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THE VSAAC VIEW

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This is the time of year when most of us are celebrating holidays – Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa. There are usually gifts and parties; families and friends getting together to share good times and good food. Alcoholic beverages are especially plentiful during this season. For most people drinking is not a problem– they are aware of alcohol’s impact. For some drinking *is* a problem and have little control over the amount of alcohol they consume; and, for some, they are unaware or perhaps unconcerned about the amount of alcohol they drink.

If you are hosting a party or just getting together with friends and family, consider offering non-alcoholic drinks or punch. Recipes are easy to find on line. Here are just a few ideas!

Virgin Pina colada: mix the following in a blender (to taste)- coconut milk, pineapple juice, coconut ice cream, pineapple chunks and crushed ice.

Southern Tea: Make tea as usual but add 2 whole cloves for each cup. Strain. While tea is hot add sugar and lemon to taste. Place 2 to 3 bruised springs of mint in a glass with crushed ice and pour tea into the glass. Add a cherry and a thin lemon slice.

Citrus Spritzers:

In a large pitcher—mix 2 cups of cold water, one 6 oz. can of frozen orange juice (thawed), 3/4 cup of frozen grapefruit concentrate (thawed) and one 1 liter bottle of chilled sparkling water. Mix and pour over ice and add orange or lemon slice and mint.

Create your own drink: Mix any fruit drink with ice and some kind of carbonated soda. Add fruit to garnish. For something special, add a scoop of ice cream.



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FAST FACTS



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- ✓ In 2008 11,733 individuals died in drunken driving crashes from the Thanksgiving Holiday until the week after New Years’ Day.
- ✓ The misuse of alcohol and drugs costs the American economy over \$190 billion annually in lost productivity, injuries, disease, law enforcement, and criminal justice.
- ✓ The misuse of prescription drugs is now a major problem in the United States for teens, adults and seniors.
- ✓ About 120,000 Americans a year go to the emergency room after overdosing on opioid painkillers. (American Society of International Pain Physicians)
- ✓ M. Lee, a researcher at Rhode Island Hospital, found that drivers with any detectable alcohol in their system incurred \$4,538 more in treatment costs and stayed an average of 3.3 hours longer in the emergency room than patients with no alcohol in their system.
- ✓ Youth, whose parents set clear rules for them, are less likely to report using illicit drugs. (According to data from the 2008-2009 PRIDE survey)

A word about depression: There are many things that can cause sadness in our lives. It can be different for different people. But it is true that many more people feel sad and depressed during the holiday season. Some reasons for holiday depression are: stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization, financial burdens, the inability to be with family and/or stress and disappointment. The loss of a loved one during the past year weighs heavily on us during this time, especially for older adults.

Depression is not just a reaction to the above stressors, depression has a biological aspect. It is not caused simply by events in one's life. There is an element that involves our brain chemistry that affects moods and feelings of happiness and/or sadness.

If you feel sad and depressed during the holidays, there are things you can do. First, don't be alone. Spend the holiday with family and friends. If they are not close by, volunteer to help others who are not as fortunate as you. (Helping others helps us to overcome the feeling of loneliness and/or worthlessness.) Find and attend special musical activities, church services, or choir presentations. Set realistic expectations for yourself and others: eat well; exercise; get enough rest; set and follow a budget; don't overbook yourself. Don't feel that you have to do the same thing every year. There is no one way to enjoy a holiday. When you take charge of your life you will feel less stressed and, therefore, less sad and depressed.

If you feel depressed at other times of the year, or feel sad all the time— check with your doctor. There is also a wealth of information on line and in books. Take some action to help yourself feel better.



Alcohol and depression: Alcohol flows freely during the holidays. We may be tempted to drink more than usual thinking that it will make us feel better. It may for a very little while; but remember—Alcohol is a depressant. You will end up feeling sadder and more depressed.



Do you wonder if you have a problem with alcohol or drugs?

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, think seriously about getting some help.

- ? Have you ever ridden in a car driven by someone (including yourself) who was “high” or had been using alcohol or drugs?
- ? Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to relax, feel better about yourself, or fit in?
- ? Do you ever use alcohol or drugs while you are by yourself?
- ? Do you ever forget things you did while using alcohol or drugs?
- ? Do your family or friends ever tell you that you should cut down on your drinking or drug use?
- ? Have you ever gotten into trouble while you were using alcohol or drugs?

(CRAFT screening tool)

For referral information: call the SAMHSA toll free
Referral Helpline 1-800-662-4357;
Infoline 211;
VSAAC 203-736-8566