

HOLIDAY SOBRIETY SURVIVAL

If you are in recovery, holiday parties, hectic schedules, family visits, frequent travel, and charged feelings (whether of elation or sadness) may fill the months from November to January with challenges – whether you have several years of recovery, or are celebrating your very first sober holiday season.

With this in mind, we offer these sobriety survival skills:

1. Attend a 12-step meeting. Yes, there's shopping to be done, work projects to be completed, and your in-laws are due at the airport at seven p.m. The best time to go to a meeting is when you feel like you have no time to spare. Even taking a half-hour to attend part of a meeting can provide a portion of serenity in the midst of holiday mania. Out of town? Call the local number for Alcoholics Anonymous (or Narcotics Anonymous) in the phone book to find the time and location of a meeting, or check the Internet at www.alcoholics-anonymous.org, to obtain information and the phone number of a group near you.

2. Have a Plan. Staying sober one day at a time doesn't preclude a little advance planning around office parties and other social events. If you are very new in recovery, you might want to skip gatherings where alcohol will be served. But if you have a good

reason for attending, set a time limit on how long you will stay. Bring a friend along who knows you are not drinking. When someone asks if you'd like a drink, try responding, "Yes, a Perrier (or cola or diet soda) would hit the spot right now."

In the rare instance that someone presses the offer of an alcoholic drink, you can say, "Not right now, thanks. I'd really like a soda." Give yourself permission to leave if you become uncomfortable.

3. Use the Phone. Support is only a phone call away, and pay phones are often located in hallways near restrooms at restaurants and hotels. Or, you can take a moment to step outside and use your cell phone to call your sponsor, a recovering friend, or the AA hotline. Don't isolate.

4. Take time for yourself. A little self-care goes a long way during the holiday season. Try to get enough sleep, eat well, and get some exercise. A quick walk outside may be just the break you need when confronted with holiday overload.

5. Embrace Change. If your old holiday celebrations revolved around alcohol, try making some new ones. Get together with some recovering friends. Plan a special holiday event. Select a gift for Toys for Tots or a similar charity. If you're entertaining guests, consider holding a brunch rather than an evening party or cocktail hour. Recovery provides us with the ability to make choices.

The disease of chemical dependency doesn't go away or take a holiday. Don't let your recovery program lapse during these challenging months.

For more information about relapse prevention, 12-step meetings for attorneys, or questions about chemical dependency, call Michael Sweeney or Meloney Crawford Chadwick at 503-226-1057. (For other practical tips, see the publication *Living Sober*, published by AA World Service, Inc., and available at the OAAP office.)

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