



LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS

Confidential Support for Legal Professionals

2022: Crouching Triggers, Hidden Dangers?

Is this a challenging time of year for you? Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCL) can help. After a couple of years of physical distancing and smaller gatherings due to COVID (which may have been a relief to some), we may find ourselves being triggered at professional and family events with larger crowds and more alcohol. We may be missing a friend, colleague, or family member that we lost during the pandemic who was with us the last time we were all together. We may find that busy social settings increase our anxiety. If we are newly sober (or even in long term recovery) or are dealing with other mental health issues these activities can be overwhelming. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or being triggered, LCL counselors are available 24/7 - you may call Sand Creek, our employee assistance counseling partner, directly at 651-430-3383 or 1-888-243-5744. Remember to say you were referred by Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers.

One volunteer says:

"In early sobriety, I had a heck of a time hanging around with my family during our annual events because so many of them involved alcohol use. The problem was not that everyone at the events was drinking too much or at all, my problem was that I became so overwhelmed with thoughts of the 'good ol' days' and the utter bravado that I would get consumed with a need to find relief. I decided to stop attending some gatherings altogether until I was stable in my recovery. Other gatherings I still attended, but with the protection of some of the hints I learned early on."

Some hints and tips for healthy and sober holiday events:

1. If you plan to attend a family event or other social gathering where alcohol will be served, or where you are concerned about anxiety or other feelings arising, be prepared and have an exit plan. If writing helps you, write down what you have gained from your sobriety and what you could lose if you decided to drink, and carry it with you. If possible, maintain an escape route by driving yourself. Rehearse an acceptable excuse in case you feel the need to leave early. If you feel anxious or triggered, give yourself permission to leave.
2. Don't feel compelled to provide details concerning your choice not to consume alcohol. Rehearse some simple explanations so they are at the tip of your tongue. "I have a long drive

ahead." "I am trying out the craft sodas." Put some deflective humor into your lines and most people will not press for further explanation. Sometimes "no thanks" or "I'm good" is enough.

3. Keep several phone numbers handy in case you need to place a "check-in" call to a member of your support system (e.g., sponsor, recovery friend, etc.) -- and use them!

4. Bring a supportive friend or colleague with you to your gathering. You can ask that they be prepared to provide a reason for leaving early upon an agreed signal from you, like a "code word" or other agreed gesture (a good friend will not mind taking a little heat to protect you!).

5. If you find yourself in a crowd that is getting loud and unruly and you feel like you are on shaky ground, find someone who looks uncomfortable and connect with them. Chances are they are in the same boat as you and need a friend with whom to decompress. And, again, you should always be prepared to give yourself permission to leave early. Your sobriety and mental health should come first!

6. Think about starting new or alternative holiday celebrations with sober and supportive friends. Set boundaries and remember there is much you cannot control.

The following websites provide some additional holiday mental health and sobriety resources. Remember, we say, "Take what you can use and leave the rest."

[Holiday mental health tips](#) from Sand Creek, LCL's Counseling Partner

Hazelden Betty Ford: [Trying to Stay Sober This Holiday Season? We've Got You Covered.](#)

[Handling Stress during the Holiday Season](#) from NAMI

Mayo Clinic [Tips for Coping](#)