

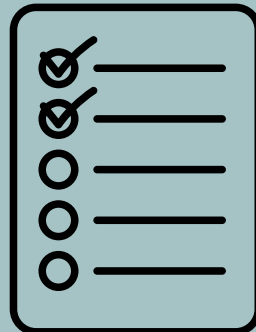


NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS WHILE IN RECOVERY

The holidays can be a time of celebration and a chance to spend time with loved ones. The holidays can also be a time of stress and anxiety for some. They can be challenging if you are part of the pregnant and parenting and LGBTQIA+ communities and are struggling with substance use. However, you are not alone. Here are some strategies to help you enjoy this holiday season.



Set boundaries. If you think your boundaries will be tested during this holiday season, practice how you will answer questions about your recovery, parenting, or identity. If you are not comfortable, you should not feel pressured to answer.



Create a plan. Plan ahead if you are going to be around family, friends, peers, or colleagues that may influence you to drink or use substances. Bring a person you trust to holiday events, your own foods or drinks that you can enjoy, and create an exit plan should you find yourself in an unhealthy or hostile situation.



Engage in healthy self-care. Pick up new activities this holiday season. You can try something new with friends or family such as cooking meals together, watching movies, and taking trips. Take time for yourself too. Don't be afraid to put your needs and recovery first.



Be intentional about the invitations you accept. It is okay for you to say "No, thank you" to invitations that are unhealthy or uncomfortable for you. Your mental and physical health is important and can be maintained by saying yes to celebrating with people who are supportive of your recovery.



Seek your support system. Surround yourself with people who are supportive of your identity, recovery, and parenting. If your family is not helpful to your mental health or well-being, you can "pick" your support system. This can include spending time with friends or peers, joining a support group, and joining a faith-based organization.



We asked pregnant, parenting, and people from the LGBTQIA+ communities how they navigate the holidays while struggling with substance use or while in recovery.



"I plan self-care during the holidays for a few times during the week. I go on walks, go to support groups, do hair/makeup/nails and take time to give myself the confidence boost I need."

"When I was pregnant I practiced self-care by talking to my support team and sponsor, practiced pregnancy yoga, attended meetings, visited positive friends/family, and journaled."



YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

CT has many resources that can support your recovery throughout the holidays.

[CT DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES](#)

[SAFE-Family Recovery](#)

[CT 24/7 TREATMENT ACCESS LINE:](#)
[1-800-563-4086](#)

[DMHAS ADDICTION SERVICES BED AVAILABILITY](#)

[PROUD PROGRAM](#)

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[WOMEN'S REACH PROGRAM](#)

"As a person who is part of the LGBTQIA+ community and in recovery, I expand my options during the holiday season. I have volunteered at soup kitchens, visited senior centers, gone to hospitals, and the VA to help support different communities. I try to keep myself busy during the holidays. If my support group is holding holiday events, I try to attend and surround myself with supportive people who care for me."



Supporting Individuals in Recovery During the Holidays

The holidays can be a challenging time for those in recovery. This time may bring up painful memories or trigger feelings of loneliness, financial worries, or social pressures.

But it can also be a time to connect, provide much needed resources, and celebrate recovery and strategies for healing.

SCREENING

If you are a provider, incorporating screening for substance use and substance use disorders into every encounter gives all patients the opportunity to receive support for their individual needs and challenges.

Consider validated screening tools such as 4 Ps, 5 Ps, ASSIST, T-ACE, or AUDIT.

BE NON-JUDGMENTAL

Use nonjudgmental, nonmoralistic, and nonthreatening language when asking individuals about substance use.

It is important to recognize personal attitudes that may influence a person's response. Stress harm reduction and meet them where they are at.

INCLUSIVE CARE

Providing affirming and respectful care makes a difference.

- Avoid assumptions about gender, sexual orientation, or family structure. People who are assigned female at birth may identify as trans, non-binary, or may be intersex.
- Introduce yourself with your pronouns to create a welcoming environment.
- Consider trauma informed care in your approach.
- Update your agency's paperwork to be gender inclusive.



HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction saves lives.

If an individual is not ready to stop using substances, talk to them about their willingness to engage in harm reduction practices. You can also provide education on overdose prevention. Offer resources that can help someone use substances more safely.

Talk to your patients about:

- **Willingness to consider changing or reducing their substance use.**
- **Narcan/Naloxone.**
- **Accessing safe injection resources through a local harm reduction organization.**
- **The dangers of fentanyl.**
- **Secure storage of medication/substances. Offer a lockbox if possible.**
- **Potential risks of using substances alone and the symptoms of a potential drug overdose.**
- **Call 911 in the event of an emergency.**

NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT?

ACCESS Mental Health for Moms offers psychiatric expertise and consultation to medical providers treating perinatal women presenting with mental health and/or substance use concerns. For obstetric, pediatric and adult primary care, and psychiatric providers treating women up to one-year post delivery.

Monday through Friday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
833-978-MOMS (6667)

CT has many resources that can help support individuals that are in recovery or exploring recovery during the holidays.

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