

# TIPS FOR GETTING OR STAYING SOBER DURING THE HOLIDAYS

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It's very easy to start letting your common sense be overruled by your emotions during certain times of the year, such as major holidays, and before you know it, you're heading towards a downward spiral of using and drinking again. During the holidays people are stressed, there is often a lot of family interaction, distraction, and confrontation, and our culture reveres revelry—'tis the season to be merry, and being merry often involves alcohol and office parties with brandy-spiked eggnog, or relaxing with a joint to relieve the tension of dealing with the in-laws, or especially ringing in the New Year with a glass (or few) of champagne. Some people may also hit bottom during the holidays and decide to get sober. This is one of the greatest holiday gifts you can give to yourself and your family!

It will be like starting a completely new life, and the time of year makes getting sober especially memorable. It's especially important to get sober or stay sober if you are pregnant. It is equally important to get and stay sober if you are postpartum, as alcohol and some drugs are known to be depressants and usage may exacerbate a condition called Postpartum Depression, or PPD, a potentially life-threatening illness that must be addressed by professional help at once.

So there's no doubt that temptations abound, not only during the holidays, but like always—and you have to dig down deep inside yourself to find that reserve of strength to not pick up the first time. Fortunately, there are some very effective and time-tested tools you can use to help yourself get and stay sober during the holidays. Below are 25 tips to keep in mind as you head towards a new year and a new you! These tips are in no particular order, and you can apply one, a few, or all of them, not only during the holiday season, but any time you feel especially stressed and challenged in your sobriety.





## The Countdown

25. Go to a meeting. There are many 12-step programs that exist especially for women, and it really doesn't matter what your drug of choice is—just get your butt up and get out the door and get yourself to a meeting where you can be among people who understand you and want to help you get through the holidays sober.

24. Pray. In AA, it's said that it doesn't matter if your Higher Power is a doorknob—it just matters that you admit that you are powerless over the drug of your choice, and make a conscious decision to turn your life over to a power greater than yourself.

23. Remind yourself why you got sober in the first place. Thinking about the 'moment of clarity' you had when you really hit bottom can

help prevent you from picking up and heading that way again. Remember, addiction is a progressive disease, and if you practice it you will end up in one of three places—an institution, jail, or dead.

22. Keep a non-alcoholic beverage in your hand during parties or other gatherings. If you must, put it in a champagne flute, but use a different glass if holding a flute glass makes you crave champagne. To heck what other people think—you really don't care, do you?

21. Prepare 2 or 3 succinct, polite responses to people who insist that you are not 'partying enough' or 'in the proper holiday spirit' because you aren't imbibing. Refer back to number 22 about not caring about what other people, especially 'normies', think.

20. Surround yourself with supportive family and friends. If you don't have anyone in particular to turn to, make new, sober friends.

19. Remember what the holidays are really about—the celebration of family, and a spiritual renewal. The rest is just icing and bullshit.

18. Have faith in yourself and your own toughness. You are a survivor; you are beautiful; you are strong. You can say these affirmations to yourself, or while you look into a mirror. How much better you look—your skin, your hair, your eyes—now that you're sober!

17. Exercise regularly. The holidays are a great time to get a head start on a fitness program you may have been saving for the New Year. Just think—if you start now, you'll be months ahead of everyone else as they trudge their bloated, overfed carcasses into the gym on January 2.

16. Be grateful. Make a gratitude list. Share your gratitude list with someone you care about. Post it in a prominent place in your bedroom or bathroom and read it several times a day. You have so much to be grateful for in sobriety; it's all a gift—a fragile little thing that can be crushed so easily if you pick up the first time. These are the reasons why you don't need to.

15. Make a buddy list of at least 5 people you can call when you feel weak. Or, give your phone number out to 5 newcomers in a 12-step meeting and be determined that you will answer the phone if and when they call. Give back to what got you sober.

14. Stay away from slippery places—your old watering holes are a no-go! This also includes so-called friends who are still drinking and drugging. No good can come of your hanging around these unfortunates; they can only bring you down. Try to surround yourself with positive, hope-filled people.

13. Plan your days and nights in advance so that you're mentally and emotionally prepared for anything or anyone who could throw you for a loop. Go through a mental scenario of how you would react if someone tried to get you to use or drink, and see yourself turning



them down. Or write out helpful hints on index cards and carry them with you.

12. Volunteer your time and service--at a state-run sobriety program, a soup kitchen, a 12-step meeting, or at an animal shelter, a nursing home, or a hospital. There are PLENTY of places you can go and it will make you feel really good about yourself!

11. Make sure to avoid getting too hungry, too angry, too lonely or too tired: H.A.L.T. If you're pregnant, understand that you may be having some weird food cravings, some disturbing mood swings, or just be dog-tired. Newborns especially make sleep deprivation a real issue. Try to nap during the day, or get a friend, partner, neighbor—someone—to take the tots off your hands so you can get rested up.



10. Live in the moment, one day at a time. That's all that we have anyway; the past is gone and the future is a mystery, so make the best of right NOW.

9. Read, or speak aloud, the Serenity Prayer.

8. Take time to contemplate or meditate on spiritual issues. Take some quiet time for yourself—you deserve it.

7. Stay away from the first drink or drug. It only takes one to go on a bender that might take you years to come back from. Or, your disease may just kill you this time.

6. Watch out for alcohol hidden in holiday foods—no rum cake for you! Ask the host at any parties you attend about the alcohol content of the banquet, especially the desserts.

5. Rather, allow yourself to have something delicious, even if it's fattening, to eat or drink.

4. Call your sponsor, or find a sponsor.

3. Clean your 'mental' house by getting rid of any negativity.

2. Do something special and nice for yourself. You deserve candlelight baths, maybe a spa day... use your imagination and treat yourself!

1. Create some new holiday traditions, new ways to celebrate instead of resorting to self-medicating.

Good luck—but it's more than luck, it's commitment to your sobriety and to yourself. You can do it!

For your sake and for the sake of your unborn baby, please don't drink or use illicit drugs during pregnancy. If you are struggling,

remember, we at Magnolia Women's Recovery Program care, and are here to help!

If you are having trouble stopping drinking or using drugs, or would like more information, please contact us, your doctor, or use the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator.

Sources:

<http://www.promises.com/articles/relapse-prevention/holidays-sober/>

<http://projectturnabout.org/12-tips-for-staying-sober-during-the-holiday-season/>

[http://www.scripps.org/news\\_items/3802-25-tips-for-sober-living-during-the-holidays](http://www.scripps.org/news_items/3802-25-tips-for-sober-living-during-the-holidays)

Please watch the following YouTube Videos for more information.