Focus on the Moment

One way to manage stress is to focus on the moment and experience the peace of the season.

- **Schedule time for yourself** to exercise, go for a walk, spend time with healthy, supportive friends.
- **Go to a coffee shop**, turn-off your phone and spend time with a cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate.
- **Volunteer** at a food pantry, The Beacon Homeless Resource Center, or other place where you can help someone else.
- **“Count your blessings....”,** is a song from the movie White Christmas, and its good advice.
  
  Take time to jot down what you are grateful for - the people who have made a difference, the places where you find support, the activities and hobbies you enjoy, things that give you peace of mind, security, and comfort.
- **Invite someone over** and watch a holiday special.
- **Turn-off all the lights** in the room except the Christmas tree. Relaxed and notice how the lights color the walls and ceiling, the shape of the boughs and the ornaments.
- **Put on Christmas music** and pay full attention to the lyrics.

Managing Your Recovery
The Holidays

The holidays has its own set of challenges. Spending time with family you haven’t seen for awhile, more parties and celebrations, increase stress and expectations. Here are a few ways to help you manage.

Always having an exit plan – a plan that gets you out of a situation that makes you uncomfortable. (Turn the page for some exit ideas)

Setting boundaries with friends and family

- Maintain your values regardless of what others think
- Don’t be afraid to say, “No” when you’re asked to do something that contradicts your values
- Let trust develop over time in new relationships
- "Say what you mean, mean what you say, just don't say it mean."

Stick close to your support network. Attend your support meetings and keep your support phone numbers close at hand. If you have a smart phone, add your supportive friends to your Favorites tab in your contacts page. Remember to stop by the Hope Haven Alumni meetings on Saturday, 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.

Surrounding yourself with healthy, sober people is important, especially if family events are triggering.

Make a schedule. Running out-of-time is a stressor. Don’t wait until the last minute to buy gifts or send cards. Try to get places a little early. Block out time for yourself and don’t give it up!

Slow down, take it easy. Spend time meditating and practicing mindfulness.

Try not to overindulge on the holiday sweets and meals. Plan time to work-out, go for a walk, spend time in physical activity.

Get as much sleep as you can. Getting enough sleep is important in boosting your body’s immune system to fight illness and maintain energy.
5 Exit Plans to Holiday Parties

Have a Reason to Leave that One Person.
Sometimes you have to make an appearance at a party, and you know someone will be there hounding you about drinking. Plan a reasonable reason to make a clean get-away – “I have a babysitter at home”, “The dog needs to get out or he’ll be bonkers all night”, “I have an early morning meeting the next day.” Once you’ve stayed for the ‘required’ time, thank the host and say goodbye using your reason to leave and be on your way.

Set the Stage for Your Early Exit.
“Happy Holiday! Looks like a great party. Oh by the way, I can only stay for a little while. A special dinner is waiting for me at home and I promised I wouldn’t be late!” When your early exit is not a surprise you’ll have a much smoother round of goodbyes and have a target time to leave.

Avoid them Entirely.
You probably have a know which gatherings could be the biggest challenges. If you don’t need to go, decline the invitations as soon as they arrive. Don’t let an unwarranted pressure or guilt force you into situations that can compromise your well-being.

Slip Sliding Away.
When in doubt, quietly slip out. Sometimes parties start out our great and take a turn for the worse. The best laid plans and intentions don’t always work out. Remember you’re in charge of your actions. If things don’t feel right, slip out the back door and slide away. Most likely no one will notice.

Your Accomplice is Your Excuse.
Plan ahead of time with the person you’re going to the party with, a reason they have to leave early. When leaving early isn’t your fault, its much easier. If your date isn’t feeling well, has to be at work early the next day, or another obligation you’re off the hook. This is a team effort, your accomplice is not only your excuse but can also be the one who says, “C’mon, we’ve gotta get going.”

If you can’t leave...then what?
No thanks, not tonight
Sometimes you can’t avoid a gathering or party, or someone is obnoxiously offering you something to drink or use. Saying “I don’t want to right now” and walking away may be enough to escape from the situation.

Bring your own. Walk in the door with a can of soda, bottle of water, or other non-alcoholic drink. Or grab one as soon as you arrive and nurse it. People usually don’t offer a drink if you already have one in hand. Keep it in your hand at all times. Some joker may decide to spike your drink to see what happens!

Have a support friend come with you to events that could be risky and you want someone to help you through.

C’Mon Back!
North Bay Lodge
Madison Bus Route 22
- AA Meetings, Monday 5:30 p.m.— 6:30
- NA Meetings, Wednesday 6:00 p.m.— 7:30
- Alumni Meeting, Saturday 10:00 a.m.— 11:00
Hosting your own event is a great way to control who you surround yourself with, what’s served and the party atmosphere.

Here are a few idea starters to get you started:

- **Host brunchtime party** with build your-own-omelets or top-your-own Belgian waffles.
- **Have an ugly sweater contest** - award prizes for All-Around UGLY Sweater, Most Original, Best Couple Combo, Most Likely to get Arrested if Seen in Public, Most Festive.
- Create a holiday scavenger hunt.
- Dress as your favorite holiday character, guests guess who everyone is.
- Have a white elephant gift swap.
- Sing Christmas karaoke.
- Build gingerbread houses.
- Have a News Years Even talent show, everyone performs something.
- A **Game-Day tournament**: Monopoly, Catan, Ticket to Ride, Risk, Backgammon, Scrabble.

**Chocolate Haystacks**
- 24 ounces chocolate and/or butterscotch chips
- 2 cups chow-mein noodles
- 1 cup toasted nuts (almonds, peanuts, cashews, or pecans)
- Dash sea salt (optional)

1. Prepare two sheet pans with parchment paper.
2. Melt chocolate chips according to package instructions.
3. Add chow mein noodles and nuts to the melted chocolate and carefully combine until noodles and nuts are well-coated.
4. Heap teaspoons full of mixture and drop onto parchment paper.
5. Sprinkle with sea salt, if desired.
6. Cool on counter or place in refrigerator for 15 minutes until set
7. Store in an airtight container.
Places to Meditate

Olbrich's Bolz Conservatory

Escape the winter and stroll into a tropical paradise on Madison’s eastside at the Olbrich Bolz Conservatory.

The conservatory is a glass pyramid filled with exotic plants, bright flowers, a rushing waterfall, winding paths, fragrant orchids and free-flying birds.

Take a few moments to relax on a bench, listen to the sounds, smell the humidity, and feel the quiet calm of peace.

Donald Park

Donald County Park is located in Dane County just 15 miles southwest of Madison on highway 92 south of Mount Horeb, by Mount Vernon.

The park contains oak, hickory and pine woods; majestic rock outcroppings with scenic vistas, trout streams and clear springs, restored prairies, and old apple orchards.

Miles of hiking trails lead to the top of Hitchcock Ridge, follow the path of the trout streams, pause at the Big and Little Springs, Larson’s pond, and wind through the woods and prairies.

Benches overlook the valley’s, creeks, and meadows all along the way, making this a perfect place to reflect, anytime of the year.

Reflect on Your Journey

- How are you feeling?
- Are you using the tools, skills, practices and principles that you learned at Hope Haven?
- How is your journey going?

If you need help...call now 251-8881

The Greatest Gift to Give People You Love Is Your Recovery.

Merry Christmas!