

Abstinent Holidays – OAIA

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Holidays can be the best of times and the worst of times. Family dynamics are hard and harder when everyone is under the stress and excitement of the holidays. Traditions change, we lose family members and gain some. We can be the person we want to be if we come prepared and look for ways to be of love and service. We always have a choice...do not let anyone or any food be an excuse to lose our abstinence.

General Tips

Remember who you are and that this is a life or death disease. Abstinence matters at all times! Think of it as any other day as far as the food goes, and focus on enjoying the people!

- Concentrate on beauty of the season...tree trimmings, gift wrapping, caroling, spiritual meaning and ceremonies.
- Renew your commitment to the program and food etc -- “new level, new devil” -- Some levels of life are more demanding, risky, vulnerable: such as holiday time, food, family, emotions etc
- Remember that your disease is not taking a vacation or holiday. This is like any other day for you food wise. It is a special day because of the people you will be with and maybe even some fun clothes!
- Affirm to yourself that you know what all these different foods taste like, you have eaten enough of them to buy stock in the companies. I have now given up my right to a chemical peace of mind. Time to trade up by being and staying in recovery.
- Increase meeting attendance — make more calls
- Playing it out has helped me: If I have this then what will happen next? Well, history has proven I want and get more and then binge...hmmmm..not worth it.
- Be prepared, do not let lack of preparation lead you astray! Have an emergency kit in you car or have backup food with you! Your food is your medicine, you need what you have on your plan.
- Service — what can I do, what fits, how can I be helpful to others while caring for self
- Love, stay positive, acceptance of what is, let go of what you cannot change, surrender
- Ask for support/ help from your OA fellows, friends and family
- Pray and meditate a lot; especially before going to a social gathering.
- Keeping my phone handy for quick hook up calls if I need support.
- Thinking about what I can offer at this gathering, like being a good listener, offering to help clear the table, pass out food, clean up, watch the little ones, etc.
- Always have a vehicle there so if you need to leave – you can.
- Bring your holiday emergency action card

The Food

Be prepared, do not let lack of preparation lead you astray! Have an emergency kit in you car or have backup food with you! Your food is your medicine, you need what you have on your plan.

- Never say “I shouldn’t have that” or “I can’t have that” but say instead says things like “no thanks, I’m good” or “I’m full, thank you”. People are less likely to try to talk you into eating. “I have food allergies.”
- Offer to set the table or clean, but don’t offer to wash dishes or be alone with the food.
- Clarity — look at what is on my plate
- Don’t fondle the food with your eyes. Take being in combat as serious as you can.
- Drink lots of water.
- Stay away from the snack table, bring a game to play before the meal.
- Say “no thanks” to desserts.
- Don’t watch cooking shows
- Offer to have the meal at your house.
- Don’t graze or stand over the food table.
- Chew a piece of gum if it isn’t a trigger for you.
- Keep it simple!!! Don’t over-think it! Abstinent recipes can have very few ingredients and don’t have to take a lot of time to prepare.

Food at your house...

- Pick out abstinent, balanced meals that fit your food plan, ask others to bring their favorite dish.
- If you are cooking stick to recipes you have made before...no need to taste!
- Cook the minimal amount as possible to avoid having leftovers
- Don't bake - if this is a temptation or do it with someone else
- Eye ball your food for the meal if you aren't comfortable weighing and measuring in front of others at home. Talk with your sponsor for suggestions.

Food when eating away from home...

- Call ahead to find out what they are serving and bring your own meal in a lunch bag that you can have on hand in the car if needed. You can always eat what you can at the meal and substitute the rest from what you brought from home.
- Build your plate reasonably, only once.
- Make an abstinent dish to take and share.
- Make a meal and take it to the gathering, if you feel that there is nothing there on your food plan.
- Eat before you go and then focus on service.

Holiday Menu Ideas	
Simple colorful food...make people gathering together the focus, not the food. Let others make and bring their favorites, be sure you have beautiful food that you can eat.	
Protein	Roasted turkey or a turkey breast Egg Bake for Brunch(spinach, cheese, meat, etc) Baked Chicken/Baked Ham Any other healthy protein, beef, shrimp, fish.
Starch	Mashed potatoes made with chicken broth, butter on the side for others Abstinent dressing(stuffing) made with chicken broth, onion/celery and spices! Sweet potatoes (baked) or mashed with some chicken broth Baked potatoes or Roasted red potatoes with seasoning or mashed potatoes Rice (mixed grain) dressed up with some vegetables and herbs... Winter squash with some herbs or spices
Vegetables	Green beans and sweet red peppers Roasted vegetables, Brussels sprouts are particularly fun and pretty Carrots cooked with cinnamon Fresh green beans or asparagus with lemon juice and slivered almonds (fat) A colorful, mixed vegetable salad with abstinent dressing on the side
Fat	Mixed nuts as a side that could be used for your fats Butter or olive oil infused with herbs
Condiments	Raw cranberry sauce made with an orange and some Stevia or Spenda... Veggie Tray/Relish tray(olives, pickles)
Dessert	Fresh fruit tray (you can have fruit while they have dessert if that is on your food plan)Use your evening snack for dessert Splurge on out of season fruit, like raspberries in December and put in a pretty dish Baked apple with spices such as cinnamon or nutmeg
Beverages	Hot tea instead of hot chocolate Fancy favored coffee, with cream as fat Sparkling water instead of wine or soda with a slice of lime, twig of mint or a couple of raspberries in a pretty glass.

Stress

- Don't get into the frenzy. Do what you want to do and don't do things you don't want to do. Keep it simple if you want to.
- Do something nice for yourself: bubble bath, coffee with a friend, bauble gift for yourself.
- Making sure you have taken care of yourself blood sugar wise by eating on your regular schedule, getting enough sleep and working through feelings via the 12 steps. This is to make sure you are calling a HALT, not getting too hungry, angry, lonely or tired.
- Balance — can be more challenging to achieve/maintain during holiday times: Consider the overall calendar of events, 'to do lists' emotional triggers
- Self care — sleep, nutrition, exercise, fresh air, tools of program, having a plan and living it one day at a time
- Don't get into the "shoulds" find balance.
- Don't go to functions that are not critical AND those you don't want to attend. Less exposure to food and resentment.
- Spend more quiet time with my HP, reading, journaling to keep myself balanced.
- Clarity — literally and metaphorically: finances, time management, gifts, fears, trigger people/events and foods — talk it over with your fellows and stay in the present!
- Keep your spending to a budget Less time in stores, less opportunities to be exposed to food and the manufactured smells they spray in the malls.

Circle of Support

- Stay in touch.....step up your contact with your fellows. Have phone numbers of fellows to call – program on your phone or keep in your pocket or purse! Know who will be around at the time you may need them
- Make at least 1 hookup call prior to the event
- Bookend, call someone and commit an action or relay your fears before event. Then call and report your actions.
- Go into bathroom and make a call or text, pull out your For today book and read! Breathe!! Pray!!!
- Ramp it up with your sponsor - call in more often
- And when all else fails, service, service, service.

Families and Friends

- Don't get caught up in the talk about food at work or other places.
- Surround yourself with supportive people.
- A sense of humor can help: "Can't you have just one chip?!" Me: "Oh, thank you but no. If I did that bag wouldn't be quite enough!"
- Concentrate on conversation and the people you are with. Holidays are really about family and friends but do not forget that you have abnormal behaviors around food.

Holiday Emergency Action Plan Card to keep handy and carry when you go out, keep in your car, at work....

5 things you need on your card

1. Circle of support phone numbers = Sponsor and 2-3 OA fellows
2. Pray! Write your favorite prayer on your card
3. Write your food plan on the card
4. Be prepared - Bring your own food/beverages to have as a substitute for whatever you may need
5. Remind yourself to be present and that it is just one meal

Twelve Steps to a Better Holiday Season

1. We admitted the holiday season has a deeper meaning than devouring food.
2. We came to believe a Power greater than ourselves could help us see and celebrate the true meaning of the season.
3. We came to believe our Higher Power could help us appreciate the joyfulness of the season as we understood it.
4. We made a searching and thorough examination of our relationship to food during the holidays and other things we enjoy about the season.
5. We admitted to our Higher Power the exact nature of our food habits during holidays seasons past.
6. We became entirely ready to allow our Higher Power to remove our attachment to food as a necessity of the holidays.
7. We humbly asked him to remove our desire to partake of holiday treats.
8. We made a list of all persons whose presence makes the holiday season joyful for us and with whom we would like to share our joy.
9. We made plans to spend time with those people whenever possible, except when to do so would remove us from our primary purpose of abstinence.
10. We continued to enjoy the company of friends and family and other non-food aspects of the season.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our appreciation of the season, praying for knowledge of its meaning and the joy we feel at this time.
12. Having realized that sharing the joy of this season with others far outlasts the fleeting pleasure of food, we gave ourselves the gift of abstinence throughout the holidays and gave others the gift of our full attention and appreciation.