



MY SOBER TOOLBOX

HSM's guide for
the festive season



The Christmas season can be a challenging time of year for many people. Add a global pandemic, lockdowns, remote working and home schooling to the mix. Many people are facing isolation, fear, loneliness, anxiety and grief. Everyone is doing their best to cope with these challenges in the best way possible.

Everyone has their ways to try and cope with such difficult situations. Some of those strategies can be beneficial, like mindfulness and relaxation breathing. On the other hand, some people turn to unhealthy behaviours as a coping mechanism, like alcohol use. Having a plan that can identify stressful triggers and putting in place some tried and tested strategies to help us cope more healthily is important.



What is a sober toolbox?

A sober toolbox is a personalised collection of healthy strategies that you know you can rely on to help you navigate through the challenging times. These strategies are healthy alternatives that can help relieve pain and shift a stressful state of mind instead of relying on alcohol to achieve that relief.

Who can benefit from this sober toolbox?

Whether you are taking a mindful approach to your alcohol consumption, especially around Christmas time, or you are in sobriety or are thinking about it, everyone can benefit from having a personalised toolbox.



Why does it work?

No matter what stage of the journey you are on, having your personalised sober toolbox helps you build a strong self-care framework you can draw on at any time or place you may be on your journey. It's your personal investment in learning new ways to check in with yourself, manage difficult emotions, tolerate distress and self-soothe without the use of alcohol. If you are in sobriety, this toolkit can help you master the skills for managing challenges and living your life with clarity and purpose.

When to use it?

Use this during the Christmas and holiday season or whenever you feel the need. Make this part of your daily self-care routine.

Following is a collection of evidence-based tips, tools and strategies you might like to include in your personalised Sober toolbox. Choose and apply the tools that best meet your needs. You can always come back to some of these tools if they're not quite right for you right now.

Remember, there is no wrong or right way here, you are the expert of your own life. Embrace your awesomeness!

My Toolbox

Decide on a concrete plan for how you want to spend the holidays – develop this plan when you are in a calm state of mind. Stress and temptations are everywhere, especially this time of year, so set your boundaries and stick to them!

Tip: Work through and build on these tools with your health professional.

My Toolbox



1. Embrace a 'holistic approach' to your health and wellbeing

A holistic approach to health and wellbeing is central to our quality of life. This encompasses focusing on a set of core values, including Physical Health, Psychological Health, Social Health, Community and Culture, Relationships, Occupational Health, and Emotional Wellbeing.

Gently fostering these seven domains, one step at a time, can help instil hope and purpose. Take a moment to reflect on this concept. When you are ready, you might like to apply this process by setting a **SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-limited)** goal for each domain as you would like it to be in your life.

Tool 1

What SMART goal can you set yourself for each domain of your life right now?

Psychological Health

(e.g., maintain a balanced state of mind through weekly mindfulness meditation)

Social Health

(e.g., connect with at least one friend every week)

Community and Culture

(e.g., attend community talks or volunteer at local organisations)

Relationships *(e.g., try and understand a loved one's point of view)*

Occupational Health

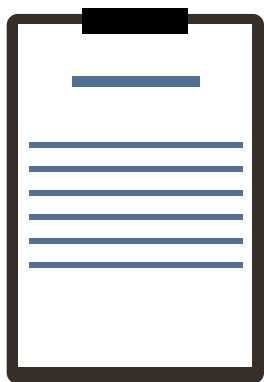
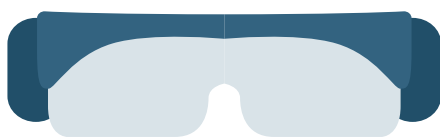
(e.g., learn a new skill)

Emotional Wellbeing

(e.g., learn to face my fears)

Physical Health

(e.g., Attend follow up appointments, find a buddy to exercise with)



2. Build Your Community of Support

A community of support is particularly crucial for people who are changing their patterns of alcohol use. It is important to be connected to people who are supportive and with whom you can discuss your feelings and experiences safely. People with a supportive network usually feel more capable of coping with day-to-day life stresses and the problems that can be a part of it.

Who can provide support?

Anyone you trust and feel comfortable approaching.





Tool 2

My Support Network

There are six kinds of support that may be beneficial for you to focus on.

• **Emotional**

(Someone with whom you can discuss your feelings)

• **Moral**

(Someone who can provide you with encouragement)

• **Instrumental**

(Someone who can help you with practical tasks such as transportation, and child care etc.)

• **Mentor**

(Someone who can provide you with guidance and instruction)

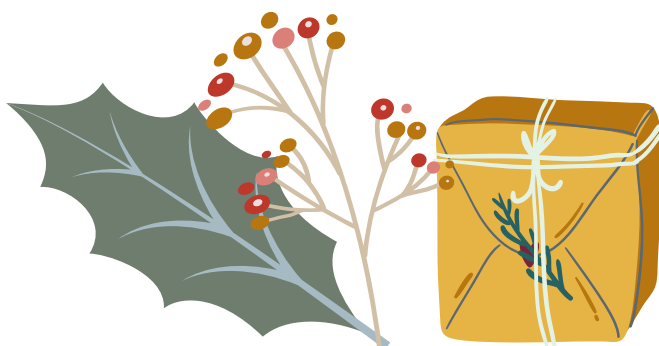
• Recreational

(Someone with whom you can share some leisure time)

• Spiritual

(Someone, somewhere, or something, that allows you to access spirituality, allowing for a sense of values and direction)

So, you have goals for each domain of your life, you have identified your community of support and now it's time to plan ahead for some of the challenges that may surface and that you may need to face around the Christmas holiday season.



3. Have a Plan of Action

Tool 3

1. Bring your own alcohol free drinks or phone ahead and explore your options.

2. Have some sober responses ready for saying 'NO' to drinking. For example:

'I'm on a break from drinking right now'

'I've decided to make health my priority this season'

3. Have an Exit Plan.

Exit plans can help you overcome any obstacles. Have your exit plan ready for those uncomfortable or triggering situations you might find yourself in.

- **Step away as needed.**

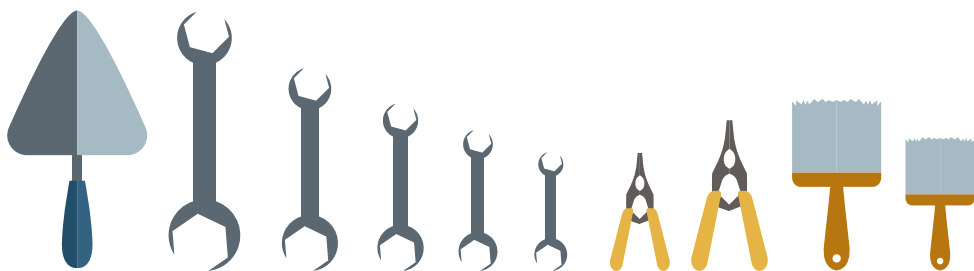
Let your host or a trusted confidant know in advance



that you might need to leave early, that way you can slip away without too much attention placed on you.

- **Call someone from your support network** and use them as your 'outside insight' – that's someone who understands and supports the journey you are on.

- **Go somewhere safe** and stay connected with appropriate support.



4. Prepare for Big Emotions

Tool 4

You might be feeling raw and vulnerable as you've made the decision that you won't be trying to escape from or numb any emotional pain with alcohol. Therefore, you will feel emotions that you possibly haven't felt in a long time, which can be scary. Work through this with your therapist. Know that **'you will grow through what you go through'**.

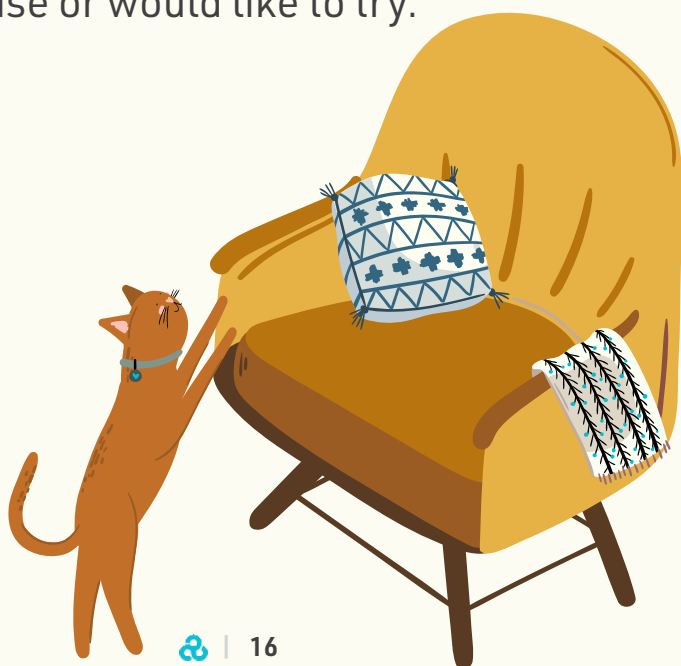


5. Manage Stress

Tool 5

Stress can interfere with your life and tends to be heightened during the Christmas holiday season.

However, there are strategies to mitigate stress before it starts, and for when you're already in the thick of it. Use the following checklist to help identify or remind yourself of the strategies you already know have worked for you or that you would like to start implementing to help you cope with stress and urges. You might also identify some additional tools you use or would like to try.



When stress is interfering with your life, it can be difficult to remember that you do have some good options.

Check the appropriate box to remind you which strategies you are already using or would like to try to help you cope more effectively.

Strategy

**I already
use this
strategy**

**I will try
this
strategy**

Learn what my triggers are and develop a Plan of Action. (Tool 3)

Embrace a holistic approach to my health and wellbeing. (Tool 1).

Adopt healthy eating habits. Start with a nutritious breakfast. A healthy diet can help boost our mood.

Establish a healthy sleep regime.

Strategy

I already
use this
strategy

I will try
this
strategy

*Engage in daily
exercise and keep
moving.*

*Develop my
community of
support network.
(Tool 2).*

*Manage stress with
calm breathing and
breaking actions.*

*Share how I'm
feeling openly and
respectfully.*

*Check in with myself
and journal my
reflections daily.*

*Acknowledge my
achievements every
step of the way.*

*Practice mindfulness
and relaxation
techniques.*

*Practice self-
compassion.
(Tool 6).*

Strategy

I already use this strategy	I will try this strategy
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Connect with others. (Tool 7).

Express my emotions through Art, Music, Poetry and Movement.

Carry with me a supply of herbal teabags, essential oils, and other self-soothing items that can bring me comfort and help me feel grounded.

Create and celebrate new traditions.

Other:

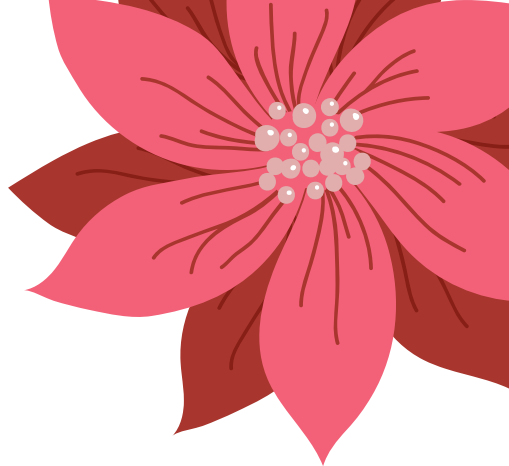
Other:

Other:

6. Treat Yourself with Compassion

Make yourself a priority in your own life and treat yourself with compassion. The demands of life and all the stresses that come with it can often make it challenging to step back and give yourself the understanding and compassion you need and deserve. This can keep you in the vicious cycle that stands in the way of you moving forward. Be warm and empathic towards yourself, especially if you encounter emotional pain, grief and loneliness. Nourish yourself with love and embrace your heart with self-compassion.





Tool 6

Eight Ways Towards Self-Compassion

1. Be aware of your inner critic

Is your inner voice a harsh taskmaster? Are you hard on yourself for failing in some way? Perhaps you are feeling sensitive and vulnerable right now, so be gentle with yourself. You can begin by offering yourself some praise to provide a little balance to any ongoing, self-doubting inner dialogue?

2. Don't be afraid to say 'yes' or to say 'no'

Give yourself permission to say 'yes' to the things you would like to do and say 'no' to doing things that make you unhappy.

3. Act on what you need and not what you want

Clarify what you need and stay focused. This will help you to remain strong and centred. In turn, you will be able to turn away from automatic behaviours that have kept you stuck in the past and you will be able to start moving forward.

4. Be mindfully present with what is in front of you

Tune out from the distractions in your head and be fully present with what is happening right in front of you. Stay focused and clear about how you want to show up in that moment.

5. Learn to forgive yourself and others

Are you harsh on yourself and perhaps on others? We might not be able to change the past. However, from this moment, you can choose to unhook

from the past so that it frees you up to begin to create new meaning in your life.

6. Accept compliments graciously

When someone says something complimentary to you or about you, accept this at face value and don't question this. Graciously thank the person for their kindness.

7. If you need help, ask for it

Whatever you're going through right now, know that you are not alone. Although everyone's experiences are not exactly the same, be assured that many others, just like you, have been through difficult experiences before, and they have been able to navigate the challenges with support.

8. Be YOU!

Be proud of yourself!



7. Lean on your Peer Community

The cornerstone of a peer-led community is the shared lived experience of the challenges and obstacles that present themselves along life's journey. The shared experience between a community of people moderating their alcohol consumption or maintaining sobriety provides you with the opportunity to lean on others who understand what you are going through. Engaging with your peer community can provide motivation and hope that progress and recovery are not only possible but sustainable.



Tool 7

The Daybreak app is a peer-led online community for those who want to change their relationship with alcohol, be it to moderate or abstain from alcohol. It is a non-judgemental community, moderated by health professionals to ensure all Australian adults can have free access to an online community.

Daybreak



**Learning
from lived
experiences**



**Inspiring
community**



**Support
from a Care
Navigator**



Set goals



You have courage and have made a commitment to living a full and purposeful life. Over time this will get easier. Remind yourself:

**One day, one hour,
one minute at a time.**

SUPPORTS

CRISIS & EMERGENCY

Emergency 000
Lifeline 13 11 14
Suicide Call Back 1300 659 467

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
ReachOut 02 8029 7777

DRUG & ALCOHOL

FDS 1300 368 186
Carers Australia 1800 242 636

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Grow 1800 558 268

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Sane Australia 1800 187 263
Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships Australia 1300 364 277

LGBTIQA+

Qlife

1800 184 527

[Livechat](#)

(3pm-12am AEST)

MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND COUNSELLING

Grief Line

1300 845 745

Black Dog Institute

02 9382 2991

Butterfly Foundation

1800 334 673

(Eating Disorders)

ONLINE SERVICES

eheadspace

eheadspace.org.au

eMH Services

emhprac.org.au/services/

Hello Sunday Morning

hellosundaymorning.org

Daybreak

hellosundaymorning.org/daybreak/

We thank our partners



Australian Government
Department of Health





www.hellosundaymorning.org

References American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). Washington DC: Author. Australian Psychological Society (APS). (2010). Evidence-based psychological interventions in the treatment of mental disorders: A literature review (3rd ed.). Melbourne: Author. NICE. (2011). Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder (with or without agoraphobia) in adults.

London: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. World Health Organization. (2008). ICD-10: International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems (10th Rev.). New York.

e-Book by Dominique Robert-Hendren MAPS
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