

The background features a dark, textured surface with numerous out-of-focus, circular bokeh lights in shades of purple, blue, and white. In the bottom left corner, the tip of a black pen nib is visible, pointing towards the center.

# *The Ultimate Guide to Staying Sober for the Holidays*

**created exclusively for:**  
**THE DISCOVERY HOUSE**

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# *stay focused & surround yourself with good people*

For those of us who don't drink, the holiday season can be a difficult thing to navigate. Between holiday parties, family gatherings, managing everyday responsibilities on top of staying committed to our recovery or sobriety - it's exhausting just thinking about it.

However, humans are capable of some pretty amazing things. We have the ability to overcome things that we would never have dreamed of. It's hard to see in the moment, but take a second to think back to the last thing you thought was impossible to accomplish. Whether it was landing your dream job, starting a family, or even trying not to drink - life throws us some curveballs. But if we set our minds to it and do the work we can accomplish so much.

This guide was created to help you stay committed to your recovery through a socially difficult time - the holidays. From attending parties where alcohol is being served to forming friendships and drawing boundaries, this guide will help you to navigate some of the most difficult challenges that we face as people in recovery.

02

How to

Navigate Any

Holiday Party

- Sober

# *How to Navigate Any Holiday Party - Sober*

No matter how long one has been sober the holidays can be a hard time to deal with. Part of staying sober is learning to adapt and develop the tools that to lead a healthy life. When equipped with a good mindset the tools that have been developed are put to their best use.

During the holidays one can choose to focus on the negative and feel sorry for themselves or learn to embrace joy and remember to live one day at a time with the growth in challenges and the serenity of knowing one is on the right path.

Here are a few tips that can help you through the holidays without compromising your recovery.

## **A Strong Support System**

Above all, one of the most important things to develop in sobriety is a good support system. This may encompass friends and family but also a list of emergency contacts that understand the challenges faced in sobriety, especially during holiday time. A few things to remember:

- Keep a phone list handy in a purse or wallet
- Even though others are busy during the holiday don't let that be an excuse not to call when facing a possible relapse or when a listening ear is needed
- No drama is as big as it seems in the moment and a decision may have to be thought about or slept on in order to take appropriate action

## Don't Drink Out of Cocktail/Wine/Champagne Glasses

When attending a party where alcohol is present don't drink out of a wine glass. It might easily get mixed up with someone else's glass and an accidental drink could be taken.

If the accidental drink happens, do not continue drinking. Call someone on the support list immediately and leave the situation where the drink happened. Do not take it too hard if an accidental drink happens, it can be chalked up to a learning experience.



## Practice Your Sober Social Skills

Sobriety will sometimes lead to anxiety but there is no reason not to anticipate an upcoming party for reasons other than drinking. A party is a perfect place to practice sober social skills and meet new people.

A few things to bear in mind:

- Come up with a list of topics to talk about at parties
- Bring a sober friend or someone who will remain sober during the party
- Leave early if feeling uncomfortable
- Have plans after or a backup plan if one leaves early

## **Don't Let Guilt or Stress Get The Best of You**

The holidays can be extremely hectic. Tradition is a huge part of the holidays but don't be guilted into situations where one may feel uncomfortable. It is not the end of the world to be selective with which events one can attend. It is a rational fear that if old obligations or traditions are not followed then one might not be included in other events or the same traditions next year. This might be so, but number one on the list should be sobriety.

New traditions can be created if old ones are no longer healthy or end up being too stressful.

Shopping, decorating, baking and making a huge holiday meal may be some of the expectations. The holidays do not have to be perfect and most of the time spontaneity is the key to creating new traditions.

Finding new ways to accomplish some of these tasks and decrease stress will help keep cravings under control.

### **A few tips:**

- Shop online
- Include some pre-made baked goods or sides with the meal
- Put up simple decorations and don't feel that there is a deadline for when the decoration has to be up
- Have a potluck instead of making the entire holiday meal
- Check online and in newspapers to see what local holiday events are happening
- Take the time to enjoy the presence of friends and family



**03**

*How to*

*Set Boundaries*

*During the*

*Holidays*

# *Setting Boundaries During the Holidays*



**Boundaries are a healthy part of every relationship; personally and professionally. They are also the glue that strengthens these relationships when acknowledged and respected.**

**As adults, setting boundaries is essential to success of building and maintaining happy relationships. Boundaries command respect, dignity, and integrity. They are a way of life and if you want to succeed in your recovery, you need to both set and accept them.**

**When it comes to recovery from substance abuse, setting boundaries is important; especially during the holidays. Wounds may not be totally healed, yet families desire to celebrate the holidays together.**

**Setting and respecting boundaries with family during the holiday season will ensure you all enjoy each other's company and come out on the other side with newfound mutual respect. Voice your concerns; listen to the concerns of other family members, and work together to set boundaries that are comfortable for all of you. It's also important to attach consequences to each boundary.**

**Sitting down with family to discuss your fears of upcoming family gatherings and offering to work together to set boundaries during the holidays will bring you all closer as a family.**

**"One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say."**

**– *Bryant H. McGill***

04

*How to*

*Cultivate*

*Gratitude*

*During the*

*Holidays*

# *How to Cultivate Gratitude During the Holidays*

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If you and your family have been bogged down with concern over your recovery, it can be incredibly therapeutic to express gratitude for everything that's going right and to stay focused on those wonderful things in life to be thankful for.

## **How Far You've Come**

Drug treatment centers are able to help thousands of people, but did you know that thousands upon thousands of others are suffering from addiction alone and have not yet sought treatment? In fact, only 1 in 10 people who are addicted actually get the treatment that they need. It's a chilling reminder to be grateful for your commitment to recovery and the opportunity that you were given to obtain it.

## **Family and Friends**

Christmas is a cherished time for remembering the love of family and friends. Just as your suffering loved ones came to you when you needed it most, remember that you can offer the same encouragement and comfort to others in your life when times get hard. You can show your family and friends gratitude on Christmas by enjoying life's simple pleasures with them – a cup of hot cocoa strewn with heaps of whipped cream!

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## **Life Itself**

Even though you were suffering greatly at the hands of your addiction, simply having your health intact and the ability to sit and converse with your friends and family at your Christmas dinner table, is something precious to be thankful for. As the saying goes, where there is life, there is hope and Christmas is a wonderful time to cherish that hope together as a family.

## **Newfound Empathy and Understanding**

One thing that many family members come to be grateful for in recovery is a heightened sense of empathy for their loved one and understanding of the issues that led them to abuse drugs or alcohol. Many families untap new stores of love and compassion as they struggle through the recovery process together. Naturally, there are pitfalls, but the bonds of family can nurture the healing process—and that's something unmistakably worth giving thanks for!

## **Effective Treatment**

Addiction to drugs and alcohol is an old problem—an ancient problem actually. Unlike the past, today we have highly effective addiction treatment options available. Treatment is most certainly something grand to be thankful for.

The holidays are a time of joy, so be sure you invite joy to your table during the holidays even if there has been a decided lack of joy in your family for some time.

Moreover, joy and gratitude can be highly contagious. You might find that your positive spirit sets the tone for the celebration and gives everyone the chance to enjoy the day with positive hopes for a future free from addiction.

**05**

*How to*

*Create a*

*Gratitude*

*List*

# How to Create a Gratitude List

One of the best tools you can add to your relapse prevention toolbox is a gratitude list. It is a well-known fact that those in recovery who focus on being thankful are less likely to relapse.

Starting your day seeking things to be grateful for and adding them to your gratitude list throughout the day or at the end of the day will promote happiness, keep you in a positive frame of mind, improve your health, and motivate you to stay on track with your recovery.

## Just Start

Grab a pen and a journal, or open a blank Word document on your computer and begin by writing down all the things that make you smile; big or small. Keep your gratitude list handy. When you are having a tough day, read it to remind yourself of all the things you have to be happy about. It will motivate you to brush away the clouds and look a little harder that day for a piece of joy.





## Singing the Blues

There will be 'those' days when no matter how hard you try, you can't find one little thing to write on your gratitude list. When that happens, sing. Out loud. That's right; grab a wooden spoon, use it as a microphone, and belt out a song. Any song will do. That alone should make you smile. It will certainly make your neighbors smile.

If you don't know the words, make them up or steal a tune and modify the lyrics with all the things you are grateful for.

Since the holidays are near, maybe something like this....



On the first day of Recovery my  
sponsor gave to me

A vote of confidence in me

On the second day of Recovery my  
sponsor gave to me two words of  
encouragement and  
A vote of confidence in me

On the third day of Recovery my  
sponsor gave to me three words of  
wisdom

Two words of encouragement, and  
A vote of confidence in me



You get the gist. When you are done laughing, you will have something wonderful to write on your gratitude list!

# *Are you struggling with addiction?*

CONTACT US IF YOU NEED HELP

**888-962-8968**

[www.thediscoveryhouse.com](http://www.thediscoveryhouse.com)

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