



It may only be the beginning of March, but Spring is knocking early. In WNY that often means a major celebration after a long, cold winter. People are out and about again—hobnobbing on restaurant patios, grilling in the backyard, going to cultural events, and planning for Spring parades.

For those who plan not to drink, these activities are fun but potentially challenging. Here are four ways to get out and enjoy your community this spring while staying sober.

1. **Focus on food—and coffee!** This is a golden age for foodies in WNY. Food and Wine magazine has [featured Buffalo](#) as worthy of a food pilgrimage, and locals agree that there are more choices than ever for every appetite. Focus on unique eateries and plates with interesting ingredients. If you're a coffee lover, get out and enjoy Buffalo's burgeoning coffee scene at **Tipico Coffee, Cafeology, or Hearth and Press.**
2. **Bring the party home.** If you don't feel comfortable eating around the presence of alcohol, get your meal to go and invite supportive friends to your home—or, since this is Western New York, fire up your grill and host a backyard BBQ.
3. **Go beyond the bar.** Bars and breweries are popular social destinations, but they can be hard to navigate for those seeking

sobriety. Thankfully, there are many great places to go in Western New York that don't center around alcohol: museums, parks, farmers markets and gardens, just to name a few.

4. **Take a walk.** Go to the main thoroughfare of your city or town and take the time to people watch, enjoy the warmer weather, and window shop. If you want to take your walk to the next level, a slew of St. Patrick's Day themed events are coming up. You can walk or run in the [Buffalo Shamrock Run](#) on March 4th and the [St. Patrick's Day Dash](#) in Jamestown on March 19th.

Planning for Success

When you're facing challenges to your sobriety, you can plan ahead for success. Sally Yageric, Interim Director of Community Programs at [Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse \(ECCPASA\)](#), gives some tips for staying successful even in challenging situations.

1. **Turn to your support network.** Who has been there for you all along? Identify this person (or people) as soon as possible, and connect with them when you sense a rough time ahead. Go to an AA or NA meeting for a refresh.
2. **Be honest with yourself.** Don't pretend that something won't be a challenge when you know that it will be. Accept the challenge and have a plan to realistically tackle it.
3. **Make a plan.** Have an alternative plan ready to go; that way, if you're invited to do something that you know isn't a good idea, you'll be prepared to say no.
4. **Call EAP.** Call us to make an appointment to come in and meet with a counselor about the challenges you are facing. Is there a member of your household who needs support, as well? They can call us as part of your EAP benefit.