

Useful Contacts:

Scottish Families affected by Alcohol and Drugs

Tel: 08080 10 10 11

Police

Tel: 0300 111 2222

Drugs and Alcohol Team

Tel: 01738 474 455

Narcotics Anonymous

Tel: 0300 999 1212



*Drugs and Alcohol
At Christmas*

*A booklet aimed at 'Surviving Christmas'
for those who use drugs and alcohol
during the festive season.*

'Surviving Christmas' is a seasonal campaign run by PLUS Perth, a local mental health campaigning charity. To access our 'Surviving Christmas' pocket guide and other helpful resources, please visit www.mentalwealthperthshire.co.uk or call PLUS Perth on 01738 626242.

Reasons for drug use at Christmas

It is understandable why people would choose to take drugs or alcohol, especially at Christmas. It is a stressful time where lots of painful memories can come back that people try and avoid and it can seem like everybody else is having so much fun.

There are a number of circumstances that would cause people to resort to taking drugs. A person may be suffering from depressive symptoms and take drugs in the hope of gaining some relief. In some, negative symptoms may develop, as a direct result of taking drugs or as part of withdrawal symptoms when drug-taking stops. Others may take drugs to 'escape' from a problem during a particularly stressful time in their life, like Christmas. The stress involved in these may trigger feelings of depression and distress, which can cause further problems and possibly increase drug use.

Heavy drug use can lead to major financial problems, difficulties with relationships or trouble with the law, which can be increased during the Christmas period. It is important to try and control your drug use as much as possible, especially at times of distress.

Circumstantial drug use

If you are off for the Christmas holidays, you can often struggle with finding a purpose to your day and finding things to do for the two weeks that people are off. During the holiday season it can be more stressful going out of the house than staying in. People frantically running around trying to finish their shopping, friends on Christmas nights out and families out together can cause more upset for some. And if you don't

have family or close friends you may have nothing more to do than staying in and taking drugs and drinking.

If substances are taken as a result of isolation and feeling down it can cause more problems at work, home, school, and in relationships, leaving you feeling more isolated, helpless, and possibly ashamed.

If you are taking drugs or drinking due to the loss of a loved one or if you are unable to be with loved ones at Christmas time, it can worsen your grief, making it much harder to cope, get back to work and get back into your routine again.

What can you do?

There are a few things that you can do over the Christmas period to try and reduce your use of drugs and distress.

Some can find it helpful to fill their time with regular meetings with friends whether it is for a coffee, a walk or a chat. If you can, it is good to stay in touch with friends to reduce your feeling of isolation. If for any reason you can't meet with friends, volunteering is a great way to fill your time and to feel good about yourself and those who may also be in distress or struggling. You can find out more about how you could volunteer in Perth and Kinross, by calling Voluntary Action Perthshire on 01738 567076 or by visiting www.vapertshire.org.

Talking openly about how you are feeling with a close friend, family member or your GP may help alleviate your distress and help to find ways to 'Survive Christmas'. It is often better to bring a memory or thought into the open rather than hiding it away and it is good to do this well before the Christmas period, to allow you to identify ways to take care of yourself this Christmas.