

Holiday Survival Strategies Roadmap

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Best practices for a joyful, sober holiday season

Clarify Values & Intentions

- Spend some time reflecting on last year's holiday season to get clarity about the ways you want this year's holidays to be the same – or different – than last year.
- Make a list of rituals and traditions you do each year. Eliminate any that no longer have meaning to you, no longer bring you joy, or are just time-wasters. Add any new traditions that you would like to incorporate into your holidays.
- Make a list of specific wants and needs you have for the holidays (for example: recovery activities, spending time with friends or family members, time to rest and reflect, or physical, emotional, relational, or spiritual self-care).
- Do a *values clarification* exercise. Examples of values: connection, generosity, tradition, family, service, peace, harmony, spirituality, health, and beauty. Ask yourself, "What values do I want to demonstrate or embody this holiday season?"
- Ask yourself, "What do I want to do?" or "What brings me joy?" For example, you may prefer a quiet, meditative New Year's Eve even though you feel pressure or think you "should" spend New Year's another way.
- Ask yourself, "What is my intention for the holidays? Choose one word to represent the kind of holiday experience you want to create. Do you want connection, peace, gratitude? If you need help on this one, return to the values clarification above.
- Identify limiting beliefs and statements like: "There's no one to _____ (have Christmas dinner with, for example)." Or, "I don't have anywhere to go on New Year's Eve." Turn the question around and ask, "Who is a potential person I could do _____ with?" Or, "How can I identify all my options for New Year's Eve?"
- Give yourself permission to do what you want to do, what brings you joy, and to say no to things that don't. When you say yes to something that others want of you – that you don't want yourself – it's the same as saying no to yourself.
- Identify a word you've chosen for yourself to describe how you want to show up for the holidays. Place the word and/or your intention in a prominent place that you will see every day.
- Review your sobriety, dating, and/or food plan to clarify your boundaries.

Plan

- Based on any issues you identified in the section above, make plans accordingly. For example, talk to your partner about how long you want to stay at the office holiday party or a family gathering, and plan to leave at a pre-arranged time or create a signal so that you and your partner can communicate that you're ready to leave.
- Get out your calendar and enter all of the recovery meetings and activities you want to attend on your calendar NOW with reminders. Treat the scheduled time as you would a meeting that you scheduled with an important person that you wouldn't cancel.
- Make plans for fellowship or to meet with your sponsor either before after meetings to motivate you to go. "Batching" activities (doing several activities back-to-back) is a great way to get them done.
- Identify any recovery meeting schedule changes to avoid showing up for an activity/meeting that's been cancelled.
- Plan your schedule according to your values, needs, and wants, and put everything on your calendar.

Take Action

- Once you've identified your needs and wants, take action on those that you can fulfill yourself and make requests of others, if appropriate, around needs or wants you can't meet on your own.
- If a regular recovery meeting is cancelled due to the holidays, schedule a meeting with your sponsor, a program friend, mentor, or dedicate the time for recovery reading, step-work, meditation, or other recovery work. Bookend if needed, by texting or calling a program friend or sponsor before and after this scheduled time.
- If you have difficulty showing up for recovery meetings you plan to attend, set up accountability around getting to meetings by bookending, for example.
- Create specific boundaries for yourself. For example, decide in advance the limits on how much alcohol you will consume at an event or how much time you plan to spend with family members who are difficult or toxic.
- If anything happens this year that you know you either don't want to repeat next year or you'd like to add next year, make a note to yourself on your calendar for next year to remind you so that you can plan accordingly.
- Do a 10th step at the end of the day as a way to review how you're doing and keep yourself on track.
- Make a list of 50 outer circle activities and put it in your wallet. When you're feeling bored, sad, triggered, or lonely, choose one and do it!