**22 Ideas on How You Can Stay Sober During the Holidays**

**Tips From *The Recovery Book: Answers to All Your Questions About Addiction and Alcoholism and Finding Health and Happiness in Sobriety***

For some people in recovery, the holidays can be tough. But you *can* make it to January with your sobriety intact. You don’t have to let unfulfilled expectations, stressful family dynamics, or crazy in-laws threaten your recovery. Not to mention all those holiday parties.

You just need a bit of preparation. Start planning your sobriety strategy now, with these tips from *The Recovery Book* (www.TheRecoveryBook.com).

**Sober Holidays Tip #1:  Remind yourself every single morning how good it feels to be sober (and how great it will feel come January).**

Plant that thought in your mind right now, and think about it every morning. Stick a note on your bathroom mirror to remind yourself to think about it every day.

**Sober Holidays Tip #2:  Keep your expectations realistic, so you don’t set yourself up for an emotional letdown.**

Getting sober doesn’t mean life is instantly perfect. Other people in your life probably haven’t changed, and many of the conflicts that crop up at family reunions will doubtless crop up again. Accept it, roll with the punches, and rein in the urge to manipulate everything and everyone. It will be enough for you to take care of and control yourself.

**Sober Holidays Tip #3:  Plan activities other than sitting around and gabbing.**

In many families, getting together for the holidays means sitting around and drinking. Investigate other options now. Movies, museums, holiday concerts, skating, walks, sledding, sports events can all help fill the time and limit stress. If weather keeps you inside, suggest activities that will keep everyone busy and focused, such as decorating holiday cookies, board games, or old movies.

**Sober Holidays Tip #4:  Limit the amount of time you spend with relatives who make you crazy.**

If everyone is gathering for the holiday, including your brother who drinks like a fish, plan on an overlap of just a day or two. If he arrives on Christmas Day and stays a week, you can arrive a couple of days before Christmas, help your hosts prepare, enjoy a quiet Christmas Eve, and leave the next day.

**Sober Holidays Tip #5:  If you’re traveling, go to meetings wherever you are.**

Find a meeting long before you get there. This will give you the booster support shot you’ll almost certainly need—the chance to say, “Sure, I love my family, but sometimes they drive me up the wall,” or to talk about whatever else it is that almost drives you to drink.

Find a meeting here —> [Find a meeting](http://www.therecoverybook.com/how-to-find-a-meeting/)

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**Sober Holidays Tip #6:  If the holidays mean visiting your old hometown, take time to see old friends you enjoy; avoid those you used to drink or use drugs with.**

Make plans now for how you’ll occupy your time while there, so you don’t find yourself with time to kill and fleeting thoughts of visiting the people who are still drinking or using.

**Sober Holidays Tip #7: Remember what Recovery Zone you’re in.**

If you’re following the Recovery Zone System, remember where you are in recovery. If you’re in early recovery, the Red Zone, you are bound to be a bit shaky. Don’t push yourself or leave yourself open to temptation. It’s okay to have a quiet holiday season.

**Sober Holidays Tip #8  Do a Recovery Zone ReCheck before the holidays get started.**

Think about the events coming up in the next few weeks. What situations could possibly set you on the road toward relapse? Seeing your ex-husband at a party? Having a fight with your mom? Having dinner with friends who drink? Make a plan now for how you will deal with these events; maybe you’ll go to some extra meetings before you travel, and plan to call your sponsor or a fellowship friend if anything does happen. Or maybe you’ll investigate online meetings now, before anything happens, so you can go to a meeting at a moment’s notice. Remember, it’s okay to retreat to an earlier Recovery Zone for a few weeks.

**Sober Holidays Tip #9:  If you’re flying and feeling vulnerable, ask for help.**

Planes don’t have “no alcohol” sections, so the person right next to you might order something alcoholic. What do you do? Ideally, fly with someone you know, someone who knows you are in recovery and will avoid drinking during the trip. If you’re flying alone and feeling vulnerable, explain your situation to the flight attendant. Ask if he can help you change your seat if anyone next to you orders anything stronger than tomato juice. Swapping seats is almost always possible. If you do get stuck next to a drinker, close your eyes and meditate. Put your headphones on and zone out to music or a meditation recording, or watch the movie. If you have Wi-Fi on the plane, contact a friend in recovery for support.

**Sober Holidays Tip #10:** **Plan your own celebrations.**

If you aren’t traveling for the holidays, plan to celebrate with local AA or NA friends. If you haven’t been invited, do the inviting yourself. Follow old family traditions or start some of your own.

**Sober Holidays Tip #11  Don’t romance the drink or drug.**

If everyone starts talking about the “good old days,” leave the room. You don’t want to start thinking about your drinking or using days. That can lead to preoccupation and obsession, and then to cravings. Keep your focus on your life right now, your life in recovery.

**Sober Holidays Tip #12  Be very careful about what you eat and drink.**

Alcohol doesn’t come only in a glass or a bottle. It can come in bowls and plates, too. And what you don’t know *can* hurt you.

One reason, of course, is that even a small amount of alcohol can trigger a relapse. How much does it take? A tiny drop? A small glass? There is no definitive answer, so it’s best to avoid all alcohol and keep your risk as low as possible. Another reason is the psychological risk: the taste plus the “thrill” of knowing that you’re consuming alcohol could turn on a compulsion to drink. Remember, the addiction is in the person, not the substance; it’s critical to stay away from that slippery slope of guessing what might be risky for you.

**Sober Holidays Tip #13 Bring recovery reading when you travel.**

Get ebook versions of The Big Book, The Recovery Book, and other recovery literature on your phone or ebook reader before you leave town. Download some inspirational recovery talks as well.

**Sober Holidays Tip #14 Practice TAMERS every day.**

Don’t let up on your brain healing activities. Practice TAMERS every day:

* **T**hink about recovery, **T**alk about recovery
* **A**ct on recovery, connect with others
* **M**editate and **M**inimize stress
* **E**xercise and **E**at well
* **R**elax
* **S**leep

**Sober Holidays Tip #15  Make a plan for dealing with cravings.**

Write up a list of what works for you: calling someone, reading recovery books, a quick workout at the gym, prayer. Think about what has worked for you in the past, and be sure you are ready with some solutions.

Can’t think of anything? Try to stay sober for just one minute. Then two minutes. Then start doing something (wash the dishes, read the news), and set your alarm for five minutes. When you’ve managed to get through five minutes, try for ten. Keep increasing the time. Tell yourself you only need to focus on not drinking right now, this minute, this hour, this day.

**Sober Holidays Tip #16  Make a plan for staying sober at parties.**

Decide in advance that there’s no way in the world that you will drink or use drugs at the event. Ask for help from your Higher Power, because you may need it. Know and rehearse exactly what you will say if someone asks, “Would you like a drink?” or “Want to do a line?”

**Sober Holidays Tip #17  Stay sober at the party: Serve yourself.**

If you can, bring your own water bottle or glass full of soda, so you don’t even have to go near the bar. If you don’t bring your own, when you arrive head straight to the liquid refreshments and help yourself to a safe option. Keep your beverage in your hand for the rest of your time at the party (refill as needed). That way you won’t have to keep turning down offers of something to drink. People won’t be asking you and unknowingly tempting you. If you set your drink down while dancing or when you step into the bathroom, get a new one when you return. Don’t take a chance on anyone having accidentally switched drinks or good-naturedly topped yours off, or even worse, slipped a drug into it.

**Sober Holidays Tip #18 Stay sober at the party: Don’t go it alone.**

Bring along an AA buddy or a hired sober companion. Or take someone at the party into your confidence (the host, a friend, even a waiter); candor will serve you better than pride, embarrassment, or guilt. Tell them that you can’t drink, and enlist them as bodyguard. It will make the event easier for you, and will keep you from winding up in a relapse. If you can’t take someone with you, arrange to text with someone throughout the evening. Or make a plan to call your sponsor every hour on the hour. Build in some accountability, however you can.

**Sober Holidays Tip #19  Stay sober at the party: Curb resentment.**

You’re almost sure to run into someone who’ll say, “Do you mind if *I* have a drink?” Your automatic answer will most likely be “No, I don’t mind.” The truth is you probably do resent it. You’re as good as the other guy. If he can drink, why can’t you? If you feel resentment building, make your excuses and find your sober buddy, slip out to a meeting, or call or text your sponsor. Pull out your phone for a quick check-in with an online meeting or recovery forum. Or head home and immerse yourself in an online meeting.

**Sober Holidays Tip #20  Stay in touch with sober friends.**

Make sure your phone is filled with the numbers of AA members and call them frequently to stay in touch.

**Sober Holidays Tip #21  Find a meeting!**

Okay, we’ve said it before. But it bears repeating. Because it works. Find a meeting. If holiday gatherings with family or friends become drinking parties, head for the nearest meeting. No one will miss you and the social drinkers will understand. Many AA clubhouses even have round-the-clock meetings on holidays. See [Find A Meeting](http://www.therecoverybook.com/how-to-find-a-meeting/).  (http://www.therecoverybook.com/how-to-find-a-meeting/)

**Sober Holiday Tip #22  Give thanks.**

Stop by a church or some quiet area like the beach, a lake or a park, and spend a few minutes thanking your Higher Power for your sobriety and your new way of life.

Check out the entire list of 37 sober holidays tips from The Recovery Book at <http://www.therecoverybook.com/sober-holidays-2014-1>.

*For more ideas on getting into recovery and staying sober all year round, follow us at* [*www.TheRecoveryBook.com*](http://www.TheRecoveryBook.com)*,* [*@TheRecoveryBook*](https://twitter.com/TheRecoveryBook)*, or* [*Facebook/TheRecoveryBook*](https://www.facebook.com/TheRecoveryBook)*.*