

Supporting Those With Addictions Prepare for Success in the Holiday

December 2013

As we enter the holiday season, families will gather to celebrate and share time together. While the season is full of expectation of happy events, seasonal gatherings are often a source of anxiety for families with loved ones who are in recovery or struggling with addiction.

Advanced preparation can help reduce the anxiety for everyone. If you are hosting or participating in a gathering with your loved one, it is best to decide in advance if you will be participating in the consumption of alcohol. Many people believe since they are not the ones with “the problem” they should not have to change their behaviors. A gentle reminder is that addiction recovery does not happen in isolation, and the support of family can play a significant role in a loved one’s recovery. This support can include choosing not to have alcohol at your gathering or choosing not to consume alcohol at a gathering so your loved one feels they are not alone.

If you are hosting an alcohol free event out of respect and support for you loved one, communicate that to your guests and ask that they understand and participate in the support. These decisions will depend on where you are at with your loved one’s addiction, and where your loved one is in their addiction or recovery. For them, this can range from needing to avoid places with alcohol altogether, to being able to be around alcohol without wanting to use. This level of comfort can vary even day-to-day depending on where your loved is in their recovery and where they are emotionally at the time. The only way to know is to communicate openly with your loved one.

While it is not your job to manage your loved one’s addiction or their recovery, you can prepare with them prior to the event so they have an opportunity to safely manage it. Communicating your needs and identifying what they can expect from a gathering far enough in advance will give your loved one enough time



to process, make an informed decision about their participation, and prepare a safety plan before attending a gathering.

Open and honest communication shows respect for your loved one's situation and your guests, and reduces anxiety for all. Let's all do what we can to look after ourselves and support our loved ones this Holiday season.