



REACH Dorset's

How To Handle The Holidays

Your guide to prepare for and manage your health & wellbeing over the festive period.

The Holidays Can Be Hard

Not only does the winter season bring colder weather and shorter days, but many people struggle with the challenges and pressures that the festivities bring about. Navigating the next few months may feel overwhelming but this guide aims to help you cope with the difficulties you may face.



At REACH we understand how you are feeling & how these emotions may be heightened by thinking that everyone else is enjoying themselves at this time of year. It's important to remember this is not always the case and there are others who are struggling too.

You are not alone, we are here to help.

REACH Dorset Holiday Opening Hours

Hub Closures

25th December (Christmas Day)

26th December (Boxing Day)

1st January (New Years Day)

What Support Do You Need?

Your REACH worker will be in touch if your regular appointments need adjusting due to staff taking leave. However, we are always here for you and will support you where we can if your worker is away.



If you know you might need some extra support or guidance at this time of year, open up to family, friends or, talk to us for some friendly advice. At the back of this booklet you'll find links to more support services that can help.

Scripts & Pharmacies

All patients will be send a SMS message via REACH to check opening hours & collection regimes. Pharmacies will be closed on 25th & 26th December and prescription schedules have be adjusted so, collections due for these dates will be made on 23rd & 24th December.

This is the same for 1st January (New Years Day) - collections adjusted for pick up on Monday 30th and Tuesday 31st December, but it is your responsibility to clarify this with your pharmacy. Christmas Eve & New Years Eve will be heavy in terms of footfall for pharmacies, so try not to leave collection till last thing of the day as this may be more difficult. Please collect no later than 2pm on these days where possible.

Needle Exchange Service

Reduce your risk of harm & infection by using our needle exchange service for free equipment such as sterile needles, sharps bins & wipes.

You can get needle exchange supplies delivered. Scan the QR code to register.



Seasonal Stress

You may be feeling the pressures of the practicalities of the upcoming season, which can have a negative impact on your mental health. You might:

Need to
organise
childcare

Have extra
responsibilities
to care for
others

Be under
financial
stress

Be affected
by changes
in sleep and
routine

Experience more
conflict or tension
with family

Trying to balance everything can feel overwhelming, it is important you take the time to look after yourself. Planning ahead can help alleviate some of these stressors:



Prioritise what you have to do and make decisions that align best with your wellbeing.



If having a routine makes feel in control, think ahead of how you can implement parts of your usual routine around new plans or time away.



If you know you find this time of year difficult, make a list of coping strategies or things that bring you comfort.

Money

Christmas and all the festivities that come with it bring a lot of stress onto our wallets. From gifts to parties and extra costs to keep warm at home, you may be worried about how you manage your money.

Many of us are feeling the squeeze of the cost of living crisis. If you are struggling, reach out to Citizens Advice to see what options you have to get extra help. The Trussell Trust also have a free helpline for financial support advice.



If money is tight this season, budgeting will be important for managing your money.

Consider putting money aside for presents, socialising, food and higher household bills. If things get tough, speak to someone about your concerns.

Money Saving Tips:

- Check out the charity shops or Facebook marketplace for affordable decorations, outfits and gifts.
- Source discounted food items in the shops.
- Sell your own unwanted items or clothing online to get some extra cash.

Social Pressures



It is likely extra challenging at this time of year to maintain your progress on your recovery journey as you may feel pressure to drink or use substances at social events or celebrations.

Others may not be aware of your recovery & might pressure you to join in. In these situations you can:



Write a list (on paper or phone) of reasons why you have chosen recovery



Call a friend or family member who supports you



Remove yourself from the situation and go to a place you are safe & not tempted



Distract yourself from the temptation by engaging with other things (chatting, dancing, eating, playing games)



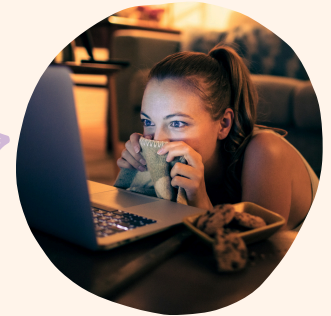
Instead of feeling left out, choose a soft drink, tea, coffee, hot chocolate or 0% option

Wholesome Activity Ideas

When it's hard to escape the boozy celebrations or those pesky people trying to tempt you, it's best to occupy yourself with activities that won't side track your progress. Try these with friends or by yourself!



Do some festive baking



Watch a movie or read a book



Play online or video games



Journal, draw or scrapbook



Cook a nice meal



Do a puzzle, board games or art & crafts

Staying On Track

If you are dependent on alcohol, stopping drinking suddenly is extremely dangerous and result in death.

Your REACH worker will help you to cut down gradually but staying on track with your recovery plan may be more challenging over Christmas.

If you don't already, keeping a drinking diary is a great method for keeping you on track with your recovery.

Write down each drink you have with how many units you have in it. Tally up your total units each day & each week.

Ask REACH for a drink diary template! Alternatively, use a notebook or phone notes app.



Services at this time of year are under extra pressure & it may be more difficult to get care. If you are using drugs, follow these steps to reduce your risk of harm:

- ★ Clean any equipment with alcohol wipes
- ★ Don't carry drugs inside your body
- ★ Do not share needles
- ★ Prepare your own drugs
- ★ Wash injecting sites before & after injecting
- ★ Dispose of all equipment into a sharps bin

Naloxone

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose through injection or nasal spray. At REACH, along with other providers, we can provide free Naloxone kits for you to have in times of emergency.



Get in touch with us to get your own, free Naloxone kit and guidance on how to administer it.



Managing Difficult Feelings

When uncomfortable feelings arise, it's good to have some tricks up your sleeve that you know make you feel more at ease.



If you are dealing with negative emotions, start by following these steps to help you cope:

1. Take yourself to a calm space and check in with yourself. Can you identify the emotion you're feeling?
2. Figure out what has triggered this emotion. Was it something specific?
3. Accept the emotion. Allow yourself to feel it instead of fighting it.
4. Take action. Is there something you can do to make yourself overcome the emotion? Or, reach out for more support.

Task: Create a Coping Kit

A coping kit, sometimes called a soothing box, is unique to each individual. It contains a variety of physical items that have been included because they help the person manage their feelings and improve their mental wellbeing.

Start by choosing a durable bag or container. A bag may be preferable so you can take it around more easily. Next, choose a selection of items that make you feel good. Some examples could be:

Photos of loved ones

A stress ball

A notebook & pen for drawing or journaling

A special rock or crystal

A spare pair of headphones

Next time you are struggling emotionally, find a safe space to access the kit you've created.

Try this!
Write a positive, uplifting note to yourself & include it in the kit. Write things that will reassure your future self.

you will get through this!

Loneliness

You may be alone during the holidays or you may feel lonely even if you are around other people. Feelings of loneliness are commonly made worse at this time of year, as people around us connect with family and friends to celebrate.



To help combat feelings of loneliness, try these:

Activities to do at home

- Read a book
- Watch a film
- Do a puzzle
- Write a letter to a loved one
- Play with your pets
- Bake for a friend or neighbour
- Listen to a podcast
- Have a sleepover with a friend

Ideas to get out n' about

- Invite a neighbour round for tea/coffee
- Visit the Christmas light displays
- Attend a local community event
- Visit a cosy café
- Go to the cinema
- Take a book to read in a park or café
- Go on a walk

You may be struggling with a mixture of emotions, especially if you have difficult relationships with family members. Perhaps you have conflicting thoughts about rebuilding these relationships. Try this reflection to gain some clarity on this:

Reflective Activity

1. Are you missing anyone in particular right now?
2. Was this person(s) a good or bad influence in your life? And, why?
3. If they were a good influence, is there any barriers to you reaching out to them?
4. What emotions might speaking to them again bring up?
5. If you reached out to this person, what is the worst possible outcome, what is the best?

If you feel it is low risk, perhaps reach out to them and see if you can reconnect.

If it would not be a good idea to reach out, try writing an unsent letter. This is where you write a letter to them but don't send it! It is a great way to express your emotions and can bring peace of mind.

Self Care

Be Kind to Yourself

To be there for others, you must first take care of yourself. Showing up for yourself looks different for everyone, check out these ideas & add your own:



- Prioritise rest
- Get fresh air every day
- Practice positive self talk



Tidy Life, Happy Mind

As mentioned in the beginning, being organised and prepared for the season can help us to manage stress and avoid feeling overwhelmed.



Similarly, keeping our space clean and tidy will help us feel more at peace when we may be dealing with difficult situations or emotions. Set aside 5 minutes at the same time each day to tidy your space.



Eating Well

Eating well doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. See the tips below to keep eating well:

- Incorporate a variety of fruit & vegetables
- Start your day with a high protein breakfast
- Drink water throughout the day
- Enjoy sweets & treats in moderation. If you are craving sweets, try having a fruit first
- Have a vegetable source with every meal (frozen & tinned are cheap ways to get your veg in!)
- Have regular meal times to build a good routine

Sleep

Sleep is essential for maintaining a healthy mind & body. Try these tips for building a good sleep routine:

Avoid screens late at night

Have a hot drink in the evening

Eat dinner a few hours before sleeping

Stick to a regular sleep & wake up time

Quieten your mind by journaling

Relax at night by reading, meditating or stretching

Reflect & Rate

As the end of the year approaches, it can be a good time to reflect on our past and consider what we want for our future.

Circle the number that best reflects how you feel about each part of life.
1 being least happy & 10 being the happiest!

Personal growth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My inner peace	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Relationships with family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Relationships with friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Social engagement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Work/career fulfilment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Finding time for hobbies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Physical health	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Making time to exercise	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mental wellbeing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My recovery progress	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ability to ask for help	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Choose the 3 with the lowest scores from your list and set some action points for the year ahead.

For example: If you scored low on 'Making time to exercise', your action point could be to take a 10 minute walk each morning.

Item: _____

Score:

What can you do to improve this?

Item: _____

Score:

What can you do to improve this?

Item: _____

Score:

What can you do to improve this?

Looking Forward

Considering what we have gone through and can help set up us for success in the year to come. Use these prompts to reflect on this year and set new goals!

What has gone well this year?

3 words to sum up my year:

Rate this year on a scale of 1-10

1 small goal for next year:

1 big goal for next year:

One word to take into next year:

Things I will not take into next year
Add yours!

Comparing myself to others

Negative self talk

What's on at REACH?

North Dorset

6th &
12th
Dec



Free Haircuts

6th Blandford: 11:30-1:30pm
12th Gillingham: 11-1pm

13th
Dec



Festive Buffet

Blandford
10:30-12:30pm

16th &
20th
Dec



Table Top Sales

16th Gillingham:
20th Blandford: 11-3pm

Blandford events: Blandford United Reformed Church, DT11 7PX
Gillingham events: Woodcock Court, Queen St, SP8 4DZ

West Dorset

16th
Dec



**Candle & Christmas
Card Making**
Weymouth Hub
11am-1pm

16th
Dec



**Festive Bake Sale &
Advice Stall on**
Weymouth Seafront
11am - 1pm

25th
Dec



Christmas Day Social
at The Dry Dock for
drinks & bacon
butties! 11am -2pm

Weymouth Hub: 24 High West St, DT4 8JH

East Dorset

19th
Dec



**Women's Christmas
Crafts Group**
Mondays 11am-12pm



**Christmas Decorations &
Festive Gifts Workshop**
12-2pm

6th
Jan



**Big REACH Quiz of
2024 Monday Eve**
6:15-7:30pm

East events at: Wimborne Community Centre, BH21 1EB

Gift Appeals

If you are struggling to afford gifts this year, speak to your worker to access donations, that we have put together, to help our clients who are in need this Christmas (REACH clients only).



Of course all our usual groups will be running throughout the holidays (except between 23rd-26th December & New Years Day).

Check them out by scanning the QR code with your phone!

Need More Support?

REACH Contact Details

Phone: 0800 043 4656

Email: www.waythrough.org.uk/reach

Alcohol Resources

Drink Aware - www.drinkaware.co.uk

Alcoholics Anonymous - www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Alcohol Change UK - www.alcoholchange.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help-now

Local Support

We Are With You - www.wearewithyou.org.uk

Paragon - www.paragonteam.org.uk/teams/dorset

Sexual Trauma And Recovery Service (STARS) - www.starsdorset.org

Steps To Wellbeing - www.steps2wellbeing.co.uk

Andy's Men's Club - andysmanclub.co.uk

National Support


Samaritans - phone: 116 123 www.samaritans.org

Women's Aid - www.womensaid.org.uk

Mind Charity - www.mind.org.uk

Shelter Housing - call: 0808 800 4444 www.england.shelter.org.uk

The Hub Of Hope (Texting Service) - www.chasingthestigma.co.uk



*May you
continue to
embrace the
gift that is
recovery*