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The holidays can be an exciting and joyful time of year, filled with gatherings, family and friends. For better or worse, many of these gatherings come with the invitation to enjoy a few holiday drinks. A quarter of the \$49 billion-a-year distilled spirits industry's profits happen between Thanksgiving and the New Year, per the [Distilled Spirits Council of the United States](#).

Many find this time of year to be an extra challenge, and we want to do what we can to stay on the right path and provide support to others when needed. If you are in recovery or know someone in recovery this holiday season, stick to your best self-care practices and ask those around you how they might need extra [support](#). And for those still including alcohol in their holiday celebrations, here are some basic but important things to consider about our own behavior with alcohol to ensure the holiday season stays joyous.



### **5 tips for managing holiday drinking**

If you are trying to strike a balance with alcohol consumption over the holiday season, here are a few tips to consider:

#### **1. Plan ahead and set a party (or drink) limit**

Overcommitting to parties and other holiday activities is an easy trap to fall into if we're trying to do everything and please everyone. This isn't realistic, and there will be times when you should say "no," especially if you want to limit your consumption and are wary of certain events or people who encourage you to over-imbibe. Consider setting a drink limit for yourself and make sure to rotate in a water or non-alcoholic beverage after every alcoholic drink to avoid going over that limit.

#### **2. Find a holiday buddy**

Create a "buddy system" during the holidays with someone you trust. Whether you want to set boundaries around alcohol consumption ahead of parties or need support going into a stressful day with family, having a partner (i.e., spouse, sibling, friend, coworker) to talk things through ahead of time and set healthy boundaries can be key.

#### **3. Be mindful of your overall intake with food and drink**

Whether traveling or attending social gatherings, how, what, and when we drink and eat shifts during the holidays. You may skip a meal because you are rushing around, and then drink later that same day during a party. This can make the effects of alcohol more pronounced. Some may also drink more alcohol while increasing the number of sweets and other unhealthy holiday foods, which can throw a wrench into your sleep and other self-care routines. Try to maintain your health during the holidays by being mindful of what you consume, including alcohol *and* food.

#### **4. Double down on self-care**

People often think that a few drinks will help them relax or that more wine will help them sleep, but there's a rebound effect with alcohol that can actually make you feel worse and make your sleep worse, not better. If you're feeling overwhelmed about too many upcoming activities or anxious about socializing, instead of turning to alcohol, double down on self-care. Whatever helps you feel healthy and balanced, keep those activities in place throughout the holidays and do your best not to skip out on what helps you take care of you.

#### **5. Prepare for when others over-drink**

Are you worried about how much your spouse might drink over the holidays? Concerned your parent might overindulge and bring up a sensitive topic you don't want to discuss? Check in on your expectations going into the holidays, and practice addressing the stressful situation in advance. Practice navigating your emotions via "cognitive rehearsal" (e.g. thinking through how you know you'll feel and how you want to respond) so that you have a plan and feel prepared. This way, instead of getting frazzled in real time if someone has too much to drink, you'll have practiced handling it and feel better positioned to navigate the situation with ease.