

Holiday Survival Plan for Men in Recovery

PRE-HOLIDAY PLANNING

MY BIGGEST TRIGGERS (Check all that apply:)

- ☐ Being offered drinks during football/sports
- ☐ "Man up" or "just have one" pressure
- ☐ Other men questioning my sobriety
- ☐ Being called weak for not drinking
- ☐ Feeling isolated as the only sober guy
- ☐ Seeing drinking buddies who still use
- ☐ Family asking about job/money/life
- ☐ Ex-wife/custody/co-parenting stress
- ☐ Feeling judged for past mistakes
- ☐ Toxic masculinity or competition
- ☐ Pressure to "forgive" people who hurt me
- ☐ Having to explain why I'm sober
- ☐ Missing the "old me" who partied

My top 3 triggers:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

SETTING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

What I WANT the holiday to be:

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What it will ACTUALLY be:

One expectation I'm releasing:

THE "NO" PRACTICE

One thing I'm saying NO to this year:

- ☐ Going to [specific place/person's house]
- ☐ Staying the whole day
- ☐ Watching football with heavy drinkers
- ☐ Explaining my recovery
- ☐ Being around my using friends
- ☐ Pretending everything is fine
- ☐ Other

My boundary script:

"

"

BEFORE I GO

I will:

- ☐ Attend a support meeting
- ☐ Call my sponsor/therapist
- ☐ Bring my own drinks (NA beer, soda, whatever)

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- ☐ Tell someone my exit plan _____
- ☐ Set a time limit (leaving by _____)
- ☐ Eat before I go _____
- ☐ Have emergency contact on speed dial _____
- ☐ Plan something to look forward to after _____
- ☐ Other _____

MY SOBER SUPPORT SYSTEM

People I can text during the day:

1. Name: _____ Phone: _____
2. Name: _____ Phone: _____
3. Name: _____ Phone: _____

Check-in times:

- Before event: _____
- During event: _____
- After event: _____

EXIT STRATEGY

I'm allowed to leave if:

- ☐ Drinking gets heavy _____
- ☐ Someone won't stop offering me alcohol _____
- ☐ I feel triggered or unsafe _____
- ☐ People are being disrespectful _____
- ☐ Someone brings up my past to shame me _____
- ☐ The vibe is toxic _____
- ☐ I just need to leave (no reason required) _____

My exit line:

" _____ "

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How I'm getting home:

- ☐ Driving myself (can leave anytime)
- ☐ Have backup ride arranged
- ☐ Uber/Lyft budget set aside

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES & SUPPORT

WHEN SOMEONE OFFERS ME A DRINK

My response:

- ☐ "I'm good, thanks" (no explanation)
- ☐ "I'm not drinking today"
- ☐ "Nah, I'm good"
- ☐ "I'm driving"

If they push back:

- ☐ "I said no" (firm, no explanation)
- ☐ "I'm not discussing this"
- ☐ Walk away
- ☐ Leave the event if they won't drop it

I will NOT: Justify, over-explain, or feel guilty for saying no

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS "JUST HAVE ONE"

What they're really saying: "Your sobriety makes me uncomfortable about my drinking"

My response:

- ☐ "That's not how it works for me"
- ☐ "I'm good where I'm at"
- ☐ "Not for me, but you do you"
- ☐ If they persist: "I'm done talking about this"

Reminder: Anyone who can't respect my sobriety doesn't deserve my time.

WHEN I FEEL LIKE THE ONLY SOBER GUY

I will remember:

- There are probably other sober men there (they're just quiet about it)
- Being different doesn't mean being weak

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- My sobriety is more important than fitting in
- I'd rather be sober and isolated than drunk and "included"

If isolation feels unbearable:

- Text my support person
- Leave early (that's success, not failure)
- Remember why I got sober in the first place

FOOTBALL/SPORTS WATCHING SURVIVAL

My plan:

- Bring my own drinks (NA beer looks like beer)
- Focus on the game, not the drinking
- Have a job (grilling, bringing food)
- Leave at halftime if it's too much
- Watch the game somewhere else
- Skip it entirely this year (that's okay)

DEALING WITH EMOTIONS

If I start feeling emotional, I will NOT:

- Tell myself to "man up"
- Push emotions down
- Feel weak for having feelings

I will:

- Acknowledge what I'm feeling
- Text my support person
- Take a break (walk, bathroom, outside)
- Remember emotions are part of recovery
- Leave if I need to process this alone

Reminder: Feeling emotions doesn't make me weak. Numbing them makes me stuck.

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IF I GET ANGRY OR FRUSTRATED

My anger plan:

- 1 Notice I'm getting angry
- 2 Take a physical break (step outside)
- 3 Do box breathing (4-4-4-4) x 3
- 4 Ask: "Is this worth my sobriety?"
- 5 If the answer is no, leave

What I will NOT do: Blow up, get in a fight, or use anger as an excuse to drink

AFTER I LEAVE

I will:

- ☐ Text my support person that I'm safe
- ☐ Do something I enjoy
- ☐ NOT replay every conversation in my head
- ☐ Eat if I'm hungry
- ☐ Attend next day's meeting
- ☐ Acknowledge I survived without using

AFFIRMATIONS FOR THE DAY

- Getting sober is the strongest thing I've ever done
- I don't owe anyone an explanation
- Real strength is facing my problems, not numbing them
- I'm allowed to leave at any time
- My sobriety is more important than anyone's opinion
- Setting boundaries doesn't make me weak
- One day sober is better than any day drinking

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

You don't have to do this perfectly.
You just have to do it sober.

If you leave early, that's success.
If you set a boundary, that's success.
If you say no, that's success.
If you survive without using, that's success.

Staying sober is the most courageous thing you can do.

EMERGENCY RESOURCES

24/7 Support:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988
- SAMHSA National Helpline: 1-800-662-4357
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

Find a Meeting:

- AA: www.aa.org | NA: www.na.org
- SMART Recovery: www.smartrecovery.org