



The Holiday Coping Toolkit

A Guided Resource for Mental
Health & Recovery Support

By **River's Bend PC**, Your Partner in Healing & Recovery

www.riversbendpc.com

Welcome

The holidays can bring joy, connection, and reflection, yet they can also stir up stress, loneliness, and old triggers. Whether you're protecting your sobriety, managing anxiety or depression, or simply trying to stay grounded, this toolkit will help you:

- Recognize your triggers
- Strengthen coping skills learned in therapy
- Create daily structure and self-care rituals
- Build resilience through reflection and support



“You can’t control the season — yet you can choose how to care for yourself through it.”

— **Stephanie Howey,**
LMSW & Co-Owner
at River’s Bend

1. Know Your Triggers

Use this page to identify what might make the holidays harder for you, so you can plan support before stress appears.

Common Holiday Triggers

My Triggers

My Coping Strategy

Family conflict or expectations

Grief or loneliness

Financial pressure

Parties with alcohol or substances

Overcommitment or exhaustion

Disrupted routine

Weather or seasonal depression

Tip: Awareness is power. Once you've identified triggers, pair each with one coping mechanism — breathing, boundaries, journaling, calling a friend, or leaving a situation gracefully.

2. Create Your “Coping Script”

Sometimes stress catches us off guard. Prepare a few go-to phrases that keep you grounded.

When declining an invitation:

“Thank you for the invite! I’m keeping my schedule lighter this year to focus on my health.”

When offered alcohol or substances:

“I’m good with what I have — thank you!”

“I’m focusing on my recovery this year.”

When family tension rises:

“I need a quick breather — I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

“Let’s take a pause and revisit this later.”

My Personal Coping Script:

(Write 2–3 phrases you can practice aloud.)

3. Daily Grounding Practice

When your emotions start to spiral, use this **5-4-3-2-1** grounding method to return to the present:

- **5** things you can see
- **4** things you can touch
- **3** things you can hear
- **2** things you can smell
- **1** thing you can taste

Reflection Prompt:

How does your body feel before and after grounding?

4. The “Three-Part Calm” Routine

Try this quick daily exercise — it takes just five minutes:

- 1. Breathe** – Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 4. Repeat 4 times.
- 2. Affirm** – Say one encouraging phrase out loud (examples below).
- 3. Move** – Stretch, walk, or stand outside for 1–2 minutes.

Affirmations to Try:

- “I am safe, steady, and present.”
- “Progress matters more than perfection.”
- “I can protect my peace without apology.”

Write your own affirmation below:

5. Holiday Coping Calendar

You don't have to plan every day — but mapping out intentional moments helps keep you centered.

Date	My Focus for the Day	Coping Tool or Ritual
Dec 1	Practice gratitude	Write down one thing you're thankful for
Dec 3	Connect with support	Call a recovery friend or therapist
Dec 5	Rest	Say no to one commitment
Dec 8	Move your body	20-minute walk or yoga
Dec 10	Reconnect	Attend a support meeting or church service
Dec 15	Ground	Practice the 5-4-3-2-1 technique
Dec 18	Reflect	Journal about wins from this year
Dec 22	Give	Volunteer, donate, or send a kind note
Dec 25	Protect your peace	Take a quiet morning for yourself
Dec 30	Prepare for the new year	Set 1 wellness goal for January

(You can expand this to include your own meaningful days.)

6. The “SOS” Plan: When You Need Immediate Support

Even with preparation, tough moments happen. Having a plan helps you respond instead of react.

My SOS Plan:

Warning Signs – What I notice when I’m struggling:

What Helps Me Right Away:

- Go outside for fresh air
- Text or call a friend
- Write down what I’m feeling
- Play calming music
- Practice grounding

Who I Can Call:

- My therapist: _____
- My sponsor/support friend: _____
- Family contact: _____
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (24/7)

If you ever feel unsafe with your thoughts or sobriety, **call 911, 988**, or reach out to **River’s Bend** immediately. Our clinicians can help you get the right level of care, from **outpatient therapy** to **IOP/PHP support**.

Call our intake team today:

248.585.3239 (Troy) | 248.702.6132 (West Bloomfield)



7. Journal Prompts for Reflection & Gratitude

Use these pages to reconnect with what's meaningful and healing this season.

What brings me comfort when I feel overwhelmed?

What does “**peace**” look like for me right now?

Who are three people who make me feel safe or supported?

What small act of kindness can I do this week?

What am I grateful for today — even if it's something small?

Optional exercise: Each night, write one sentence about a positive moment from the day, something you noticed, felt, or did for yourself.

8. When to Reach Out

If you notice yourself:

- Feeling persistently down, irritable, or anxious
- Having trouble sleeping or eating
- Feeling tempted to return to old habits or substances
- Isolating from friends or loved ones
- Struggling to maintain daily structure

It's time to connect for extra support. You don't have to wait for a crisis. At **River's Bend**, we help clients reconnect with coping skills, therapy, and structure that make recovery sustainable, especially during high-stress seasons.

Call our intake team today:

- **Troy:** (248) 585-3239
- **West Bloomfield:** (248) 702-6132
- www.RiversBendPC.com

Closing Reflection

The holidays don't have to be perfect to be peaceful. Every boundary you set, every breath you take, every kind word you offer yourself — these are victories.

“Healing isn't about avoiding the storm — it's about learning to stay grounded through it.”

— Stephanie Howey, LMSW & Co-Owner at River's Bend

You're Not Alone This Season

If you need professional guidance or a safe place to talk through your plan, **River's Bend is here to help.**

Our **licensed clinicians** offer **in-person** and **virtual therapy**, IOP, and PHP programs designed for real-life recovery.

Contact our intake team today to find the support that fits your life:

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