

GETTING THROUGH  
THE HOLIDAYS...  
SOME HELPFUL  
HINTS FROM:



THE ME WE  
FAMILY  
EDUCATION &  
SUPPORT GROUP



"MAKING A DIFFERENCE,  
NOW THAT YOU KNOW"  
HOLIDAY TIPS #4



## *How To Support A Family Member In Recovery During The Holidays*

How can family members do to support a loved one's recovery from addiction to drugs and alcohol, especially during the holidays?

There are many important ways to support a family member in recovery during the holidays.

With so many seasonal triggers and distractions, the holiday season can be especially challenging for loved ones new to sobriety and their families. Many family members attempt to take on personal responsibility for protecting their loved ones to ensure they make it through the holidays sober and committed to their recovery journey. However, although addiction is a family disease and family support is important to a healthy recovery program, it is important for family members to understand that the commitment to recovery rests solely on the loved one

READ MORE



"Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction".

- - Barack Obama

## *Holiday Highs & Lows*

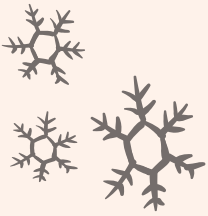
For many Americans, the end of the year brings images of happy families gathered around a Christmas tree, big dinners of turkey and stuffing, holiday music, and cozy fires. For others, the holidays can be a much darker and more difficult time – a time of family conflict, financial strain, loneliness, grief, and seasonal affective disorder. If you find the holidays to be an emotionally difficult time, you are certainly not alone. A Google search for “grief and the holidays” shows nearly 2.2 million results. Seasonal affective disorder (also known as SAD and seasonal depression) affects 6 percent of Americans. Another 14 percent experience a lesser form of seasonal mood change known as the winter blues. The emotional strains of the holidays and winter weather take a grave toll – during the holiday months of December and January, the CDC reports that alcohol-and-drug-induced deaths spike

READ MORE



Making a difference,

**ME**  
**3M** now that you know.



## *15 Ideas for New Sober Holiday Traditions*

Families can experience many emotions while navigating the holidays, whether in still waters or rough seas. Friends and families come together and we place at the forefront of our thoughts all of the joy of our connections that we sometimes forget in the day-to-day. In these special times, our gratitude for life and joy in all we share is so sharply focused that many describe these as “magical” times, bursting with wonder and delight.

The flipside to this coin is that emotional pain and difficulties may also be magnified during these times. We miss lost loved ones a little bit more. We remember and wish for simpler times. We feel the weight of difficult circumstances a little bit heavier.

In few ways is this phenomena more realized than with families who have a loved one in very early recovery. Strong emotions combine with a multitude of questions to create a feeling of constant pressure and walking on eggshells. Families want to know how they should act around their loved ones new to recovery. They ask if they should have alcohol at gatherings, who should be invited to functions, even if they should participate in celebrations at all. They wonder if they should give gifts or hold back. They agonize over how to have a “normal” holiday, often having had so many where their loved one was actively using substances – or even absent altogether

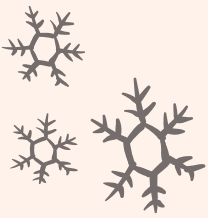
[READ MORE](#) →

*What are some ideas that might work for your family?*

Every second Sunday in December – on Worldwide Candle Lighting Day – family and friends gather to remember our loved ones who left this world too soon. Worldwide Candle Lighting Day started in the United States in 1997 as a small observance and has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world



*Sunday*  
*12/8/2024*



## *A letter this holiday time to the parents and family members of those in recovery - To My Family:*

Thank you for going to your meetings and learning about addiction and learning how to take care of yourself again.

Thank you for realizing that my addiction is not your fault, and not your fight, and not your fix.

Thank you for getting out from under me in the quicksand and standing firmly on solid ground and being a healthy support that I could reach out to you.

Thank you for keeping your eyes on those things that you can and cannot change and having the wisdom now to know the difference.

Thank you for not trying to manage my consequences and for not taking responsibility for my irresponsibility.

Thank you for doing the right thing even though it sometimes felt uncomfortable.

Thank you for the boundaries and the appropriate consequence when I violated those boundaries.

Thank you for not worrying anymore about what you could have done differently.

Thank you for not worrying about what may or may not happen tomorrow.

Thank you for realizing that just worrying about me never makes anything better.

Thank you for not giving up hope.

Thank you for having and making plans on helpful ways to respond rather than to react.

Thank you for the food you brought to the sober house, and my pillow, and the picture of all of you that you included in the bag.

Thank you for bringing the dog by, I really missed him too.

Thank you for letting grandma and grandpa know where I am rather than allowing the misplaced shame and guilt to be the reason to lie to them again.

Thank you for adding NO to your vocabulary.

Thank you for enjoying your life again and acknowledging that I am an important part of it but not all of it.

Thank you for finding that balance between your head and your heart.

Thank you for ending our conversations with "I love you" even when it felt like I didn't care.

Thank you for your effort to get better and not perfect.

Thank you for loving me even when doing so hurt so much.

Thank you for reminding yourself that God loves me too and for keeping me in your prayers.

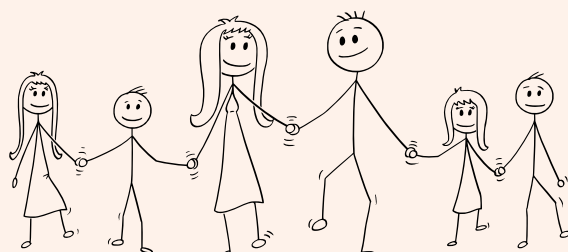
Thank you for walking this very scary journey with me.

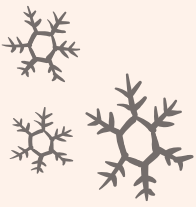
Thank you for reminding me that there was always a place in your life for me when I could handle the responsibilities that come with the position.

And thank you for the hugs you always want to give me even when you thought you wouldn't be able to let go.

Love you,

*Written by Jim J, March 2022 to the family members of those in recovery.*





## *Start New Family Traditions*

---



Check out holiday lights in your area. Get in the car, turn on your holiday playlist, and find brightly lit houses

---



### I Am Thankful List

Add one thing you are thankful for each day for a week. You can turn this into a decoration by writing it on a piece of paper and creating a tree with the paper leaves.

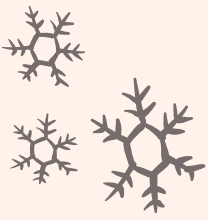


Start the 'Elf on a Shelf' tradition. Your family will look for it every morning!

---



*Put your PJ's on early and watch your favorite holiday movie. Snuggle up with your favorite cocoa!*



## *10 Tips To Reduce Stress and Take Care of Yourself During the Holidays*

If you find that you are feeling a little more stressed than usual right now, you're definitely not alone. The American Psychological Association reports that nearly nine in 10 (89%) Americans are experiencing stress or feeling overwhelmed this holiday season. When we are stressed, we need to be sure we are coping with it in the best ways possible. When stress gets the best of us, we may turn to less healthy means of coping. Here are some ways to make the season less stressful and more fun.

### 1. Don't over schedule yourself

The holiday season is a time of parties and other social gatherings. Remember that you don't have to do it all. Figure out what you really enjoy versus what you feel you're supposed to do.

Focus the majority of your energy and time on activities that are fun for you. Do your best to limit or avoid those activities that are less enjoyable. Your happiness is an important consideration in planning how you spend your time.

### 2. Simplify travel and limit car time

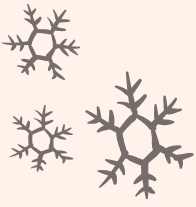
Travel can be especially stressful during the holiday season. If you must travel, do what you can to make it as easy as possible on yourself. Try to get direct flights or at least minimize the number of stops along the way. You'll avoid the stress of having to rush from one plane to the next or having to wait around for long periods of time.

Many people complain about spending too much time in the car during the holiday season driving from one gathering to the next. This can be exhausting. If possible, limit your driving to one or two events that you truly want to attend. It's part of setting healthy boundaries and keeping a reasonable schedule

READ MORE →

**NACG** (National Alliance for Children's Grief) HOLIDAY TOOLKIT SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE GRIEVING DURING THE SEASON OF FAMILY  
Click [HERE](#) for complete Toolkit

★  
♥ be the ♥  
★  
• **BEST.**  
♥  
version  
of ★ you



## *Sober Celebrating Tips For The Holiday*

Maintaining your sobriety and having fun at events that are traditionally associated with drinking such as a holiday party is possible, but it does require planning. The more safeguards you put in place, the more time you will have to distract yourself from using. These safeguards can take many forms and even be a group effort, whether the entire group celebrates without alcohol.

The following ideas can help you stay sober and enjoy the holiday season or any social gathering where alcohol will be part of the celebration.

### **Bring your own non-alcoholic beverages.**

Often in gatherings where drinking is common, having a drink in your hand is habit. Take control by bringing your own non-alcoholic (NA) beverage of choice, removing the option to fill your glass with an alcohol-based drink. There are quite a few traditional holiday beverages that are just as good (or better!) without alcohol...eggnog, hot chocolate, and hot cider, just to name a few. Find more by searching online for "NA holiday drinks" or "holiday mocktails". Do not rely on your host to provide NA options. If you are meeting at a venue that doesn't allow you to bring your own beverage, review their menu online or call ahead of time to plan what drinks will work for you. Many venues now include mocktail offerings that are fun, festive, and seasonal.

When in recovery, self-driven distraction can be beautiful. While there are likely to be activities and entertainment, prepare to have a sober activity for yourself or invite the group to participate in one such as:

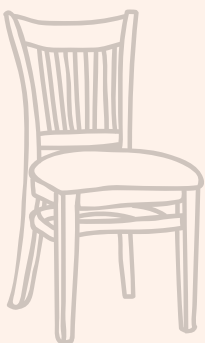
- Play a board or card game
- Ask everyone to bring their favorite childhood games
- Go sledding or ice skating
- Make ornaments and decorate the tree
- Go on a holiday light tour
- Go caroling in your neighborhood
- Have a holiday movie marathon
- Hold a white elephant exchange

It helps to mentally focus on a chosen sober activity rather than fixating on the desire to drink or all the drinking around you.

[READ MORE](#) 

---

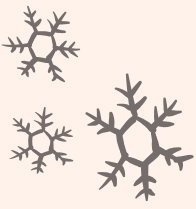
## *Beyond The Empty Chair*



*Look beyond the empty chair  
To know a life well spent  
Look beyond the solitude  
To days of true content*

*Cherish in your broken heart  
Each moment gladly shared  
And feel the touch of memory  
Beyond the empty chair.*

-- Unknown



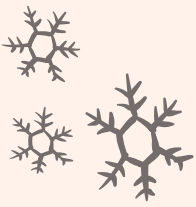
## *Facing The Holidays With A Shattered Heart*

The holidays can be the toughest time of the year for families who have lost a loved one. And if the loss is due to addiction, it can add a whole array of additional struggles such as shame, guilt, and regret - and possibly trying to cope with untreated trauma. As isolating as this complicated grief may feel, please remember that you are not alone and that sometimes the anticipation of the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays is more difficult than the actual days themselves. It is important to prepare ahead of time how you plan to manage the upcoming holidays and decide how you can best deal with the merriment that usually comes along with these gatherings. Memories of holidays past may also serve as painful reminders of the devastating loss in your life. Because frankly, you may not be feeling jolly or festive, and just getting through the upcoming days is the only thing on your mind. Below are some suggestions on how to make the approaching holiday events seem more manageable:

- **Be easy on yourself.** There are going to be difficult days and overwhelming moments during this holiday season. It is okay to let yourself cry. And do not put too much pressure on yourself to be there for everyone else. Be sure to make time for yourself. And on the other side of this, remember, it is okay to feel some moments of joy or laughter.
- **Make new traditions.** Sometimes facing the holidays can be completely overwhelming – the sights, the sounds, the smells - may all bring back so many memories of your loved one who has passed. If the thought of all these memories flooding back at once becomes too paralyzing, know that it is okay to make new traditions. Maybe that means NOT putting up a Christmas tree. Maybe this means having the family gathering at a different location. And maybe you change up the traditional meal that day.

[READ MORE](#) →





## Preparing For The Holidays

- Know your spending limit. Lack of money is one of the biggest causes of stress during the holiday season. This year, set a budget, and don't spend more than you've planned. It's okay to tell your child that a certain toy costs too much. Don't buy gifts that you'll spend the rest of the year trying to pay off.
- Give something personal. You can show love and caring with any gift that is meaningful and personal. It doesn't have to cost a lot. Or use words instead of an expensive gift to let people know how important they are to you. Make a phone call or write a note and share your feelings.
- Get organized. Make lists or use an appointment book to keep track of tasks to do and events to attend.
- Share the tasks. You don't have to do everything yourself. Share your "to do" list with others. Spend time with friends and family while you share tasks like decorating, wrapping gifts, and preparing the holiday meal.
- Learn to say no. It's okay to say "no" to events that aren't important to you. This will give you more time to say "yes" to events that you do want to attend.
- Be realistic. Try not to put pressure on yourself to create the perfect holiday for your family. Focus instead on the traditions that make holidays special for you. And remember that just because it's a holiday, family problems don't go away. If you have a hard time being around your relatives, it's okay to set limits on your time at events and visits.



## Resources

Al-Anon Family Groups

[CLICK HERE](#)

Nar-Anon Family Groups

[CLICK HERE](#)

Let's Get Real Inc.

[CLICK HERE](#)

ME WE Family Education  
& Support Group

[CLICK HERE](#)



My Recovery Day

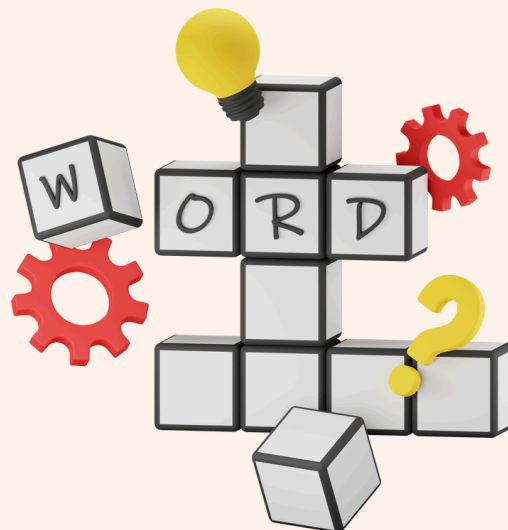
[CLICK HERE](#)

United Way  
First Call For Help  
211

[CLICK HERE](#)

## Take A Break!!!

Give holiday chores and hustle and bustle (and yourself) a break, and sit down with your favorite son, daughter, grandchild, niece/nephew or neighbor and work on a puzzle together.



Easy

Med

Hard

*Serenity Prayer*

*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*