



## 10 Tips for Staying Healthy, Happy and Sober during the Holidays



During the holidays, nearly every popular woman's magazine includes an article on how to "cope" with the extra challenges that are part of this season. At some point, most of us feel overwhelmed because of fatigue, changes in normal routine, unrealistic expectations, memories and losses, too much commercialization, financial pressures, eating too much and too much partying.

"As difficult as it is for many of us to navigate the holidays," says Win Turner, PhD, LADC, program director for the DHMC Addiction Treatment Program, "it's even more challenging for those who are in recovery from substance use and who are trying to maintain sobriety. At just about every turn – beginning with Thanksgiving and continuing through the New Year - there are temptations that can change the season of cheer into a season of regret for people at risk of relapse."

The DHMC Employee Assistance Program and the DHMC Addiction Treatment Program offer the following tips for a healthy, happy and sober holiday season.

### **1. Set realistic goals and set limits for yourself**

*Don't get bogged down with someone else's expectations, do what works best for you. If you're in recovery from addiction to alcohol or drugs, addiction to food, or from co-dependence, your recovery work should continue to be your number one priority.*

### **2. Stick with basics for good health**

*Get plenty of rest, eat three balanced meals a day and get some exercise to keep the endorphins happy. Keep your blood sugar level balanced, and watch your intake of nicotine and caffeine.*

### **3. Stay connected to friends with healthy attitudes**

*Be in touch with others who make healthy choices and others in recovery. These are the folks who understand what you need and how you feel. If you feel like you're losing control, attend more meetings and if you have a sponsor, keep in touch. Don't feel "guilted" into spending time with people who are negative or non-supportive of healthy choices.*

### **4. Make plans for how to cope with holiday parties where you know that alcohol, drugs or an over abundance of sweets will be available**

*Remember that it is all right to avoid a party all together. If you must attend a holiday party with alcohol, drugs, or tons of tempting cookies, cakes, and other sweets, take along a couple of recovery friends for moral support, or have their phone numbers handy. It's also a good idea to arrive late and leave early. If you think there might not be any non-alcoholic drinks, bring along your own.*

### **5. Create new ways to celebrate**

*Some old traditions (people, places and events) might trigger negative urges, so plan some new activities like hosting a tree trimming party, or a holiday poetry reading, or an ornament or wreath-making workshop. Use your imagination!*

### **6. Understand that this might be an emotional time for you and make a survival plan**

*Adopt a slogan that will help you refocus your energy when you begin to have unpleasant feelings. Practice saying it often, so that it will be right there when needed. Something like “One day at a time” or “HALT” which is shorthand for not letting yourself get too hungry, angry, lonely or tired.*

### **7. TV timeout**

*Cut down on TV watching. Many of the commercials and the story lines are full of people drinking and eating at parties. Why tempt yourself unnecessarily?*

### **8. Keep busy**

*There are lots of free holiday concerts, performances, and volunteer opportunities during this season.*

### **9. Do something nice for someone**

*Do something thoughtful for an elderly neighbor or family member. Take a child skating or sledding. Volunteer at a soup kitchen or wrap gifts for a nonprofit. The options are endless.*

### **10. Do something nice for yourself**

*Treat yourself gently: pamper yourself with a massage, attend a hockey game, take a bubble bath or go out to a favorite restaurant.*

**Remember, the best gift you can give yourself, your family and friends is to stick to your recovery plan. There's no better way to spread the “spirit” of the season!**

