

Guest Column: Stay sober on Valentine's Day with these tips

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Valentine's Day is known for many things, such as flowers, chocolates, romance, dinners and date nights. However, the day can also be known for creating many negative emotions, such as guilt, sadness, depression, anxiety, and anger.

It can be particularly challenging for someone new to sobriety and recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

Fortunately, there are practical ways to stay sober, avoid relapse, and treat the day as any other.

If someone is struggling with a substance use disorder, it is critical to find help. Addictions worsen with time.

"Valentine's Day can often be the first hurdle for many people in sobriety," said Michael Leach of Addicted.org. "Many of the negative emotions attached to the day have the potential to lead to relapse."

The first tip is to identify any potential stressors or triggers. An individual may feel they are feeling stressed because they are hyper-focused on their love life. Yet, it could be a work responsibility, family stressors, health issues, or financial obligations.

In addition, it could be a particular situation or group of people creating stress. In that case, avoid it or them, and set clear boundaries. Overall, have a plan in place to recognize stressors and manage relapse triggers.

Another good approach is to counter the day's culture and unplug from social media. Celebrate other forms of love with your children, friends, or family members. Moreover, off social media for a couple of days if seeing endless Valentine's Day posts causes stress.

Finally, lean on support. A good support system is integral to addiction recovery, regardless of the day of the year. Spend time with other sober and single friends or attend a recovery meeting. Stay safe and healthy and reach out for help if needed.

Marie Garceau has been working in the field of substance use and addiction recovery for over a decade. Her primary focus is to reach out to the community and spread awareness. She does this to educate others about the dangers of drug use and to help prevent individuals from using drugs.