

HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE

The holiday season brings a volley of emotions and activities. Hectic schedules, family travel, frequent parties, dinners, and social events fill the months from November to January with challenges for almost everyone. However, there are particular challenges for people in recovery – whether this is their first sober holiday season or their 21st – as well as for people who experience depression, families of individuals in addiction, and individuals with eating disorders. With this in mind, we offer this Holiday Survival Guide.

- 1. Attend a 12-Step Meeting.** The holiday season is often filled with events that compete for your time and energy, including shopping, work, and visitors. At this time of year, you may feel that you have no time to spare to attend a 12-step meeting. Yet, investing time in a personal program of recovery provides a valuable buffer and can be a lifesaver when things seem overwhelming. You are not alone. The OAAP can also refer you to recovery resources out of town.
- 2. Make a Plan.** Anticipate events and make plans – set time limits for social events or stressful visits with family. Give yourself permission to say “No.” If you’re very new in recovery, you might want to skip occasions at which alcohol will be served. Have a spouse, or another person who knows you’re not drinking, available for support.
- 3. Reach Out.** Take time for meaningful contact with others, particularly when the holiday season evokes feelings of sadness or loneliness. Call a friend, a recovery sponsor, or a peer. Volunteer to bring a meal to a homebound person or buy toys for children in need. Support is only a phone call away. Call the OAAP. Don’t isolate yourself.
- 4. Maintain Self-Care.** When we are stressed, attention to ourselves should be the highest

priority – yet it is often the lowest and the first thing that is eliminated. Get enough sleep. Take some quiet time for reflection and relaxation. Follow healthy eating habits in between special dining events, instead of indulging in a season-long binge. What we eat can also influence our mood. Get some exercise. A quick walk outside may be just the break you need when confronted with holiday overload.

- 5. Keep it Simple.** Maintaining reasonable expectations about holiday spending, travel, social events, and family celebrations is the key to holiday survival. Consider alternatives and new traditions. For example, instead of laboring over a stack of cards to mail, consider calling the people you miss. If you’re entertaining, consider having a brunch or dessert party rather than an elaborate dinner party. Make your choices work for you.
- 6. This, Too, Shall Pass.** Remember, if all else fails, this will soon be in the past.

There is a lot of joy to be found during the holidays – if you can minimize the stressful elements and maximize the fun! Make the holidays your own and enjoy them. You won’t have to go around shouting “Bah Humbug!” ever again.

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