



Holiday Stress: A Note About "Partying" (...and Excess)

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Holiday celebrations are wonderful, joyous opportunities to share relaxing time with friends and family. But for some families, addictive disease or excess may be a heart-breaking aspect of the holidays.

Excess, whether related to alcohol or food, drugs, gambling, debt, sex, Internet use, or other compulsive behaviors, is often a misguided response to (*and cause of*) stress.

Addiction is a disease of the family and impacts each member, not just the addict. Addictive disease often occurs in more than one family member, though the form it takes may look different. A person with a binge-eating disorder may not drink alcohol at all, but they may have had an alcoholic parent or grandparent or spouse. A compulsive gambler or shopper may eat healthily but have a relative with a problem with prescription drug abuse. While these disorders used to be cause for addicts and loved ones to despair, fortunately there is now excellent support and treatment available for addiction recovery as well as for the families, friends and even employers of those impaired by addictive disease and compulsive behaviors.

If Someone's Addictive Behaviors Concern You:

1. Remember that they have a disease. While their behavior may reach a point where it is out of control, few addicts would choose to do some of the things they do.
2. If their behavior at a holiday gathering becomes aggressive, do your best to stay out of the way. If cross words should fly, try visualizing a human-sized bottle (*or appropriate substance*) doing the talking.
3. There are many skilled professionals with specific expertise in addictive disease. You can also find free 12 Step meetings for friends/family of addicts in your local phone directory. (see below)

Where to Seek Help for Addicts & Loved Ones:

1. Local hospital and community outreach programs
2. Clergy of any denomination
3. Trusted physicians or therapists or addictions counselors

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4. There are free 12-Step recovery programs in nearly every city, and even in many small towns, across the United States, and in many foreign countries. While this is not the only course of treatment, it's tried and true, readily available, provides anonymity and privacy. They offer strategies you may find useful and meaningful as millions have, and help you to feel less alone on your journey to recovery. It is suggested that you should attend at least six meetings and if possible in more than one location, before deciding if it's for you. Every meeting is different, depending upon slightly varying formats and who happens to be there that day. There are no dues or fees. What have you got to lose?

- Local chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous offer free, highly regarded programs that have facilitated millions and millions worldwide to live in Recovery. AA offers several meetings weekly in most locations: www.aa.org
- Narcotics Anonymous is for anyone who struggles with use and abuse of prescription and/or street drugs. www.na.org
- Al Anon is for the family and loved ones of alcoholics: www.alanon.org
- Codependents Anonymous is also for family and loved ones: www.codependents.org
- Overeaters Anonymous is for anyone who struggles with over or under-eating, chronic or binge-eating disorders, body image issues and other obsessive and compulsive behaviors related to food: www.oa.org
- Gamblers Anonymous is for anyone who struggles with gambling and high-risk behaviors relating to money: www.gamblersanonymous.org
- Debtors Anonymous is for anyone who struggles with indebtedness and the spiral of spending and issues relating to money: www.debtorsanonymous.org

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