

# asac action

December 2009

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## Holiday Tips for Families

In addition to still recovering from the Flood of 2008, many families are also dealing with job loss or reduced incomes. The mixture of sadness and feelings of loss along with celebration are normal when we have experienced disaster. It is okay to enjoy ourselves and find pleasure in our lives again without feeling guilty. We need to recognize it is a normal part of grief and adjustment to think often about the Holiday before it arrives, wondering how it will be to not share the day with a loved one, or be in your own home or with other family members or co-workers to celebrate. These worries and concerns about how the day will be are normal and a part of learning to cope with loss and change.

Following are some tips to maintain a healthy state of mind during the holiday season:

- Take time for a favorite activity as a way to relax and relieve stress.
- Talk about your loss, memories of loved ones unable to be with you, or of customs that you will be unable to continue.
- Find meaningful activities that honor cultural and family traditions while creating new memories.
- Think about your own needs during the Holidays and “treat” yourself. We can take better care of family and friends if we also take care of ourselves.
- We can relieve the sense of obligation and burden by doing things that we would like to do rather than what we “should” do for a holiday event.
- It is a normal reaction to sometimes feel bitter when others who do not know us wish us holiday happiness when we are trying to cope with losses and sadness through the holiday season.
- Our faith and the faith community can be a great comfort. We can reach out to a spiritual advisor for support.
- Finding even small ways to help others will provide a sense of satisfaction and caring.
- Accept support and assistance. They can help make difficult times more bearable.
- Do not allow yourself to feel guilty that you are unable to afford gifts because of the disaster. Instead look for special things that your family can do for each other and provide gift coupons or think of other fun ways to celebrate. Remember that giving ourselves and our time and talents are the greatest gifts and the most memorable.
- Be realistic in your hope for the holidays and for the future.
- Although it is tempting to do otherwise, get a little extra sleep, eat healthy, and exercise to relieve some of the holiday stress.
- The holidays provide time to spend time with others we enjoy and can talk to about our feelings and hopes for the future.



May you find Joy and Peace during  
this Holiday Season

## ASAC's Novus Center

On October 1st, ASAC's three year federal grant to provide methamphetamine and cocaine treatment came to an end. The agency's commitment to providing stimulant-specific treatment programming, however, has not ended. Grant funding provided staff training in the Matrix Model which has allowed us to expand the treatment curriculum into other program areas. ASAC's Youth Residential component now uses the Matrix Model in its family programming and we also conduct intensive outpatient groups at ASAC's main campus based on the Matrix Model. The Matrix Model is a process of coaching, reinforcing and supporting positive behavior change. It is a research-based program that has been proven effective in the treatment of substance abuse disorders; especially stimulant addictions.

An evaluation of the Substance Abuse Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) grant showed that Novus Center clients found the counseling they received was both helpful and effective:

59% of the clients rated the treatment program Very Beneficial

37.5% rated it Beneficial

3.5% said the program was Not Beneficial

In addition, 68.3% of the clients reported no substance use 30 days after treatment and only 8.5% had been arrested. Our goal was > 40% to be substance free 30 days after treatment and < 20% arrested. The one goal the program did not meet was that 70% of the clients would be employed or in school. Client follow-ups showed that only 58.5% of past clients were employed or in school.

The Novus Center does not restrict its treatment programming to only stimulant users and the Matrix Model. Anyone seeking substance abuse assessment and outpatient treatment services can access services through the Novus Center. The Novus Center is located in downtown Cedar Rapids, 210 2nd Street SE, Suite 500. For more information, call Shirley Schneider, Novus Center Director, at 364-0587.

## Toxic Danger - Inhalants

You've talked to your teen about drug use and other risky behaviors, but you might not have discussed "huffing," "sniffing," "dusting," or "bagging." And if those terms don't ring a bell, it's time to brush up on inhalant abuse. More than a million teens used inhalants — including household products like nail polish remover, correction fluids, and bleach — to get high last year. Most teens do not realize how dangerous inhalants can be, but statistics show that repeated exposure can lead to suffocation, brain damage, and even death. Parents should closely monitor these household substances to prevent abuse and irreversible health consequences.

### Know the Signs

Combined with irreversible health hazards, easy accessibility in the home, and legal opportunity to buy directly out of the store, inhalants pose a serious threat to teens everywhere. Parents should be on the lookout for some of the common signs and symptoms of abuse, such as unusual breath odor or chemical odor on clothing; spots and/or sores around the mouth; nausea and/or loss of appetite; slurred or disoriented speech; or red or runny eyes or nose.



Go to [http://www.theantidrug.com/drug\\_info/drug\\_info\\_inhalants\\_signs.asp](http://www.theantidrug.com/drug_info/drug_info_inhalants_signs.asp) to learn more about the dangers, signs and symptoms of inhalant abuse:

## **Prescription Swapping** - *By Keiaffa Green, Prevention Specialist*

You have a headache, and your regular aspirin isn't doing the trick. Your buddy says that they have some prescription strength Ibuprofen. You take one and think nothing of it. The "If it works for them, it can work for you" attitude can put you at risk. Prescription drug swapping is the most common way to start an addictive habit. Many people think its okay to gives someone else your prescribed medication, but it is dangerous and illegal.

Anyone can become at risk for abuse if medications are not taken properly, but the elderly are particularly at risk. Misuse of prescription medications may be the most common form of drug abuse among older adults. It is less likely that an elderly person will comply with the directions on the prescription bottle. There may be confusion regarding the dose or the frequency with which to take the medication or difficulty reading the small print to even be able to understand what side effects could happen while taking the drugs. Prescription medication can be fatal if taken without medical supervision. Memory problems can lead to missed or duplicated doses.

The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information found that those who are over 60 years old have the highest prescription abuse rate. Among that age group, 17% have abused prescription drugs, and most of these individuals have done so unknowingly. This also leads to sharing medications with their close friends and family. By sharing medications, it puts others at risk for various complications like heart failures, respiratory failure and liver damage. Prescription medication can be fatal if taken without medical supervision.

If you or someone you know is abusing or sharing medications please call ASAC's Prevention Services at 319-390-4611 or visit us on-line at [www.asac.us](http://www.asac.us). For additional information check out NIDA.org.

## **3...2...1...HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

With the new year just around the corner, party plans are beginning to come together. With this evening of celebrating the end of one year and the beginning of a new one, large amounts of alcohol seem to be commonly brought into the picture as a necessity to having a good time. Several media campaigns remind adults how to be safe by doing things such as having a designated driver, eating while drinking, and knowing when to stop. But what about minors? Although it is illegal for minors to consume alcohol, New Years Eve seems to have been taken over by teens as a great night to drink and be merry, just like their over 21 counterparts. New Year's Eve has turned into a night of temptation to drink and drink too much, even for those who know better. Those who have never been tempted to drink may have a new issue in front of them as others around them are drinking.

The temptation to provide to minors might also be apparent during this time of year. Some parents believe as long as there is supervision or a safe location for underage drinking to take place, it can be considered "safe drinking." There is no such thing as safe drinking when minors are involved. Exposure to parties with alcohol places your child at risk for being a victim of accidents, crime, assault or worse.

Doing some pre-planning can go a long way during this time when drinking seems to be the thing to do. Here are a few tips for parents to help keep their children safe on this crazy night:

1. Communicate with your child. Make sure they know that you do not approve of underage drinking.
2. Know your child's plan. Where will they be? Where will they stay? What adults will be around?
3. Communicate with the other adults involved. Ensure everyone is on the same page regarding not allowing or providing alcohol to minors.
4. Do not rent hotel rooms for your children. Often there is little to no supervision in hotels, especially if a parent makes the reservation. Many hotels will assume parents are present.
5. If your child is coming home that night, stay up and have a discussion with them. You will be able to see if anything is out of the ordinary right away.

Ensure a safe New Year for you and your family!

