

## The Holidays & Recovery

With Thanksgiving behind us, it is time to look toward Christmas and prepare. I am not talking about shopping and wrapping presents. I am talking about preparing for the extra time and money teens will have during the holiday break.

Research shows that too much time and money are significant risk factors for relapse when teens are in recovery. The combination of having two weeks or more off of school and extra money for/from Christmas can be a trigger to use. *Boredom and cash can equal trouble.*

This is a time when parents need to be aware and watchful. It is easy to get caught up in busy schedules. So I want to remind parent's of drug-using teens to be drug testing their child and following through with clear expectations about abstinence and consequences for use.

With this risky time, it is important that teens in a program of recovery be consistent with attending counseling sessions/meetings. Too often, people think that substance abuse/addiction and recovery are on vacation just because it is the holiday season and school is out. That is just not the case.

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Now is not the time for people in recovery to be missing treatment meetings for snowboarding trips, so it is important for parents to hold themselves and their child accountable to continue their recovery while school is out for the holidays.

## New Year's

While New Year's Eve is often a time of celebration and happiness, it can also be a time of relapse for people in recovery. As a matter of fact, New Year's Eve for the drug-user is not about reflection and commitment to improving upon a new year. It is a time to get intoxicated.

In addition to this belief about New Year's Eve, there really are an alarming number of people using alcohol and other drugs at this time. For many people without a problem with alcohol, drinking champagne at midnight is tradition. For the person in recovery, it can be difficult watching so many people drink.

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Watching other people drinking and having fun can be quite tempting. Certainly, people will be offering them drinks and asking them to celebrate too. My colleagues and I have even worked with client's whose parents or other family members have given them champagne on New Year's Eve despite the fact that their child has an alcohol/drug abuse problem.

The parents thought that their child should be able to have one glass of champagne and enjoy the New Year. For a person with substance abuse and especially addiction, that one glass of champagne may trigger them to have a strong desire to experience intoxication. After that first drink, that person's mind may become centered on one thing, "how will I get more of this?"

While I hope that you celebrate and have a great New Year's Eve, I want to remind all parents to be mindful of their own use. By drinking, it sends the message to the person in recovery that it is "okay to drink on New Year's Eve". Finally, continue to have the expectation that the person in recovery remain abstinent on New Year's Eve. Be safe and have fun!!

**LOS ANGELES -- A recent study by researchers at Duke University Medical Center has shown that college students drink more alcohol than they may realize.**

"We asked students to pour different types of drinks into cups of various sizes. We found that, in most cases, students are way too liberal in their definitions of single servings of alcohol," wrote Dr. Aaron M. White, assistant research professor in the department of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, in an e-mail.

The study found the students over-poured shots of alcohol into cups by 26 percent, into mixed drinks by 80 percent and beer by 25 percent.

The data suggested that students drink more alcohol than indicated by their responses in alcohol surveys, bringing into question the validity of alcohol surveys.

The study also said that this might indicate that students are not well informed about the alcohol content of standard drinks.

The study found the amount of alcohol students poured was skewed on the size of the cup. The study indicated that the larger the cup, the more the volume of fluid the students poured.

Anmol Bhagchand, a sophomore majoring in math, said that he thinks the data is more relevant to inexperienced drinkers.

"I pay attention to how much I'm putting in, the percentage, the proof, everything," Bhagchand said.

The beverage industry should label the size of one standard drink, White wrote.

"A 12 oz. beer containing 7 percent alcohol is not the same as a 12 oz. beer containing 5 percent alcohol," White said. "Attempts to educate the public about standard servings of alcohol will need to take this into consideration."

