

5 Ways to Survive the Holidays Sober

THE BLOG

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When I first entered recovery, I was convinced that there was no way I could handle celebrations, weddings, and especially the holidays without alcohol. I literally couldn't see a future where I didn't have a drink in my hand. Less than a week after I entered rehab, I volunteered at a local concert selling beer and wine to customers because I had already made the commitment.

It may not have been the best decision, but I made it through without taking a drink. Ten days after I got clean, I attended one of my best friend's weddings as a bridesmaid. No drinks were had.

After 5.5 years in recovery, it's become almost second nature to avoid alcohol at all costs. Most of my family members know I don't drink and it's no longer an issue. Even though I've stopped fixating on my "need" to relax with a cocktail (or 12), I still remain vigilant about occasions that could involve a heavier amount of drinking.

With the holidays coming up, it's important to know what actions will help and harm you in maintaining your sobriety. Whether you've recently stopped drinking or have been sober for many years, these five tips are crucial to surviving the holidays sober.

1. Have a plan

Never go into a situation unprepared. If you are celebrating the holidays at a family member's house, make sure you know when the party begins and ends, who will be there, and what you may expect.

Even if you think you know exactly how the situation will play out, always be prepared for the unexpected. Know ahead of time what you will do if someone offers you a drink, becomes drunk themselves, or you start feeling uncomfortable or triggered.

2. Keep a drink in your hand

If you are early into your recovery, you may feel uncomfortable turning people down for drinks, especially if you were always known to accept. Make sure to prepare your own non-alcoholic drink and have it on you at all times. This not only ensures that people will be less likely to offer you alcohol, but you will be in control of what you're drinking.

3. Set a time limit

Some celebrations tend to disintegrate as time goes on. Attendees of both family get-togethers and celebrations of friends can sometimes drink more than normal during the holidays. If you already know that you are going to an event where this is likely to happen, set a time limit on how long you will stay. Enjoy the company while it is still enjoyable, then say your goodbyes before things get out of hand.

4. Have someone available to call

Alcohol in and of itself is a huge trigger to anyone suffering with alcoholism, but in addition, family dynamics and situations can also prove to be triggering during the holidays. Make sure to let someone who knows your situation know that you may be in a triggering situation as a form of accountability and ask if they would be available for you to call in case you need someone to talk to.

Simply excuse yourself for a minute to make a phone call. If that person doesn't pick up, find someone else to call in order to help you through.

5. Be selfish

Both addiction and recovery are selfish. In addiction, your thoughts revolve heavily around the object you are addicted to and little thought is given to much else. Recovery needs to be the same way. There are many selfless and giving actions that come out of recovery, but at the core, you need to make decisions that are best for you and your life.

If a family situation is unmanageable and simply not safe for you to put yourself in during this time, you may have to skip it altogether. Some people find this hard and put the feelings of others before their own. Really take the time to consider if spending time with family is a wise idea depending on where you are in your recovery. If your friends are holding a holiday party at a bar and you've recently stopped drinking, it may be a smarter idea for you to sit that one out. It's a case by case basis, but treat each case with the utmost importance when making your decision.

Erin Bahadur writes the healthy living blog [Erin's Inside Job](#) where she stresses the importance of true wellness coming from within. Physical, mental, and emotional wellness are all crucial to achieving the best version of yourself.

Need help with substance abuse or mental health issues? In the U.S., call 800-662-HELP (4357) for the [SAMHSA National Helpline](#).

