

Festive Helpline Opening Hours

The Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs Helpline will be running at a reduced capacity during the holidays. **Our Helpline opening hours are Monday to Friday 9am – 9pm.** Our advisors will not be available for all of these hours but our answer machine message will be updated daily to reflect the times when an advisor can be reached over phone and webchat. If no advisor is available you can leave a message and we will return your call.

For Saturdays and Sundays we operate a call-back service where you can either leave a message, email us or text us.

At peak times our Helpline may be busy. We have dedicated email and text advisors that can potentially respond faster to you.

Helpline: 08080 10 10 11

Email: helpline@sfad.org.uk

Text: 07717488079

Webchat: www.sfad.org.uk

Bereavement Support Service referrals will still be taken during the festive period but the referrals will not be allocated to a counsellor until after the holidays (week beginning 4th January 2021) as this is an outsourced service.



Christmas Planning



Christmas can be a challenging time when you are supporting a loved one who uses alcohol and/or drugs. The perfect picture of the family around the dinner table that we are so used to seeing is very unrealistic for most of us and the pressure of spending time together as a family can cause anxiety and fear.

While you wish to have your family all together and everything to go to plan, you may also have some reservations and concerns. Maybe previous years haven't gone to plan or there are difficult relationships within the family unit, or you don't feel your loved one is in a good place and can't have a whole day without using/drinking. It can be difficult having the success of the day relying on someone who can be unreliable at times.

Remember, you do still have control over how your Christmas period goes. It is still possible to have a lovely time that is not impacted by their behaviour. With a global pandemic to contend with this year, it may add additional stresses into the plans for the festive period.

Some Initial Considerations

- What are your expectations for Christmas?
- Are these realistic?
- What have previous years been like?
- What are your 'musts' for your loved one to participate in your Christmas?
- What boundaries need to be communicated now?

Remember: It is important that you have a good Christmas break too

Setting Boundaries at Christmas

- It is okay to set boundaries at Christmas - remember boundaries are simply behaviours we deem acceptable; they are not punishments.
- Boundaries (and communicating these) help to

give you a feeling of control over your festive period.

- Boundaries and consequences can create motivation for change from our loved one.

How to Set Boundaries at Christmas

- Pick boundaries that are important to you.
- Keep them concise and achievable.
- Discuss them with your loved one early on (at least a week before).
- Try to avoid defending your decisions.
- Try to avoid bringing up old examples of when they have let you down as this tends to lead to argument.
- Have clear consequences if boundaries are not met and make sure that you both understand what they are.
- Be prepared for them 'opting out' of your conditions and prepare a response that holds them responsible for their decisions and actions. For example: 'I am sorry you have decided not to be involved. I will miss seeing you on Christmas day.'
- Be firm with your boundaries and consequences. For example: If you have asked them not to arrive on Christmas Day under the influence but they do, it is important you stick to the consequence you have told them will happen, even if it means asking them to leave. The temptation is to 'let them off' because it is Christmas but this only leads to your boundaries being disrespected in the future.
- Discuss your boundaries with other family members and those who will also be present on the day so everyone is on the same page.

Christmas Self-Care



When speaking with family members about self-care over the festive period, one thing that we got talking about was social media and how limiting our time on social media or taking it at face-value can be self-care in itself.

Most of us have relied on technology this year and it has been great to be able to keep in touch. It has allowed us to stay in contact with friends and family over video calls and enjoying social interaction at a time that face-to-face contact has been limited.

This is one advantage of living in a digital age. If this pandemic had hit some years ago we would not have been so lucky as to have the technology that we have at our fingertips to stay in touch.

However for as much good technology can do there is also the negative side to social media. The reality of social media that most people paint a perfect picture of themselves and their family life. Sometimes negative experiences are shared in cryptic messages on social media but the true reality of real life situations and their impact on us and our loved ones are generally not shared on these platforms.

Pros

- Allows you to keep in touch with people
- Speeds up communication
- Eases loneliness
- Allows you to have fun
- Can spread positivity

Cons

- Can trigger insecurities
- Can enhance fear of missing out
- Can overload you with information
- Can make you doubt your own judgement

Be mindful and take what you see on social media at face value. Keep in mind that people are putting certain chosen images of their day and their experience of Christmas on social media. Limiting time on social media can be a good way of not exposing yourself to the not so positive aspects of social media.

Some other self-care tips from family members include:

- Crafting. It can help fill time and be a welcome distraction.
- Take one day at a time and if a day feels too long break it into smaller chunks.
- Practicing mindfulness regularly.
- Take space for yourself rather than putting the needs of others first.
- Alternative/complimentary therapies like using stones or crystals.
- Going for a walk to get some head-space.
- Give yourself 5 minutes. Christmas can be a busy time and even 5 minutes for yourself to catch your breath and collect your thoughts can help.

50 Ways to Take a Break

Take a Bath

Listen to Music

Take a Nap

Go to a body of water

Watch the clouds

Light a candle

REST your legs up on a wall

Let out a sigh

Fly a Kite

Watch the stars

Write a Letter

Learn something **NEW**

Read a Book

sit in **NATURE**

Listen to a guided relaxation

Take Deep Belly Breaths

MEDITATE

Notice Your Body

Call a Friend

Meander around Town

Walk Outside

Go for a run

Buy some Flowers

Find a relaxing scent

Eat a meal in **SILENCE**

Turn off all electronics

Take a bike ride

Create your own coffee break

View some **ART**

Examine an everyday object with Fresh Eyes

Drive somewhere **NEW**

Go to a park

Pet a furry creature

read or watch something **FUNNY**

COLOR with Crayons

Make some **MUSIC**

Go to a Farmers Market

Forgive Someone

Engage in small acts of **KINDNESS**

Do some gentle stretches

Print on a surface other than paper

Write a quick poem

Read poetry

Let go of something

Put on some music and **DANCE**

Give Thanks

Karen Horneffer-Ginter www.karenhg.com Art by Paula Hansen www.chart-magic.com

By Karen Horneffer-Ginter