



# Holiday

EDITION

RETREAT  

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REVIEW



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Peter Schorr  
President & CEO

Dear Friends,

It has been quite a year.

Throughout 2020, we have seen the worst pandemic in our lifetime, we have seen civil unrest, and we have witnessed an election that has split the country in a way which we haven't seen in 160 years. But throughout all of this, we will overcome all of this adversity and thrive. We are resilient and we never fail to show our full strength and resolve when tested.

This year, our backs have been against the wall, but we have refused to acquiesce, and we will continue to stay the course. Now, it is time for our country to heal. The upcoming holiday season is certain to take on new meaning in light of the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, we will continue to cherish our loved ones, family, and friends. Hopefully, after this, will not take anything for granted.

We at Retreat Behavioral Health wish you health, happiness, and success this holiday season. Please be careful and stay well.

God Bless,  
  
Peter Schorr  
President/CEO





## THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE HOLIDAY BLUES

by Dr. Briam Berman Psy.D.

**The holiday season is once again upon us. There is a chill in the air and everything at WAWA is pumpkin spice flavored. The work day feels busier than ever as preparations are made to spend time with loved ones and friends. As the holidays draw closer, some of us will experience anxiety with regards to meeting family obligations, while others will feel isolated and alone.**

COVID-19 only adds additional stress to an already challenging time. As we prepare to forge joyous experiences while reflecting on another year gone by, it is natural for emotions to be mixed. This is all expected for a typical holiday season.

However, sometimes even when things are going exactly as planned, we still feel bad. There is no reason for this negativity, and yet the ominous feeling cannot be shaken. You might ask yourself “why do I feel this way?” Work is going well, the year was profitable and you are surrounded by family and friends. You privately search your thoughts for answers, but none are to be found. And while there appears no justification for feeling so blue, there are actually unconscious forces at work. These illusive influences are called “reinforcement contingencies” and occur outside of awareness. They influence all aspects of behavior and can result in negative mood states, reduced energy levels and anxiety.

One of the most commonly occurring of these unconscious processes is classical conditioning, a behavioral phenomenon

first observed by Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov in the late 1800s. By repeatedly pairing a bell tone with food, Dr. Pavlov discovered that he could cause a dog to salivate as if food was present simply by ringing a bell. How did he do this? Pavlov observed that by repeatedly pairing the bell with food he was able to elicit a conditioned response. In other words, the dogs responded on a biological level to an arbitrary item simply because of its direct association with the food. While classical conditioning is a well-known phenomenon, what most fail to realize is that dogs are not the most susceptible species; humans are!

“Triggers”, as people like to call them, essentially act like Pavlov’s bell unconsciously eliciting conditioned responses. Some of the most universally conditioned stimuli include people, places and things. The ease at which each of these stimuli are paired with everyday experiences causes them to be powerful triggers. For instance, avoiding people, places and things is a customary recommendation for those in recovery from a substance use disorder (SUD). The science driving this advice stems from the way in which substances are repeatedly paired with the same people, in the same places, and with the same things. Because of these pairings, even walking into a seemingly safe environment can induce a biological reaction such as a post-acute withdrawal. However, the influence of classical conditioning extends well beyond these obvious triggers. Less noticeable yet prominent examples including times of day, seasons, emotions, and yes, even holidays can cause conditioned responses!

Because of the nature of holidays, life impacting events are likely to occur. Novel relationships are celebrated while marriages fall apart. Infants gaze upon the world with new eyes as the sick and elderly take their last breath. These deeply felt experiences forcefully pair with the holiday season resulting in a robust conditioned response. The end result is having a joyous family occasion while continuing to suffer.

Fortunately, there is a solution! No one has to be at the mercy of unseeable forces. It starts with building an awareness of life events and emotional experiences that have been paired with the holiday season. If you find yourself wondering “why do I feel so bad?”, then change the question to “what have I paired with this holiday?”. You might want to investigate the extent to which holidays have been associated with the passing of loved ones, substance use, or anxiety. You may choose to reflect back to relationships which have ended or jobs that were lost during previous years.

While it may not be possible to avoid conditioned responses, awareness offers the flexibility to choose the kind of person you want to be when emotional states show up. In behavioral science, mindfulness of emotion while behaving in a way consistent with personal values is termed “psychological flexibility”. Psychological flexibility has been shown to be crucial for coping with emotional pain in a mentally healthy way. It requires a combination of mindful awareness, self-acceptance, and a commitment to core values. Research has shown that those who exhibit greater psychological flexibility benefit from improvements in mood, reduced stress, and an enhanced quality of life, all of which are important resources to bring to this year’s holiday experience. Should you find yourself distressed at your annual family gathering, take solace in knowing that this may be the result of forces outside of your control. However, what you can control is how you choose to respond, hopefully with your core values in mind. Happy Holidays. ■



Dr. Berman



# THE VALUE OF MUSIC DURING THE HOLIDAYS

by Dr. Eun Sil Suh, PhD

As a young musician from Korea, Music Therapy was always a fascinating profession to me. Once I heard the term “Music Therapy,” my heart began beating full of anticipation for an unknown but exciting world. Because of my irresistible curiosity and anticipation, I came to the US, where music therapy has already been prevalent. Here I dove into the world of music therapy.

Early in my career, I found that my experience was not as I expected. As a young music therapy student in my first semester of practicum at a local behavioral health hospital, I was questioning what I was doing with my clients. My clients seemed to have difficulty progressing and seemed like they were not responding, so my confidence began to decline.

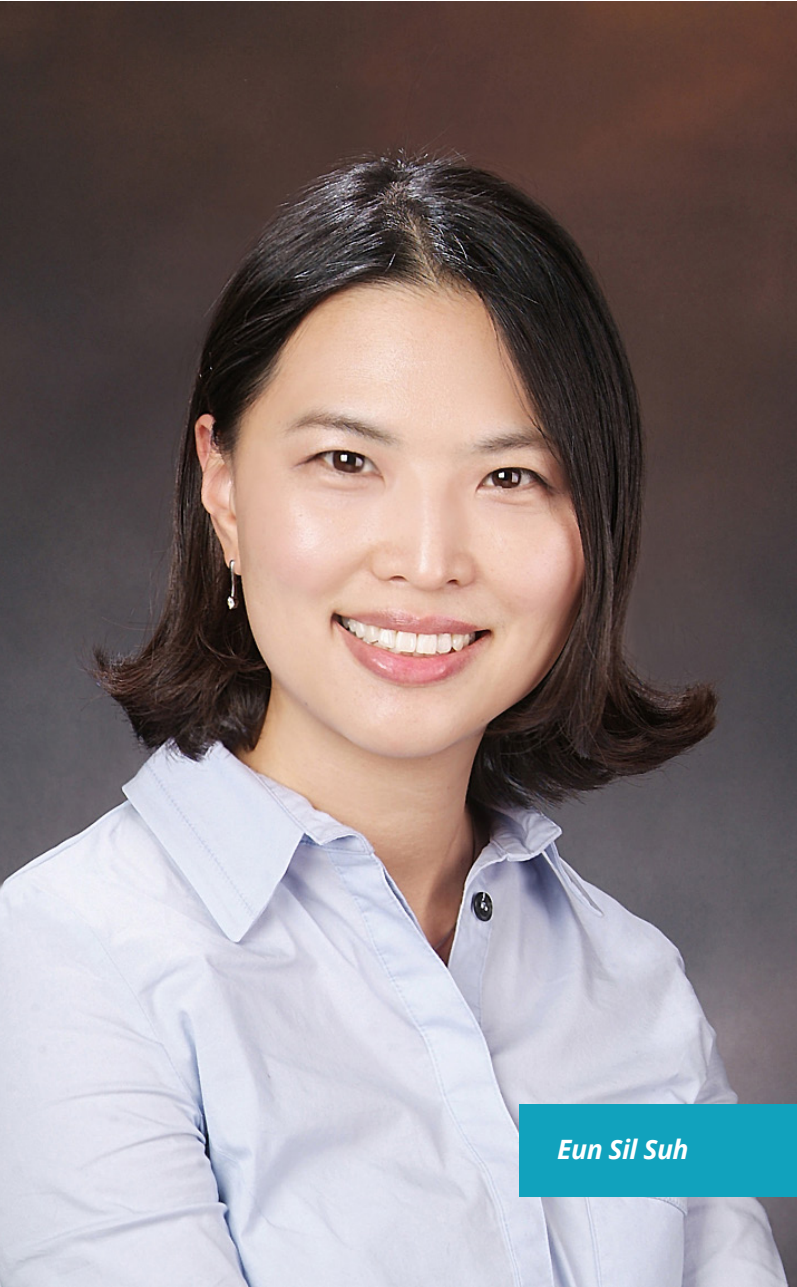
One day, it was close to the Christmas. There was a client, J, who did not stop talking and did not listen to what others were saying even during the music therapy session. J often spoke to herself about unrelated topics and she was not able to communicate with others. When I started to sing and play one of the Christmas songs ‘Silent Night Holy Night’ J started to listen to the music. After the music ended, she had tears in her eyes. J was able to thank me and began to communicate clearly about previous memories about the holiday.

The daughter of another client came to see me, saying that she had never seen her father (one of my clients) smiling and expressing his emotions through music like this. The music was making many changes without me knowing. I was curious about how these therapeutic changes would happen and I wanted to study more. The story was about my early experiences as a developing music therapist in a behavioral health setting.

Through music people experience various senses including smell, touch, sight, and other associations with memory. I suggest that you sing or listen to music with people so they can recall positive or meaningful memories during the holidays. People may share unexpected memories associated to holiday music is something that reminds people annually of certain experiences. Some people also may have negative memories associated with certain music. This is the time to empathize

with them and listen to their experiences. Because music is associated with long-term memory, individuals who have difficulty with short-term memory due to medical or mental health conditions, still can access these experiences.

The American Music Therapy Music therapy (AMTA) defines music therapy as “the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program”. It is used in many behavioral health settings to increase the quality of life of patients. ■



Eun Sil Suh

# BACK IN TIME: HOLIDAY MUSIC THROUGHOUT THE DECADES

by Ariana Lobo

One of the biggest highlights of the holiday season – is the music. Families gather, friends go caroling and large festivities are held in celebration. Yet the music of the season continues to be a classic part of all our holiday experiences.

Here’s a comprehensive look back in time at some of the songs that have made the holidays oh so special.

**1. White Christmas by Bing Crosby** - This classic song has warmed the hearts of so many since its epic release in 1942. Since then, it has been named as the Guinness Book of World Record’s best-selling single of all time.

**2. The Christmas Song by Nat King Cole** - Deemed so popular it was inducted into the Grammy hall of fame, this song has truly resonated throughout the decades. The classic beginning of, “Chestnuts roasting on an open fire,” rings true for so many. The Christmas Song was released in 1946.

**3. Frosty the Snowman by Gene Autry** - So many of us can remember the classic opening line, “Frosty the snowman was a jolly, happy soul.” Ironically enough, the voice behind Frosty was also the same voice behind, “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” This classic made its debut in 1947.

**4. Blue Christmas by Elvis Presley** - This sultry and heartwarming classic, released in 1957, was a smash hit. It is even rumored that Elvis Presley originally did not want to sing this particular song – yet what a sensation it became!

**5. Sleigh Ride by Johnny Mathis** - Released in 1958, this holiday classic highlights the fluffy and romantic snowfall that is a part of the holiday season for so many.

**6. Jingle Bells by Ella Fitzgerald** - Fitzgerald’s rendition of “Jingle Bells” is one of the most widely known songs of the holiday season. Released at the start of the decade in 1960, this song was the first song every played in outer space (on a harmonica), according to the Smithsonian.

**7. Winter Wonderland by Dean Martin** - Released in 1966, this Dean Martin classic is a holiday sensation. This song is perfect for cozying up by a warm fire or with some hot cocoa.

**8. Feliz Navidad by Jose Feliciano** - Easily recognized by so many, this holiday classic is both up-beat and bi-lingual. Reaching audiences who speak both Spanish and English, this song resonates throughout the ages. Debuted in 1970.

**9. This Christmas by Donny Hathaway** - The first to cover this song, Hathaway’s rendition is still the reigning champ. Released in 1971.

**10. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing! By Julie Andrews** - From the first ever holiday album by Julie Andrews, this song showcases her classic crystal-clear voice. Released in 1982.

**11. Santa Claus is Comin’ to Town by Bruce Springsteen** - With an epic debut in 1985, this cover is by far the most up-beat of them all. Springsteen truly brought rock and roll to the holiday season.

**12. Let It Snow by Boyz II Men** - This unique rendition has continued to remain a huge holiday hit since it’s release in 1993. The Boyz II Men group was a sensation in the 1990’s and their “Let It Snow” was nothing less.

**13. All I Want for Christmas by Mariah Carey** - Released shortly after the Boyz II Men “Let It Snow,” Mariah Carey’s own “All I Want for Christmas” instantly became a holiday staple when it was released in 1994. The song continues to remain timeless as it hit the No. 1 on the Billboard charts in 2019.

**14. Mistletoe by Justin Bieber** - A 2011 classic, Bieber’s hit song became a hit early on in his career.

**15. Santa Tell Me by Ariana Grande** - Ariana Grande’s hit song debuted in 2014 and quickly became a holiday sensation. She sings about how we all want a special romance around the holiday season. ■





# GETTING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS AFTER THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

by Liza Piekarsky, LMHC, CAP, NCC

**To say our country is grieving is an understatement. More than 225,678 lives have been lost in our country as a result of Covid-19. That does not even take into consideration the deaths unrelated to Covid-19 since March 2020.**

What we would normally do to grieve can't happen due to the nationwide and statewide Covid-19 restrictions. The pandemic has forced us to grieve differently and process it in a way that we could have never imagined. In a normal pre-Covid world, we

would gather, in one location, under one roof, with loved ones to mourn, cry, share stories, and provide support. Those days are a distant memory. Mourning during Covid-19 has left those who are mourning with prolonged or unresolved grief due to lack of closure.

As we approach the holiday season and preparing to spend time with those we care about, it is difficult to not feel the void of loved ones who have passed. Being together can undoubtedly trigger remembrance of a loved one who is no longer with us.

In the Jewish religion, some of the high holidays have already

taken place, allowing me the opportunity to begin my grief process a bit earlier than I had anticipated. My grandmother, our matriarch, suddenly passed in March at the onset of Covid and the beginning of statewide lockdowns. Our holidays always include her presence, delicious recipes, family traditions and rituals. As the high holidays approached, the anticipation of her not being with us for the first of many holidays to come was difficult to comprehend. I knew this would be a challenging time not just for me, but for my whole family. We were never able to be together to mourn her loss and we still weren't able to be together due to Covid. It was a dreadful feeling, but I needed to face it. I took the opportunity to bring some of her and other special items to my holiday table. Surrounding the table with those that could be with us and setting the table with the most elegant China that was passed down from my great aunt who also passed last year, creating the same meal that my grandma would have had on her table for us, sharing stories and memories. This also allowed me the opportunity to feel the way that served me and also mentally prepare for what this holiday and future holidays may or may not look like.

The holiday season will bring up so many feelings as we mourn the loss of a loved one. Know that you are not alone. Here are some helpful reminders as we approach the holiday season.

First, acknowledge that the holidays, just like this year as a whole, might be different and tough. That is okay!

**Create Rituals:** This can be something like setting up your table with pieces that may have been passed down or enjoying a prepared meal that you used to share together,

**Memorialize:** Share stories of your loved ones and reflect on memories you once shared.

**Create new traditions:** Often times it becomes unbearable to engage in the same routine that you had previously done with your loved one. Don't be afraid to create a new tradition with your family.

**Set healthy boundaries:** If an event or activity may bring on too many painful memories, it's okay to say no. Focus on taking care of you rather than pleasing everyone. Don't feel guilty. If you are stressed about making the holiday dinner, ask someone else to cook or buy dinner this year.

**Plan ahead:** Being prepared often softens the blow.

**Talk to kids about the holidays:** It can be confusing for kids that the holidays can be both happy and sad after a death. Let them know it is okay to enjoy the holiday, and it is okay to be sad.

**It's okay not to be okay:** Give yourself the opportunity to experience the range of emotions. Remember the stages of grief are not linear and can be experienced more than once.

**Ask for help:** If people aren't offering, ask. This can be extremely hard if it isn't your style, but it is important. Asking others to help with cooking, shopping, or decorating can be a big relief. Also know when it's time to seek professional help.

**Just know that you are not alone!**

To many people holidays are not voyages of discovery, but a ritual of reassurance. ■



Liza Piekarsky



# THE ANXIDAYS ARE COMING, I MEAN THE HOLIDAYS ARE COMING!

How some are affected by the holiday season and how to overcome it.

by Tanya Ruhl



The Holidays are just about upon us. It seems every year they start putting holiday decorations out earlier and earlier. I know some people who live for this time of year and couldn't be happier with the change of weather (I live in the North East, so seasons are an actual thing), leaves changing colors, get togethers, gift giving, ect. I enjoy being around these people and seeing them enjoy themselves, but I also know there is an opposite side. I know there are others out there who do not look forward to the holidays and there could be many reasons for that.

For some the holidays might bring back bad memories from childhood. You might have been raised by a single parent and have had to have your holidays split between your parents always running from place to place or possibly not even seeing one of your parents at all. As someone this has affected

personally, I can tell you it was not your fault, your decision, nor did you have any control over. I was raised by a single mom. I spent most holidays from the time I woke up in the morning until roughly 10:30am at home, then we went to my Grandmother's house. At around 1pm my father would then pick me up and we would go to his mother's house until around 3pm. We would spend about 2-3 hours there then go to his current wife's parents house for another couple of hours before we would finally head to his house and I would spend 2 more hours there before he would take me back home to my mom. This has made a huge impact on me throughout the years and I had to make a lot of changes but, more into that later.

Others might have experienced different traumas like the passing of a loved one around the holidays, this too I can relate with as I lost my brother and nephew in 2012 about a week before Thanksgiving. Being the victim of a crime around this time of year can also cause feeling of turmoil, for me personally this was the trifecta when I was the victim of an armed robbery two weeks before Christmas in 2013 at a previous place of employment. Due to all of these events throughout my life I feel anxious or dread when the holidays are approaching. This is partly due, at least for me, because I associate bad experiences with the holidays because my brain has been conditioned to believe that only stressful, harmful, or hurtful things occur during this time period. It can make the holiday season seem unbearable and make it miserable not only for myself but others including my family, friends and even co-workers at times.

Years ago, I would spend days trying to see everyone and do everything everyone wanted me to. This would lead to depression, my anxiety levels going up severely, and ultimately all I wanted to do was sleep for days on end. I have been going to therapy regularly now for some time and my biggest support is also my husband. I am lucky because he is actually able to read my body language well. He can tell when I am starting to get overwhelmed and need a break from all the hustle and bustle of things. I spoke with Kris Kurlancheek one of Retreat's Clinical Specialists and he agreed that having some sort of distress plan is a good idea.

For me, I either take some time and go to another room by myself for a while, go for a drive to one of my favorite places, or I have been known to leave the gathering all together before. Another way I self-care during this time is I have learned to set up boundaries. I don't make as many plans or commit to as many get togethers as before. I usually say I will try to make it because in reality I really do want to be there and if I am not feeling overwhelmed that day I will go to be around my friends and family because I enjoy their company.

So, I leave you all with this, don't let this year be the same as previous years. Reach out if you need help. To all of those who enjoy the holidays, please do not be discouraged by anyone who doesn't quite seem like themselves during this time period, we want to be included but we might not know how to show it. Make sure to check out what else Kris Kurlancheek has to say in his full article on the next page. ■



Tanya Ruhl



# 7 EASY STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO FIND JOY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

By Kris Kurlancheek M.A.

What is your most cherished holiday memory? What is your most painful holiday memory? For some, times around holidays contain some of our best recollections. These can include the times we felt closest to our families, moments we got to spend time with loved ones we haven't seen for a while, and just generally feeling connected and joyful.

For others, times around the holidays can be a great source of pain. Maybe a time we lost someone close to us, or experienced some other painful event. When these occur around the holidays, all of the noticeable reminders of the season can elicit feelings related those things one would wish to forget.

It is difficult to avoid the holidays. In our country, the holiday season is traditionally viewed with an immense amount of reverence. People will often do everything they can to make the holiday season magical for the special people in their lives.

Around this time, the expectations we have are remarkably high, sometimes unattainable. Even with our best efforts, we may often believe we are not meeting these expectations, which can lead to feelings of disappointment. Many people often speak of the holiday season as something they "need to get through." This is in stark contrast to the message we receive that it's the "most wonderful time of the year."

At the end of the day, making sure we are practicing proper self-care is the most important and meaningful gift we can give ourselves, as well as our loved ones.

The following are some general guidelines and strategies to make the holiday season potentially more enjoyable:

**1. Set reasonable expectations for yourself and others:** As mentioned above, we sometimes have unrealistic expectations for ourselves and others. Making an effort to set reasonable expectations may lead to less disappointment for both you and for others. Nothing and no one is perfect, someone might be 10 minutes late to dinner or dinner might not get finished quite on time. That is ok.

**2. Set up a plan for distress:** It is almost guaranteed that you will experience a state of distress at least once during the holiday season. Creating a plan ahead of time may help, including identifying supportive people to contact, and prioritize ways to "treat yourself."

**3. Create new traditions:** Creating a new tradition can be a fun and meaningful way to "redefine" what the holiday season means to you and your loved ones. Try getting together and decorating cookies or making gingerbread houses.

**4. Be consistent with your values/beliefs:** Identifying our own values/beliefs and living through them allows us to feel connected to the most important aspects of ourselves.

**5. Perform charitable acts:** Donating your time or volunteering for a cause important to you can connect you to meaningful aspects of the season. Many places look for help all year around but especially need extra help around the holidays. Homeless shelters along with animal shelters are almost always places that can use an extra set of helping hands.

**6. Honor the values/beliefs of others:** One of the ways to honor a person who is not present or who has passed is to make an effort to be consistent with the values/beliefs that have made them special. This way it is as if they are with us.

**7. Try to keep your routine:** Our brains and bodies typically thrive on consistency. Making efforts to maintain our normal routine can allow us to remain both physically and mentally healthy.

Needless to say, this year will be extraordinary compared to previous holiday seasons. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected nearly everyone in some way. While circumstances can change quickly, there is no doubt that our holiday traditions will be affected as well. It will be even more important to be mindful of expectations, especially with the ultimate goal of keeping yourself and your loved ones safe and healthy. All in all, practicing quality self-care can be the difference. Taking time to focus on some of the guidelines above may give you an opportunity to have a happy and joyful holiday. ■



# THE HOLIDAYS & COVID-19: SAFE ALTERNATIVES TO CELEBRATING WITH OUR LOVED ONES

By Ariana Lobo

**2020 has been a year fraught with numerous challenges, and from TikTok to baking, many of us have found new outlets to cope with these relentless ups-and-downs. So how do we approach this upcoming holiday season, along with all the other current struggles we continue to face?**

## SAFETY FIRST

The standardized CDC recommendations continue to remain: wear a mask, socially distance and sanitize your hands and all surfaces. These safety precautions should not change with the fast-approaching holiday season.

It can be tempting to want to presume life as normal, however, this pandemic season is far from over. So keep your health and safety precautions at the forefront of all your activities this holiday season. It has also been highly recommended from organizations such as NAMI and the WHO, that staying safe and healthy is essential for mental and emotional health as well.

## ALTERNATIVES & ACTIVITIES

**1. Indoor/Outdoor Gatherings:** The CDC recommends that friends and families gather this holiday season outdoors, if possible. If the weather does not permit outdoor gatherings, it is recommended to open lots of doors and windows for proper ventilation.

**2. Food:** As per the CDC guidelines, it is also recommended that friends and family bring their own food items for their own immediate family. This allows for less sharing of food and direct contact with other people.

**3. Shopping:** It is incredibly common during the holiday season to go out shopping and take advantage of all the hot deals. However, this holiday season it is not recommended to shop in-person. Rather take advantage of the virtual

shopping. In fact, many businesses are offering online-specific discounts to encourage people to avoid large public spaces.

Remember, above all, safety is the first priority. So let's celebrate this holiday season in style, continue our traditions and encourage as much safe interaction as possible. ■



Ariana Lobo





THE HOLIDAYS IN RECOVERY:  
TWO PERSPECTIVES WITH ONE GOAL,  
A JOYOUS HOLIDAY FOR EVERYONE.

by Joi Honer BA,CADC,CCDP

**The hustle and bustle of the holidays are often challenging enough. However, for people who are in recovery from substance use disorder along with their friends and family, navigating the holidays may create additional concerns.**

As we enter the season, let's take a moment to identify healthy ways to proactively consider and address some of these challenges from both perspectives, the person in recovery and the allies that support them. A little pre-holiday planning now may create less stress in those moments that we hope to be filled with joy, celebration and love.

**HOLIDAY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PERSON IN RECOVERY:**

1. Practice H.A.L.T. The hustle of the holidays can throw us off balance. We need to stay vigilant in ensuring, as the acronym presents, we don't get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired.

- 2. When invited to a holiday gathering that may have alcohol as part of the celebration, always create an exit plan PRIOR to attending and use it if you become uncomfortable. For instance, bring your own car to the event or plan to check in with a friend by phone.
- 3. Speaking of events, maintaining recovery is much easier at gatherings when you can bring a friend, especially someone else in recovery who understands your situation and can give you immediate support.
- 4. At events, consider bringing your own alcohol-free beverages and don't leave your beverages unattended, ensuring they remain that way.
- 5. Trust your gut feelings. If you have a bad feeling about an event there may be a reason that's valid. Talk the decision through with other people in recovery and know that you have the right to honor your feelings and decline an invitation at any time. This right even applies to family gatherings.

- 6. Speaking of family gatherings, holidays parties are not the time to do your 9<sup>th</sup> step. Dropping an emotional bombshell at holiday event is not a good way to start out the year for anyone.
- 7. Bring new meaning to your holiday. Start a new holiday tradition and make it yours to share.
- 8. Practice the spirit of the 12<sup>th</sup> step, not only in meetings, but in your community. Volunteering during the holidays is especially meaningful. Giving back to others who are less fortunate can often make us even more aware of the gifts that we have received.
- 9. Speaking of gifts, make a daily commitment to reflect with gratitude on all of the spiritual gifts you have received from others, and double the gift by reaching out to them and saying thank you.
- 10. Self-help groups often hold special meetings and event around the holidays. Make use of them to stay grounded and connect with others.
- 11. Speaking of connection, isolation and holidays are a dangerous combination. Reach out often, even more than normal.
- 12. Finally, consider lightening up! Humor can be a tool that helps us keep it simple and not take things too personally.

**WAYS FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND COWORKERS CAN BE SUPPORTIVE OF RECOVERY OVER THE HOLIDAYS:**

- 1. Remember, no one is personally responsible for anyone else's recovery, however, as a recovery ally you can be an asset by providing understanding and support.
- 2. Reach out and ask a person what they need from you over the holidays. People have different recovery needs at different stages of recovery. What they needed last year might not be necessary this year. Ask don't assume.
- 3. Honor a person's right to self-disclose that they are in recovery or participated in a treatment program. Even if you have good intentions, it is not your story to tell.
- 4. Some people don't necessarily know what they need until they're in the moment. Be flexible! Understand that what they said they might be comfortable participating last week ago they may not be comfortable doing now.

- 5. Be that person that your friend, coworker, or loved one can reach out to at a holiday gathering. If they get overwhelmed or have a thought to use a substance. Always listen first, then ask how you can help.
- 6. Larger family events over the holidays can be especially challenging. Offer to accompany someone to a family gathering as support or suggest they bring another person in recovery with them, if they ask.
- 7. Stay focused on the festivities, magic and wonder of the holidays. Don't try to resolve any deep-rooted issues or discuss old behaviors now. It's not the best time or place for those discussions. If you are holding an event that includes alcohol, please offer a reasonable number of alternative beverages. Near-beer or non-alcoholic champagne are not always good alternatives and could be too close to the real thing for some. Soda, coffee, juice, and flavored water are great options.
- 8. Ensure your event is not just focused on drinking but includes activities that encourage fun and connection. Play group games like Pictionary or Uno, do a white elephant exchange or a blindfolded cookie decorating contest to name a few!
- 9. Consider having an alcohol-free holiday gathering? Maybe you could start a new holiday tradition!
- 10. Empower the person in recovery. Allow them to take care of themselves without any judgment. If they need to leave the party early or not attend at all, support those decisions. Conversely, don't make decisions for them, if you're having a holiday gathering let them decide if want to attend or not.
- 11. Finally, never take anyone's recovery social event choices personally. Making good decisions over the holidays is a positive indication of their commitment to recovery. Point out that positive commitment instead of the disappointment.

With a little effort and preplanning, holidays can be a blessing and a joy for those who also celebrate recovery. Making cherished memories with loved ones and friends. Best wishes for a season filled with warmth, conform, love and recovery. ■

*Joi Honer is the Senior Director of Alumni & Community Engagement at Retreat Behavioral Health.*





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**Vito Baldini**  
So when stuff is not going the way it ought to, what can we do about them? How does change happen? That's what we're going to be talking about with Vito Baldini. Vito leads a group that believes change happens through small things.



**Rodney Thorne**  
**Veterans Day is reserved yearly to honor the nation's veterans.** But there's more to it than merely thanking them for their service. Rodney Thorne is a vet, and he's doing what he can to help his fellow veterans. He's here to tell us all about that.



**Bill Stauffer**  
Bill Stauffer spent a lifetime advocating for substance abuse sufferers, and he hasn't allowed the pandemic to get in his way.

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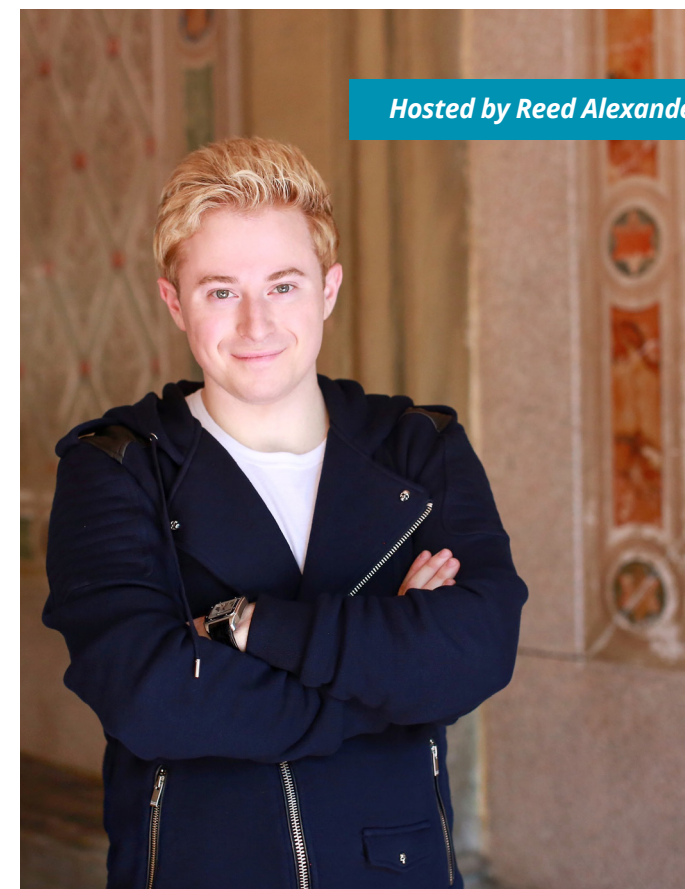


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[WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/C/RETREATBEHAVIORALHEALTH](https://www.youtube.com/c/RetreatBehavioralHealth)

## UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

FOR UPCOMING EVENTS PLEASE SEE OUR NEW EVENTS PAGE ON OUR WEBSITE!

[HTTPS://EVENTS.RETREATBEHAVIORALHEALTH.COM](https://events.retreatbehavioralhealth.com)

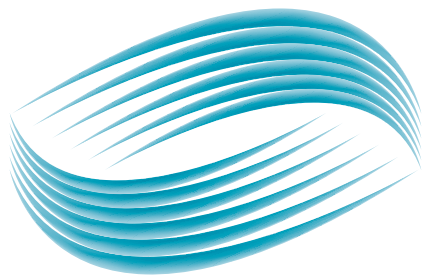
For more info about registration, email Samantha Rehtorik at [Samanthar@RetreatMail.com](mailto:Samanthar@RetreatMail.com).

*Retreat is continuing to hold a series of live panel discussions on Facebook Live. These conversations with leading experts, academics, and voices on a variety of issues pertaining to substance abuse and mental health are meant to foster important discussions about themes and topics relevant to our community. Join us regularly for these live discussions, and weigh in with your comments, questions, and feedback, on our official Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/retreatbh](https://www.facebook.com/retreatbh) to find out more information about the live panels or other events please go to our events page on our website to find up to date information.*

<https://events.retreatbehavioralhealth.com/>







Retreat  
Behavioral Health<sup>®</sup>

Contact us today for more information:

**855.859.8810**

Or visit us online at:

**[RetreatBehavioralHealth.com](http://RetreatBehavioralHealth.com)**

Retreat Behavioral Health offers addiction services, from medically monitored detox to outpatient rehabilitation, providing a full continuum of care. We work with most commercial insurers, offer 24/7 admissions and complimentary transportation. We have locations in Lancaster County, PA, Palm Beach County, FL, and New Haven, CT. At Retreat, we pride ourselves on providing a compassionate and spiritual environment for those struggling with addiction in a secure and comfortable setting with dedicated and caring staff.

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