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Healthy People
2020

Improving the health of Durham
& NC communities since 1989

December 2018

Healthy Sunday Topics: Dealing with Substance Abuse During the Holidays

Substance Abuse

For many people, the winter holiday season can be a time when substance use increases significantly. There are many factors influencing this, including the sadness associated with grieving the loss of loved ones, financial stressors and the loneliness that comes with a lack of social supports, just to name a few. In addition, there are often more frequent holiday parties to attend, which are often associated with alcohol consumption. December is considered one of the deadliest months for drunk driving accidents.

If someone is already dealing with a substance addiction, the holidays are often a time when exposure to temptations is increased. In addition, some will take a "holiday" from relapse prevention measures they have put in place, thinking this is the only way they will enjoy the celebrations with family and friends.



Here are a few tips to help you stay safe during this holiday season

- 1. Plan, Plan, Plan:** If you are already dealing with an addiction, put concrete plans in place to make sure you continue or even increase all relapse prevention measures. Schedule meetings and make sure you have support people in place to hold you accountable.
- 2. Limit your time at celebrations:** If you are attending celebrations where alcohol is served, there is nothing wrong with limiting the time you spend there. Consider leaving the celebration and immediately calling on supports that have been in place to strengthen your sobriety or consider bringing that support person with you to the celebration. Consider bringing a non-alcoholic drink with you to enjoy while there.
- 3. Limit your media exposure:** Advertisements for alcohol tend to be more frequent during the holiday season. Limiting your time spent watching media will limit your exposure to these temptations.
- 4. Keep stress to a minimum:** Learning to manage stress goes a long way in helping control urges to use alcohol and illicit drugs. Utilize techniques such as meditation and relaxation exercises to lower anxiety levels.
- 5. Know Your Triggers:** Remember the acronym **H. A. L. T.**, which stands for **hungry, angry, lonely and tired**. These are very common triggers that can lead to the urge to use.



Carol Gibbs, MD

Carol Gibbs, MD, managing partner of Senior Health and Education Partners, PLLC says, "Know when to get help: If the urges become too overwhelming, have phone numbers at your fingertips to call for help. Make sure these services are available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. Make your mental and physical health a priority."

For More Information and Where to Go for Help

If you are feeling lonely...YOU ARE NOT ALONE! There is always someone who understands and cares. Talking about your concerns is healing. Seeking advice from others is healthy. Call a friend, go to church, if possible, surround yourself with good, positive people. Here are some centers that may help you.

Alliance Behavioral Healthcare Access Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Customer Service Specialists will assist you to find a crisis provider that is well-matched with your needs. Their local number is: **800-510-9132. We encourage you to phone first.** If you already have a service provider, call them first. Providers who know you are usually best prepared to assist you in a crisis.

Have Support Come to You...

Crisis situations are often best resolved at home. Mobile Crisis Teams are available 24 hours a day in all counties. Professional counselors will speak with you and your family during a visit. They have an average response time of 2 hours. This service is provided by: **Freedom House Recovery Center Call 919-797-1865**

Go to a Crisis Center...

Many counties have a specialized crisis center where you can walk in for a crisis assessment and referrals to additional services. Appointments are not needed. The crisis center in your county is provided by:

Freedom House Recovery Center

309 Crutchfield St. Durham NC 27704

Call 919-560-7305 Sunday - Saturday – 24 hours a day

*addiction is real.
so is recovery.*

If loneliness, grief and depression get too great to handle, **call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255** or visit the Suicide Prevention Resource Center at sprc.org

Remember the ABC's

Always exercise regularly as this may help in minimizing stress,

Be willing to seek professional help, and

Control your stress and anxiety by talking to someone, breathing deeply, laughing, and meditating.

Please Donate: Community Health Coalition provides free health tips, free blood pressure checks, glucose screenings, community health education workshops, and a library of brochures and pamphlets about chronic diseases. Without donations from individuals like you, the Coalition will be forced to limit its current outreach efforts.

Please Make a Donation to Community Health Coalition through SECC or PayPal: Did you know that Community Health Coalition is an approved SECC charity? If you are a state employee or retiree, choose (Code 3770) to send your SECC gift to us! Thank you.

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Thank you.



Health Tip is a message from Community Health Coalition, Inc.
REMEMBER Healthy People 2020: A Clear Vision to Healthy Living