



## **Managing Addictions and Financial Struggles at Christmas**



The holiday season, while joyful for most, can exacerbate the challenges of addiction and financial struggles. Here is a guide to understanding and managing these difficulties during Christmas with practical strategies and support options.

If you need any support this holiday season **SIX MHA's** helpline should be your first port of call. Below is some advice on how to handle this year's festivities as well as some alternate support lines.



## Understanding the Challenges

### Addiction at Christmas

- 1. Social Triggers:** Holiday gatherings often involve alcohol and indulgence, creating challenges for those in recovery or managing addiction.
- 2. Pressure to Conform:** Societal expectations to celebrate and participate in festivities can increase the risk of relapse.
- 3. Emotional Stress:** Feelings of stress, loneliness, or unmet expectations can lead to cravings and impulsive behavior.

### Financial Struggles at Christmas

- 1. Increased Expenses:** The holidays often come with additional spending on gifts, food, and events.
- 2. Social Pressure:** Expectations to exchange gifts and host celebrations can strain already tight budgets.
- 3. Debt Cycles:** Many individuals resort to loans or credit cards, worsening their financial situation in the long term.





## **Strategies for Managing Addiction**

### **1. Set Clear Boundaries:**

- Communicate your needs and limits to friends and family.
- Avoid events or environments that may trigger relapse.

### **2. Focus on Non-Alcoholic Alternatives:**

- Bring your own non-alcoholic beverages to gatherings.
- Explore alcohol-free or substance-free holiday events.

### **3. Stick to Recovery Routines:**

- Maintain regular recovery meetings or therapy sessions.
- Practice self-care through exercise, mindfulness, and journaling.

### **4. Build a Support Network:**

- Stay connected with sober friends or family members who understand your challenges.
- Join online recovery groups if in-person meetings are unavailable.

## **Strategies for Managing Financial Struggles**

### **1. Budget for the Holidays:**

- Set a realistic budget for gifts, meals, and activities.
- Stick to your budget to avoid unnecessary financial stress.



## **2. Focus on Meaningful, Low-Cost Activities:**

- Prioritise time spent with loved ones over material gifts.
- Engage in free or low-cost holiday traditions, such as decorating, baking, or watching holiday movies.

## **3. Communicate Financial Limits:**

- Be honest with family and friends about your financial situation.
- Suggest alternatives to gift-giving, such as a potluck or Secret Santa with a small spending limit.

## **4. Avoid Debt Traps:**

- Resist the temptation to use credit cards or take out loans for holiday expenses.
- Plan ahead to save for next year's holiday season.

## **5. Seek Financial Advice:**

- Contact local financial counselling services for advice on managing debt and budgeting.
- Use online tools to track spending and plan for expenses.



## **Combining Strategies for Addiction and Financial Struggles**

### **1. Focus on Simplicity:**

- Simplify your celebrations to reduce both financial and emotional stress.
- Focus on creating meaningful memories rather than extravagant festivities.

### **2. Plan Ahead:**

- Create a calendar of recovery meetings and low-cost holiday activities.
- Prepare responses for situations where others may offer substances or expect financial contributions.

### **3. Practice Gratitude:**

- Reflect on what you have rather than focusing on what you lack.
- Shift your attention to the positive aspects of the holiday season, such as giving back or enjoying time with loved ones.





## Resources for Support

### SIX MHA:

- Helpline – 0800 880 73 73
- Email – [helpline@sixmha.org](mailto:helpline@sixmha.org)
- App Code – LVZ-489-754



### Addiction Support:

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): [[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)](<https://www.aa.org>)
- Narcotics Anonymous (NA): [[www.na.org](http://www.na.org)](<https://www.na.org>)
- SMART Recovery: [[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)](<https://www.smartrecovery.org>)

### Financial Support:

- Citizens Advice (UK): [[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)](<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>)
- National Debtline (UK): Call 0808 808 4000 or visit [[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)](<https://www.nationaldebtline.org>)
- StepChange Debt Charity (UK): [[www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)](<https://www.stepchange.org>)



### Mental Health Support:

- Samaritans (UK): Call 116 123 or visit [[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)](<https://www.samaritans.org>)



Christmas can be challenging for those managing addiction and financial struggles, but by setting boundaries, seeking support, and simplifying your approach, it is possible to navigate the season more comfortably. Remember, prioritising your well-being and reaching out for help are essential steps toward a healthier and more sustainable holiday experience.