



Holiday Survival Plan

BACKGROUND: Unfortunately holidays can at times be linked with relapse or other setbacks in progress. There may be a variety of factors that come into play, but the main reason likely is because of the high potential for a person who is trying not to use to be confronted with significant relapse triggers and other challenges during holidays. A trigger is anything that sets off either a conscious or unconscious craving or desire to return to an addictive behavior, such as using drugs.

In order to survive the holidays and stay in the right course, it is important to consider one's own set of factors that may contribute to a setback or relapse. Triggers and other factors that can contribute to setbacks in progress can be both EXTERNAL and INTERNAL. It may be much easier to plan for the external factors because they are easier to identify as we can see them. Internal factors can be much more complicated and often we cannot see them coming before it is too late. Often, it is much more difficult to cope with internal issues as you cannot physically run away from what is inside of you.

External: (Things outside of you associated with relapse or other setback)

- **People**
- **Places**
- **Things**

Internal: (Challenging issues that come from within):

- **Feelings: (such as sadness, loneliness, fear, resentment, excitement*, loss, etc.)**
- **Thoughts/Attitudes: (for example: "What's the harm in having just a few beers for the holidays" or "I can use just this just this once, then I'll stop" or overconfidence, self pity, "who cares attitude" etc),**
- **Mood states and mental health symptoms– (such as depression, anxiety, mania, trauma)**
- **Physical Conditions: (Health problems, pain issues)**

* (It is not only negative feelings that can be a challenge, often positive feelings such as excitement can trigger urges to use)

GROUP EXERCISE: First, on the board, as a group, brainstorm as many triggers and other challenges that you can think of that can occur during this upcoming holiday. Be as creative as possible and try to include both external and internal triggers and other factors. (Take a few minutes to complete this before moving to the next step)

Next, using the triggers listed on the board by the group as a guide, complete the following HOLIDAY SURVIVAL PLAN worksheet on the next page based on your personal situation.

When everyone is done, discuss.

