



November 2013

Issue No. 91

# *IN SIGHT* for Oregon Lawyers and Judges

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

## PLAN A STRESS-LESS HOLIDAY

Let's face it. Holidays are a stressful time for anybody, but they are particularly stressful for those in recovery. We know that stress of any kind can accelerate the relapse process, so it is particularly important for those in early recovery to have a holiday stress plan.

First, any good plan needs a reality check:

**The holidays are not really a competition.** They sometimes feel like a competition, but for the recovering addict or alcoholic, the stress to be the best holiday reveler, party planner, dinner maker, or gift giver needs to take a back seat to his or her personal recovery.

**It's okay to say "No."** The family has depended on you to "manage" the holidays. There's a tacit expectation that you attend the company-sponsored holiday party. You feel an obligation to family and friends to participate in holiday events. There just may not be a good reason to do any of those things except for the pressure or stress one feels to do them. That's why you need a plan. Do yourself a favor and experience the relief of saying "No."

**All holidays are celebrations of the good things of life.** Frankly, no one has the corner on the right or wrong way to celebrate gratitude, renewal, or religious occasions. When the addict or alcoholic embraces the meaning of these things, without the need to control or be responsible for outcomes, a true spiritual boost is allowed in. At times like these, stress is just an unwelcome interloper.

**It's good to ask, "What can I do to help others?"** The holidays, like no

other time of year, provide an opportunity to give to others less fortunate. Volunteering your time and energy to others in or outside your recovery program is more rewarding than anything else we do and is a gift beyond value.

### So here's the plan:

- Participate in the holidays in any way you choose, as long as it doesn't threaten your recovery. You don't have to be in control of anything. Just arrive when and if you want, and leave when you need to. No pressure.

- If there is any doubt in your mind about the "safety" of an event or party, say no. Find out what your sponsor and other recovering friends are doing. You wouldn't normally put yourself in a dangerous situation, and the holidays are no exception.

- Enjoy the holidays for what they mean to you. Celebrate whatever makes you feel the best. You never have to "guess" what things mean to you ever again. Celebrate that.

- Volunteer. Get your other recovering friends to volunteer with you. Help make the holidays special for others and they will become and remain special for you.

Be calm. Be well. Be stress free.

Happy Holidays.

*This article appeared in Recovery Matters, an electronic newsletter published by Hazelden (www.hazelden.org), and was written by Richard Choate, manager of Recovery Support. Reprinted courtesy of Hazelden.*

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