

Jackie Nitschke Center: Warns of potential addiction dangers during holidays

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(Green Bay, Wis.) – The busy holiday season is here. It’s a time of year when families and friends gather together, gifts are exchanged and voices ring out with the sounds of the season. While it’s generally a fun time, the holidays can also be a time of stress for people, especially those struggling with addictions.

“This time of year can be very difficult for people with substance abuse problems,” said Tina Marie Baeten, Clinical Supervisor at the [Jackie Nitschke Center](#). “Some just have a tough time with the dynamics of family gatherings, or holiday money issues, and that can trigger a new round of heavy drinking or drug use, or a relapse for those in recovery.” Even family members of those with addictions can feel the stress wondering how their loved one will handle the holidays and what they can do to help.

Research has shown that the holiday season presents special challenges for [those in recovery](#); in particular those with alcohol addictions. “Alcohol is such a central part of many celebrations, so it’s important not to get caught off guard when asked if you’d like a drink,” Baeten added. “Practicing how you’ll respond can help.” Some examples of language you can use if you’re in recovery or you simply don’t want to drink, include:

- A simple but firm “no, thank you.”
- Or say yes by stating, “I’d love a glass of water with lemon (or a diet soda or a cup of coffee)” is generally enough to quickly end the discussion.

- “I’ll pass as I have an early morning appointment tomorrow.”

The important thing is not to go into a long explanation of why you don’t want a drink. A simple no or quick response should do it. And keep your non-alcoholic drink with you throughout the night. If someone offers alcohol again, just state you’re good for now.

But turning down a drink is only a small piece of planning ahead for the holidays. For a safe and happy holiday, it’s important to be aware of the dangers, triggers, and strategies needed to keep anxiety, depression, stress and addiction under control. “Saying no to alcohol is important, but you need to understand what puts you in the position where you may want to drink,” Baeten explained. “Sometimes you can avoid those situations or develop coping mechanisms that will help get you through it.”

Family members and friends can also be of tremendous help when hosting holiday gatherings by taking these simple steps:

- Have plenty of non-alcoholic beverages available, like sparkling water with limes or lemons, or soda and coffee.
- Always serve food when serving beverages.
- The host should have a designated bartender to avoid people over-serving themselves.
- Keep conversations light and about positive things. Don’t venture into discussions about controversial subjects or family issues that are likely to make people anxious or angry.

Finally, if things get to be too much, it’s time to reach out for help, and programs like those at Jackie Nitschke Center are here to help. The Jackie Nitschke Center is a nonprofit dedicated to helping those facing substance abuse. JNC offers residential in-patient, and out-patient programming for individuals and their families as well as housing for those who have completed treatment. Taking the first step and asking for help can be hard, but it can also be life changing and lifesaving,” Baeten said.