

NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A SERVICE OF BEST CARE EAP

Maintaining Recovery During the Holiday Season

Relapse is always a possibility for those in recovery, but the holidays present increased opportunities for the presence of alcohol and other substances at holiday celebrations and gatherings. For most, the holidays are a time for people to create joy and positive memories with family and friends. However, for those in recovery, the holidays may bring about a wide range of feelings from uncertainty, fear, anxiety, and resentment to feelings of contentment, serenity, optimism, and security. This time of year has a way of stirring up past emotions and creating a roller coaster effect with added stress. Past holidays may have included family arguments, disappointments, and relapses. With the increased presence of alcohol and other substances, it is of utmost importance for those in recovery to plan for the wide array of feelings and memories they may experience. This may be someone's first holiday season celebrating clean and sober, and they do not know what to expect, or it may be their thirtieth year celebrating clean and sober. Either way, we know that the potential for relapse is part of any substance use disorder. Therefore, for the person in recovery, creating a holiday relapse prevention plan is essential for one to maintain sobriety. A relapse prevention plan will help them identify relapse triggers that may be present, and prepare a "plan of attack" if they should experience any triggers. Being prepared will allow the person to be able to enjoy the holidays and not sabotage their recovery.

To help you enjoy the holiday season, the NE LAP recommends the following suggestions:

1. Identify your relapse triggers (emotions, locations, people, etc.)
2. Plan a support network before you need them. Surround yourself with people that are supportive of your recovery, and avoid those that are not.
3. Attend recovery support group meetings before and/or after gatherings that involve alcohol or other substances.
4. Avoid vulnerable situations. That may mean you cannot be around certain friends or family members.
5. If you are at a gathering, get your own beverage so that you know it does not contain alcohol.
6. Have an exit strategy for every event. Do not be dependent on someone else for transportation.
7. Do not overspend. Financial difficulties can lead to increased stress, which can then lead to relapse.
8. Do not isolate, or spend too much time alone.
9. HALT – Do not become too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.
10. Take care of yourself emotionally, physically, and spiritually.
11. Set boundaries with people, and stick to them!
12. Practice gratitude every day.
13. Ask for help if you need it!

Practice your relapse prevention skills daily. The more you practice, the more confident you will feel in being assertive with others in order to take care of yourself and maintain sobriety.

If you are a licensed health or health-related service professional wanting more information about sobriety and recovery, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402) 354-8055 or visit our web site at www.lapne.org. If you would like to consult with the NE LAP, or schedule an assessment or an educational presentation, please ask for Michelle Hruska, NE LAP Coordinator, or Nicole Winkler, NE LAP Counselor.