

Holiday Survival Plan for Women in Recovery

PRE-HOLIDAY PLANNING

MY BIGGEST TRIGGERS (Check all that apply:)

- ☐ Being asked to host or cook
- ☐ Comments about my weight/appearance/eating
- ☐ Family criticism or judgment
- ☐ Pressure to drink ("It's a holiday!")
- ☐ Being responsible for everyone's happiness
- ☐ Seeing alcohol-centered celebrations
- ☐ Ex-partner or difficult relationships present
- ☐ Feeling invisible or unappreciated
- ☐ Body image anxiety
- ☐ Perfectionism about food/hosting/appearance
- ☐ Being around using family members
- ☐ Child custody or co-parenting stress
- ☐ Financial pressure (gifts, food, travel)
- ☐ Grief over lost relationships or past holidays
- ☐ Pressure to "forgive and forget" toxic people

My top 3 triggers:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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SETTING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

What I WANT the holiday to be:

What it will ACTUALLY be:

One expectation I'm releasing:

THE "NO" PRACTICE One thing I'm saying NO to this year:

- ☐ Hosting (someone else can do it or we'll go out)
- ☐ Cooking the whole meal (potluck or takeout is fine)
- ☐ Managing everyone's emotions
- ☐ Seeing [specific person]
- ☐ Staying the whole time
- ☐ Being the family therapist
- ☐ Pretending everything is fine
- ☐ Explaining my recovery to everyone
- ☐ Other

My boundary script:

"

"

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BEFORE I GO

I will:

- ☐ Eat before I go (won't arrive starving) _____
- ☐ Bring my own non-alcoholic drinks _____
- ☐ Tell someone my exit plan _____
- ☐ Attend a support meeting _____
- ☐ Set a time limit (leaving by _____)
- ☐ Remind myself: I don't owe anyone an explanation _____
- ☐ Have my emergency contact on speed dial _____
- ☐ Pack a "comfort kit" (gum, mints, fidget item, headphones) _____
- ☐ Wear something comfortable _____
- ☐ 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:

- ☐ Someone's drinking gets out of control _____
- ☐ I feel triggered or unsafe _____
- ☐ Someone makes comments about my recovery/weight/life _____
- ☐ I'm being treated as the caretaker for everyone _____
- ☐ Drama or fighting starts _____
- ☐ I just need to leave (no reason required) _____

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My exit line:

"

"

How I'm getting home:

☐ Driving myself (can leave anytime)

☐ Have backup ride arranged

☐ Uber/Lyft budget set aside

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

THE BATHROOM BREAK PLAN

When I need a minute, I will:

☐ Take a bathroom break (5-10 minutes alone)

☐ Text my support person

☐ Do box breathing (4-4-4-4)

☐ Play a grounding game on my phone

☐ Look at recovery affirmations saved on phone

☐ Call my sponsor/therapist

☐ Step outside for "fresh air"

WHEN SOMEONE OFFERS ME ALCOHOL

My response:

☐ "No thanks, I'm good" (no explanation needed)

☐ "I'm not drinking today"

☐ "I'll stick with [my drink]"

☐ "I'm driving"

☐ If pushed: "I'm not going to discuss this"

If they won't drop it, I will:

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WHEN SOMEONE COMMENTS ON MY APPEARANCE/EATING

My response:

- ☐ "I'm not discussing my body/weight/food today" _____
- ☐ Change subject immediately _____
- ☐ Walk away _____
- ☐ "That's not up for discussion" _____
- ☐ If it continues: Leave _____

Reminder: My body is not up for family commentary. I don't owe anyone an explanation about what or how much I eat.

WHEN I'M EXPECTED TO "KEEP THE PEACE" What I will NOT do:

- ☐ Mediate family fights _____
- ☐ Smooth over someone else's bad behavior _____
- ☐ Apologize for other people _____
- ☐ Make excuses for toxic family members _____
- ☐ Manage everyone's emotions _____
- ☐ Fix things that aren't my responsibility _____

What I will say:

"

"

WHEN I FEEL INVISIBLE OR UNAPPRECIATED

I will remember:

- I'm there for me, not for their approval _____
- My recovery is more important than their opinion _____
- Being overlooked is better than being criticized _____
- I don't need their validation _____
- I can leave if I'm not being treated with respect _____

One nice thing I'll do for myself during the day:

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BODY IMAGE & FOOD CHALLENGES

BEFORE THE MEAL

I will remind myself:

- ☐ All foods are allowed—I can eat what I want
- ☐ I don't need to explain my eating to anyone
- ☐ Diet talk is not required conversation
- ☐ My worth is not determined by what's on my plate
- ☐ Recovery means nourishing my body without shame

If someone comments on my eating, I will:

THE "I'M FULL" BOUNDARY

I will NOT:

- ☐ Force myself to eat more because someone insists
- ☐ Eat less to avoid judgment
- ☐ Engage in "good food/bad food" talk
- ☐ Discuss diets, calories, or "earning" dessert
- ☐ Compare my body or eating to others

If food becomes a trigger, I will:

AFTER I LEAVE

I will:

- ☐ Text my support person that I'm safe
- ☐ Do something comforting (bath, favorite show, walk)
- ☐ NOT replay every conversation in my head

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- ☐ NOT replay every conversation in my head
- ☐ Go to bed when I'm tired (not stay up obsessing)
- ☐ Attend next day's support meeting
- ☐ Journal or process with therapist later
- ☐ Celebrate that I survived without using

IF SOMETHING WENT WRONG

I will NOT:

- ☐ Shame myself
- ☐ Replay it over and over
- ☐ Assume I did something wrong
- ☐ Apologize for having boundaries
- ☐ Go back to people-pleasing to "make up for it"

I will:

- ☐ Talk to sponsor/therapist/friend
- ☐ Remember boundaries make some people uncomfortable—that's not my problem
- ☐ Acknowledge what I did RIGHT
- ☐ Learn what to do differently next time
- ☐ Forgive myself and move forward

AFFIRMATIONS & SUPPORT

AFFIRMATIONS FOR THE DAY

- I am allowed to leave at any time for any reason
- My sobriety is more important than anyone's opinion
- I don't have to earn my place at the table
- Setting boundaries doesn't make me a bad person
- I'm not responsible for managing everyone's emotions
- My body is not up for commentary
- I can be uncomfortable and still be okay
- I don't owe anyone an explanation about my recovery

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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.

You've got this.

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
- Women for Sobriety: www.womenforsobriety.org