

The Eye Opener

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Your Experience, Strength and Hope Via the Written Word

NO MORE TERRIBLE HOLIDAYS

A few years ago, when I was an active alcoholic, holidays were a mixed blessing for me. I enjoyed my family descending upon my home for the day but knew my drinking would have to be modified.

Planning the holiday meal would consist of the traditional turkey/ham, mashed potatoes, gravy, and of course plenty of wine hidden in the garage. The stores would likely be closed for the holiday so at least a two day supply was necessary. The morning began with some wine to ease the hangover—not too much because I had to be reasonably sober when my kids woke up.

Controlled drinking would be the theme of my holiday gathering. This was a frustrating experience for me. I needed to be cautious to drink slowly, trying never to get beyond buzzed. “Stay functioning”, I would remind myself throughout the day.

My brother is the only other family member who drinks. He would down several beers openly while I would sneak multiple times to the garage, drinking several gulps each trip hoping not to get caught. I didn’t want anyone to know. I wanted to remain a closet alcoholic to the best of my ability. Once I crossed the point of buzzed, my kids, who were teenagers at the time, would say I was behaving weird. If they knew, surely everyone else could too. Once all the guests had left, I would drink like I wanted to—until I passed out or blacked out.

Today I am beyond grateful to say that my holiday celebrations are completely different! Through the program of Alcoholic Anonymous I have learned to live without drinking alcohol. I celebrate each day! I remember every moment and interactions that I have. I no longer hide in my garage or plan how to control my ability to function while drunk.

Today I wake up sober and ready to accept and process the feelings that life experiences offer.

They are not always happy but I know that alcohol will not improve any feelings or situations permanently. I have learned to face my world as each day unfolds—one moment at a time. I’m looking forward to another sober holiday season. A time filled with friends and family that I will actually be present for and remember.

~ *Monica*
Beginners Group

SOBRIETY IN THE WINTER

This is my first winter sober. I was warned last week that a lot of people talk about how hard sobriety is in the winter with all of the holidays. I also remember my first sponsor telling me this is the season when a lot of people come into the rooms, because of the weather and the holidays. All I can think about is how grateful I am to be sober this winter and to be able to help anyone who comes into the rooms for the first time.

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My first meeting, I was engulfed by loving women who saw how desperate and broken I was. I hadn't felt that much affection or hope in a long time. For months these women took me to meetings, took me out to coffee and shared their experience, strength and hope with me. I felt accepted, loved and for the first time, I felt like I could love myself and live a happy life.

I have almost completed my first round of the 12 steps (knowing that I will continue to work these steps as long as I stay sober) and I am so grateful for this program and the gift of sobriety. I can't wait to be of service this winter and give back what was so lovingly given to me last year.

Emily K.
Proud & Sober

A Q U E S T F O R S A N E
A N D S O B E R
H O L I D A Y S

It's taken some experimenting to learn what works best for me, even if it may not work for others. But my priority is myself and my sobriety. Sometimes I've been graceful and other times I've fumbled. I'm glad this journey is all about progress not perfection, knowing that with each experience, I have learnt a little bit more about myself. The only thing I need to do perfectly is not drink!

Today I know the best I can do is show up—to bring my best self and remember I am human and so are they. The members of AA have taught me what human looks like and have helped me navigate being human in a healthy way, along with all the feelings that follow.

I am grateful to have the steps and a sponsor to keep me in check along the road of recovery. To make an action plan going into challenging environments has proved to work best for me. It looks something like this:

For me, it's instrumental to keep my higher power with me at all times. Over time I've found comfort in prayer and letting go of people, places and things that I can't change. One of my favorite prayers is 'Bless Them, Change Me'. My inner chant of this can block out a lot of outer chatter.

I bookend my travel with local meetings, before I hit the road and upon return, while staying connected with those who are the mortar to my sober foundation. I am grateful for meeting apps at my fingertips and screen shot options if I know that cell service is spotty. I pack snacks and a cooler—mostly with seltzer—still making sure there's plenty to drink!

Over time I have become better at setting healthy boundaries, asking for what I need, and identifying ways that I can nourish

my being. Some of the ways I care for myself are walking, finding a place to be quiet; having an exit strategy, reading a magazine, finding humor, though sometimes others may not appreciate my laughter and making time to play! I try to lighten up, relax and follow "rule 62" or not taking myself too seriously. The list continues to grow.

When I used to travel by bus across state lines for family functions I'd bring the Big Book or Living Sober. In the spirit of anonymity and privacy, I'd use wrapping paper as a decorative book cover, just like in grade school. Now a days, there are podcasts, speakers on the go and so many ways to bring the program with me. And...it's always an option and ok not to go.

Nobody ever said it'd be easy, they just promised it'd be worth it. So far, it's been worth it, because I'm worth it.

Amanda
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