



Managing Addiction, Loneliness, and Isolation at Christmas.



The holiday season can bring joy and togetherness, but for many, it can also amplify struggles with addiction, loneliness, and isolation. Here is a guide to understanding these challenges and practical strategies for managing them during this time.

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 Christmas time as well as some alternate support lines.





Understanding the Challenges

Addiction During Christmas

- 1. Triggers:** The holiday season often involves alcohol, social gatherings, and indulgence, which can be triggering for those recovering from addiction.
- 2. Pressure:** Societal expectations to 'celebrate' can create stress, leading to potential relapse or binge.
- 3. Limited Support:** Many support services operate at reduced capacity over the holidays, leaving individuals feeling unsupported.

Loneliness and Isolation

- 1. Social Expectations:** Media and societal norms around family togetherness can intensify feelings of loneliness.
- 2. Loss and Grief:** Memories of lost loved ones or estrangement can resurface during the festive period.
- 3. Physical Isolation:** Health issues, mobility challenges, financial constraints, or distance can prevent connection with others.

Strategies for Managing Addiction

1. Plan Ahead:

- Identify situations that might be triggering (e.g., parties, gatherings).
- Plan responses to offers of alcohol or other substances.





- Communicate boundaries with friends and family.

2. Attend Support Meetings:

- Many groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or SMART Recovery, offer special holiday sessions.
- Utilise online meetings if in-person gatherings are unavailable.

3. Create a Safe Environment:

- Stock up on non-alcoholic beverages.
- Spend time with supportive, understanding people.

4. Practice Self-Care:

- Stick to routines that support recovery (exercise, mindfulness, journaling).
- Avoid overcommitting and allow time to rest. HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)

Strategies for Managing Loneliness and Isolation

1. Connect with Others:

- Arrange video calls or phone calls with friends or family.
- Join online forums or communities focused on shared interests.

2. Volunteer:

- Helping others can provide purpose and reduce feelings of isolation. Many organisations need extra help during the holidays.





3. Create Your Own Traditions:

- Watch your favourite movies, cook a special meal, or take a festive walk.

4. Limit social media:

- Avoid comparing your experience to idealized portrayals online.

5. Engage in Activities:

- Focus on hobbies or interests, such as crafting, reading, or outdoor activities.

Combining Strategies

1. Seek a Support Network:

- Find a community of people facing similar challenges, either in person or online.

2. Stay Occupied:

- Keep yourself busy with planned activities to reduce overthinking.

3. Practice Gratitude:

- Reflect on the positive aspects of your life to shift focus from what's missing.





Resources for Support

SIX MHA:

- Helpline – 07441 935 913
- Email – helpline@sixmha.org
- App Code – BAR-615-869



Addiction Support:

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

Loneliness and Mental Health Support:

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

Community Engagement:

- Local churches, community centres, or volunteer organizations often host events for those alone during the holidays.

The holiday season can be challenging for those managing addiction, loneliness, or isolation, but by planning ahead, seeking support, and practicing self-care, it is possible to navigate this time more comfortably. Remember, reaching out for help is a strength, and there are many resources available to support you.

