Tips for a happy, sober holiday season

One of the most difficult times of the year for those recovering from alcoholism is the holiday season. If you find yourself struggling, remember that you are not alone. Help is only a phone call or a meeting away! Here are some helpful and practical tips to keep you from taking that first drink.

1. Plan each and every day of your holiday season
Plan to spend the majority of your time with friends and family who are supportive of your recovery. If you are required to be present for a social gathering where alcohol is being served, bring a fellow A.A. member with you. Plan fun events and outings to replace your old drinking rituals.

2. Find an alkathon in your area
During the holiday season, many clubs are open 24 hours with fellowship and ongoing meetings. If you are a member of A.A. or think that you might have a problem with alcohol, you are welcome to attend.

3. Ask for support from your family and friends
Those who are truly supportive of your recovery will be happy to help you throughout the season. Be up front and tell them your concerns.

4. Have a list of at least 10 people you can call if you feel the urge to drink
Make a list and check it twice. Carry your cell phone and your list of names at all times. The urge to drink is very powerful and can happen at any time.

5. Don't forget about regular exercise
Regular exercise is an essential component of any balanced recovery program. If you have extra time on your hands, it is a great idea to get out and exercise. Examples include running, skating, crosscountry skiing, stretching, yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates or water aerobics. Instead of napping on the couch after dinner, go for a walk around the block.

6. Stay away from slippery places
There is absolutely no reason to ever check out your former favorite drinking establishments. It is very likely that your old drinking buddies are still there and are still telling the same old stories.

7. Create new traditions to replace your old drinking patterns
Try something totally different during the holidays. Buy a new board game; take the family on a sleigh ride; prepare a family photo album. Use you imagination, be creative and have fun.

8. Write out a daily gratitude list
The quickest cure to get you out of the holiday blues is by counting your blessings. Be grateful for what you have by writing out a gratitude list every morning. Don't stop writing until you have at least 10 items on your list.

9. Volunteer your services to a charitable organization
There are many people in your community who are homeless and hungry. Why not volunteer to work at a soup kitchen or at a special Christmas dinner for those less fortunate than you? You will be helping not only the needy, but yourself as well!

10. Write a letter to yourself: How I stayed sober.
The act of writing your ideas on paper is very powerful. Write down all the activities and events that will help you have healthy happy sober Christmas. Now take action on them and make this letter come true!

11. Avoid H.A.L.T.
H.A.L.T. stands for: • Hungry • Angry • Lonely • Tired
There are very simple solutions for all of the above items. If you are hungry, get something to eat. If you are angry, talk to someone about it. If you are lonely, go to a meeting or call a friend. If you are tired, get a good night's sleep.

12. Live One Day at a time and enjoy your sobriety!
Stay in the moment. Have present-time consciousness. Be in the now. These are all different ways of reminding yourself to live one day at a time. Never mind about what happened or what could happen. Enjoy today. Live today. Celebrate your sobriety!

If you follow these simple steps, it is totally feasible to stay sober throughout the holiday season.