

Tips for Maintaining Recovery During the Holidays from Akua

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Recognizing potential triggers and situations around the holidays can help those in recovery prepare for what is to come, in addition to minimizing risk of relapse during the holiday season.”

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- December kicks off in full swing into the holiday season. The holiday season is supposed to be a joyous time of year aimed at bringing friends and family together. With all the excitement and joy, there are often moments of stress and [anxiety](#) for those in recovery from a substance use disorder or alcohol use disorder. Family ties and finances can feel strained, loneliness can surface, and a runaway train of unrealistic expectations can go off the rails. The stress and anxiety can become amplified to the point that some experience urges and cravings.

Those recovering from a substance use disorder or alcohol use disorder can experience a broad spectrum of holiday

emotions that can be challenging, even if they have the best intentions for their recovery journey. [Relapse](#) rates tend to increase during the holiday season, but this does not mean relapses are unavoidable. There are many steps one can take to remain healthy and happy in their recovery journey during this holiday season.

Common holiday triggers for relapse include the following:

- Changes in daily routine (traveling, time off work, changes to your exercise and mealtime routine, etc.)
- Financial strain (the holidays can be expensive)
- Holiday parties (social anxiety and being around alcohol or other substances)
- Family stress (controversial topics such as politics and religion, anxiety about past family trauma, guilt, and shame about addiction, living up to family's expectations, etc.)
- Loneliness (many individuals do not spend the holidays with loved ones)
- Seasonal affective disorder or depression

How to stay strong in recovery during the holiday season?

- Set boundaries: This can mean saying “no” when offered an alcoholic drink at a party or dinner. Other boundaries include:
 - Attend a limited number of holiday gatherings
 - Avoiding unhealthy foods that may trigger an urge to use
 - Paying close attention to being hungry, angry, lonely, and tired (“HALT”) because these distressing conditions can threaten recovery.

Boundaries also mean avoiding triggering conversations or people around the holidays. When in an uncomfortable situation, staying firm to boundaries is essential, which can mean changing the subject or walking away from the situation. Setting (and keeping) firm boundaries during the holiday season can prevent triggers and potential relapse.

Make a budget:

Financial holiday stress can potentially trigger a relapse, and the holidays can be an expensive time of year. The holiday season can leave people financially exhausted: from taking a vacation and buying gifts to purchasing holiday decorations and attending parties. Still, there is no reason to go into debt during this time of year. Set some time aside to look at finances and design a budget to avoid being stressed out financially. This may mean buying fewer gifts, shopping for sales, making gifts, and using airline miles to travel. The holiday season is not worth going into debt or potentially causing a relapse due to financial strain.

Attend community support meetings:

Many individuals in recovery skip out on regular community meetings or therapy sessions due to the change in their schedules. Spending time with family and celebrating the holidays is important; however, they should not replace regular community recovery meetings or therapy sessions. In addition, keeping an aftercare recovery schedule is essential as relapse rates can increase if you neglect regular support groups and therapy sessions.

Have a relapse plan in place:

Relapses often occur during triggering circumstances, but they also happen when you least expect them to. Therefore, it is important to have a relapse plan in place to outline specific steps to take if a relapse occurs. A relapse plan is usually made while enrolled in an addiction

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treatment program. A relapse plan often includes:

- Calling a trusted friend.
- Removing all triggers.
- Telling your therapist or addiction treatment program.
- Undergoing the necessary steps to recognize what underlying causes resulted in relapse.

A relapse is not a failure in your recovery but rather a mis-step that needs to be dissected to recognize the underlying triggers and come up with a new plan to avoid these triggers in the future.

Rely on a trusted friend or family member: As we dive deeper into the holiday season, everyone will experience some form of stress, loneliness, anxiety, or negative feelings. It is important to recognize these feelings, sit with these feelings and talk about these feelings with a trusted friend or loved one. Talking things out, regardless of whether they are about recovery, the holidays, or daily stressors, can have a tremendous positive impact on mood and the recovery journey. It is important to remember that recovery cannot be made alone, and it takes many working parts and individuals to navigate a strong and healthy recovery.

Try to maintain a daily routine as much as possible: The holiday season can easily throw off routines. Hectic travel schedules, holiday gatherings, and time off from work can result in neglecting self-care routines. One may find themselves exercising less, adopting a different sleep schedule, and eating heavy holiday meals and baked goods. Although these things are not necessarily "bad", they can throw off one's emotional and mental state. Stay consistent with an exercise schedule, nutrition, and sleep schedule, as these three things can drastically change mood and mindset, potentially impeding the recovery journey.

Akua Mind and Body is more than just a treatment center or residential facility; it's a revitalizing retreat that provides holistic therapy programs for those who are in need of mental health treatment and substance use addiction. Akua's integrative approach combines Eastern traditions with Western science to provide the highest quality of care combining physical, psychological, spiritual, and science-based approaches in detoxification, outpatient, and residential treatment. With facilities throughout the Sacramento Region, Los Angeles & Orange County Region, and San Diego Region, Akua aims to provide its clients with the best mental health and addiction treatment possible. Akua's goal is to help patients build a solid foundation for healing so they can live happy and healthy lives in recovery.

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