feelings come up, that perhaps there are others experiencing similar feelings. By reaching out and surrounding yourself with others who may need support, you avoid isolation and welcome bonding on a healthy level.

OUR OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED DECEMBER 25TH, 26TH & JANUARY 1ST.
WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE.

