

5 Simple Ways to a Healthy Holiday

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I don't know about you, but it seems like every holiday season I hear about people with lofty goals of remaining faithful to their exercise program, not over-indulging in holiday treats, or even actually losing weight over the holidays. I'm not saying it can't be done; however, from experience, I find that when I talk to those same people after the holidays I find they haven't quite stuck to the plan – and in many cases have actually gone to the other extreme partially due to the stress of the 'holiday fantasy' they created.

This year, instead of creating "failure" for yourself – why not set yourself up for success by creating realistic goals. Realistic goals should give you 'wiggle' room and allow you to enjoy the holidays – and hopefully won't leave you dreading January.

It's all about having the tools you need and planning ahead...to get you started, here are 5 simple things you can do this year to improve your holiday healthy balance.

1. Prioritize and strategize.

- Learn to say NO - practice now. Example, "can you come to my holiday party – it's going to be a blast?" – NO. Ok so not everyone will respond well to that response, but a friendly "Sorry I have other commitments on that day – maybe next year!?" will always work.
- Chose your events - Take a look at your social calendar – most of us know the majority of events that will come up – choose which ones you will go to and which ones you'll give a miss to. And practice the above explanation.
- Plan your cheat days –just don't make them every day from December 15th- January 2nd. It's ok to enjoy yourself over the holiday, just don't let decadence become delirium. Even your favorite holiday drink (egg nog lovers relax) is OK as long as you stick to a reasonable portion size and don't have it every day.

2. Be Flexible – if you fall off the wagon jump back on!

- Sometimes the best laid plans don't always work out. Be accommodating to ever changing holiday plans. Still honor your personal goals and plans, but allow yourself to enjoy the holidays with friends and family – nobody likes a scrooge!
- Be flexible not only with family, friends and your plans – but also be flexible with yourself. If you "fall off the wagon", jump right back on. One "off" day is only bad news if it becomes 2,3,4...10!

3. Obstacles – know what they are and plan your attack now.

- Obstacles are by far the biggest challenge people face when it comes to fitness. "I would like to be fit, but...(begin endless stream of excuses and roadblocks)."
- We all know what our particular challenges are – during the holidays the numbers of these challenges just increase exponentially.
- The great thing about challenges is that they can be stopped in their tracks with two simple steps:
 1. Acknowledge what those obstacles are

2. Develop strategies NOW that you know will work when those obstacles rear their ugly heads
- Obstacles are only challenging if you aren't prepared with your 'assault plan.'

4. Exercise.

- Exercising through the holidays is a great way to counter some of that holiday eating – and battle the stressors that come with this busy time. There are two things to consider when planning your holiday exercise routine:
- Be realistic – it may not be possible to stick to your 'normal' routine through the holidays. So instead of banging your head against a wall, why not plan ahead and modify your routine in a way that is functional and yet still effective. For example – if you're going to be out of town and away from your gym routine, why not get a resistance band and print off the LifeWorks Resistance Band routine (go to www.lwhs.com and check out Resources)? It may not improve your fitness, but it will sure help to maintain it for a short time!
- Create commitments – making plans with friends and family that involve activities, formal or not, is a great way to multitask and also keep you committed to your fitness goals. For example – go on a family walk after that holiday meal or have a snowball fight!

5. Expect success.

- If we expect ourselves to gain 5lbs over the holidays then that simply gives us the permission to do so – which generally results in behaviours that lead to the 'success' of that goal.
- If you create healthy goals, as long as they are realistic – and expect success, we modify our behaviours again – this time in a positive way.
- Consider your goals. Write them down. Believe in them. Achieve them.

Enjoy the holidays and remember what it's truly about – celebrate your family and friends and honour yourself and the year that's passed. Cheers to that!

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