



Managing Triggers During Holiday Travel (for Partners)

Whether you're in a relationship with your addicted partner or not, the holidays can be triggering after betrayal. To this point, you've looked at what this holiday season is like for you compared to holidays in the past. You've explored what you'd like this season to look like, and how to navigate this season with your children if you have them. Let's now take some time to think through a plan to manage your triggers this holiday season if travel is a part of the season.

If you've decided to include holiday travel as a part of your holidays this year, we know that travel can be triggering. You may be choosing to travel, or you may have family / friends coming to you this year. Your addicted partner may be traveling or they may be remaining at home. Either way, let's explore how best to manage triggers related to holiday travel.

The following questions will be based on those four categories we listed above:

1. If you are single and are looking to navigate holiday triggers on your own this year
2. If you will be traveling together with your addicted partner (and family if applicable)
3. If you will be together with your addicted partner (and family if applicable), and you'll have family / friends traveling to you
4. If you will be separated from your addicted partner and THEY will be traveling
5. If you will be separated from your addicted partner and YOU will be traveling separately

Remember to take this slowly and care for yourself along the way. If you get stuck or overwhelmed with a question, feel free to skip it and come back to it when you're ready. You may also find a trusted counselor, coach, or trusted friend who knows what you're going through to help you through these questions and to give you advice on other potential issues unique to you and your situation.

Consider the following areas as you create your travel safety plan this holiday season:

Questions to consider if you are single and are looking to navigate holiday triggers on your own:

If you are no longer in a relationship with your addicted partner, this holiday season can still be triggering for you. Think through the following questions to help you prepare a plan for this holiday season:

1. From the exercises you've done so far and from what you're already experiencing (or have experienced in previous holiday seasons), what triggers do you anticipate experiencing this holiday season? Write the headlines of some of them below:

2. What support resources do you have in place to manage those triggers this year? For example, look at your work on the *Navigating This Year's Traditions* exercise and see what triggering people, places, or events you can limit this year. You may also consider taking certain things out this year, modifying other traditions, or creating new traditions for yourself this year. What will the holiday traditions look like for you this year?

3. If you and your addicted partner are parents, how will you manage co-parenting responsibilities? Look through your work on communicating to the kids for more ideas. How will you manage your children(s)' expectation(s) for the holiday season with what you're needing this year for yourself? What needs to be communicated to your addicted partner about your plan this year?

4. Loneliness can be really intense this time of year in the best of circumstances. Who are safe people that you can turn to for support this holiday season? Do you have a counselor, coach, or trusted friend who knows what you're going through? Think about how you can proactively make plans with these trusted and safe people. You can also look at the words of encouragement from other partners who responded to our survey about the holiday season. You're not alone this season, no matter how much it may feel that way. So write down who you can turn to for support this year and what plans you could make with them:

5. In addition to supportive people and coping resources for triggers, what else will you do this year to take care of YOU? What are some activities or healthy self-care items that you can do? Remember, you don't have to worry about any other year than this one. This year is a time to take care of you. What does this year look like for YOU?

6. Anything else you'd like to prepare for this holiday season? Write down any other thoughts or plans you have for this year. You can do this – The holidays will pass. You're strong and you're brave.

Questions to consider if you will be traveling together with your addicted partner (and family if applicable):

1. Decide if you'd like to have daily check-ins while you're away. We've found these check-ins can be helpful to regroup after a day and plan ahead for the upcoming day:

- What time of day: _____
- Frequency of your check-ins (1x per day? Multiple times?): _____
- What things would you like included in your check-in (e.g., what worked that day, what things to work on the next day, level of safety, any triggers that day, requests for the following day, review and updating of boundaries, sharing feelings about the day, etc.):

- Where will you do these check-ins? That is, can you find a safe time and space for the two of you away from family / friends? How do you make this space for yourselves? _____

7. Thinking of the environment you will be traveling to (or multiple places you will be traveling to), what ways can you make the environment as safe as possible? Are there certain places you don't feel comfortable traveling to? Certain people you don't feel comfortable talking to this year? Any other things that you could build in to make travel feel safer this year? Write your thoughts down here.

8. Are there any triggers you can foresee for the coming trip (related to people, events, locations, memories, situations, etc.)? If so, write the headlines of those triggers:

9. What would be helpful for you this year in managing those triggers? For example, what things can you do for yourself this year to be kind to yourself and practice healthy self-care? What things could your addicted partner do that would help you feel safer around those triggers this year? If you need help, ask a trusted counselor, friend, or support person who knows your situation for help. Write your thoughts down below:

10. Given those potential triggers you've identified, what boundaries need to be adjusted for this trip? For example, do you and your partner need to discuss expectations and a plan around alcohol consumption? Do you need to add boundaries around gifts (given to others or given to you)? What people, places, or things need to be restricted or modified this year (see your plan that you outlined on your traditions for this year if you need help on this one)? Any updated plan for safety around family members or other people who don't feel safe right now? Again, if you need help, you can talk with a trusted counselor, friend, coach, or support person who knows your situation. Write down your updated boundaries below.

11. You have a plan for regrouping at the beginning, middle, or end of the day. But how will you and your addicted partner communicate about triggers / safety boundaries DURING

events that you are attending? Come up with a code word / system to communicate your lack of safety to your partner, and what the plan would be for that code word. For example, if you are using a DEFCON system, saying a “5” may mean that you’d like additional reassurance, where as saying “1” may mean that you need to exit the event immediately.

12. Are there any events that you’d like to not attend this year? Any that you’d like to limit your attendance at this year? Please list those below to talk about with your addicted partner:

13. Your addicted partner will be working on a portable program while away, but are there any healthy coping / recovery plan that needs to be put in place? For example, what’s your plan around recovery work? Your addicted partner’s recovery meetings? Program phone calls? Support from a counselor or coach while you’re away? Other supports needed? Write your thoughts down here:

14. You will be looking at another exercise that will help you with a communication plan to your children, and/or friends/family. But do you have any further areas to talk about

regarding a communication plan to your children, friends, or family this year about where you are at and what your needs are? Write down your thoughts below:

15. Anything else you can foresee that needs to be addressed ahead of time? Write down any of those issues to address proactively:

16. In addition to your check-ins are there any other requests you have for regrouping and re-assessing how this plan is working? If so, write any thoughts down below:

Questions to consider if you will be together with your addicted partner (and family if applicable), and you'll have family / friends traveling TO you

First, look through the questions above and write down your responses to any of those questions that apply to you if people are traveling to you this year. In addition to those questions, think through the following questions:

1. Do you have any additional boundaries that need to be put in place this year with people coming to your home or to the city you live in? For example, are there any people that don't feel safe that you'd like to limit access to certain parts of your home? Are there certain events that you'd like to not attend or limit your attendance this year? If so, what boundaries need to be put in place this year for safety?

2. Are there any updates you need to how you will be checking-in during this season than what's listed above? For example, check-ins may look different for you since you will be at your home as opposed to being away. How will you re-assess what's working and what's not working about your plan?

3. Looking through the exercise you completed on holiday traditions, are there any local events, places, or people that you'd like to NOT attend this year?

4. Are there any local events, places, or people, that you'd like to limit access to or change for THIS holiday season?

5. Are there any local events, places, or people, or new traditions that you'd like to add this year to your traditions? If so, write them down and prepare a time to share these and your other updated traditions with your addicted partner:

6. If you have any changes this year, how will you communicate these changes to your family, friends, colleagues, and/or children?

7. Anything else that you'd like to communicate to your addicted partner and family about how this year will be?

Questions to consider if you will be separated from your addicted partner and THEY will be traveling

If you are going to be separated from your addicted partner because of their travel plans, make sure they use the *Travel Guidelines for Recovery and Relational Safety* worksheet and the *Creating a Portable Program for Travel* worksheet first. In addition to those worksheets, the holidays often bring unique situations with family, events, alcohol use, etc. So consider the following questions:

1. After looking through and hearing your addicted partner’s plan for recovery and relational safety while they are away, do you have any updates to the plan that need to be addressed? If so, what are they?

2. Are there any additional boundaries or requests you have based specifically around the holiday season? For example, if certain family members are not safe for you right now, you may consider requesting that your addicted partner limit access to those people. You may also create boundaries around substance use, access to certain triggering places or events, etc.

3. How will you manage gifts and family time while your addicted partner is away?

4. What is your plan as a couple on what will be communicated to friends, family, others? Write a basic script for what you and your addicted partner will communicate to these people if you are separated this holiday season. For example, your addicted partner may say something like, "I've hurt _____ based on my actions, so she's not feeling safe to be with me on this trip. I ask that you please not ask me any more questions about how we're doing at this time. She and I will share more when we're ready." What is your script for what you and your partner will share with others this holiday season?

5. If you and your addicted partner are on a therapeutic separation during this season, do you have any additional boundaries / requests for them while they are away (e.g., recovery related, communication related, or relationally related questions)?

6. If you and your addicted partner are on a therapeutic separation, how much communication would you like while you are away? Look at the check-in question in the *Travel Guidelines for Recovery and Relational Safety* worksheet for more ideas.

7. What are some healthy self-care activities you can do for yourself while your addicted partner is away? Remember that this is a time to be gentle with yourself. There will be more holidays to come in the future, but this year is about reclaiming yourself and what you need.

8. Any other boundaries, requests, or needs that you'd like to address?

Questions to consider if you will be separated from your addicted partner and YOU will be traveling

In addition to what we've written above, if you're traveling this year and your addicted partner is staying home, think about if you have any requests for what would feel safest to you this holiday season. For example, what requests do you have for your addicted partner's recovery program activity? Do you have any boundaries around activities, places, or people to limit access to while you're away? Anything you'd like your addicted partner to do or not do while you're away? Any type of communication you'd like or not like while you're away? Look through the question prompts from the previous sections and write any additional boundaries or requests that you have this holiday season before you travel:
