

HOW TO STICK TO YOUR EATING AND EXERCISE PLANS OVER THE HOLIDAYS

No doubt the holidays are quickly approaching. Good food, time with family and friends, that first snowfall...

Unfortunately, this Norman Rockwell scene can fade into the reality of crowded malls, hungry kids, grumpy salespeople, bad weather, traffic...

OK. So what does all this have to do with being healthy, eating well, staying fit and distressing?

EVERYTHING! Maintaining good physical and emotional health can and will help you to better manage the additional challenges the holiday season can bring.

So how do we do all the things we **HAVE** to do in preparation for the holidays in addition to all the things we **ALREADY** do **AND** still find the time to eat right and exercise?

DEALING WITH SELF-SABOTAGING THOUGHTS

Judith Beck, Ph.D., author of the Beck Diet Solution, suggests using techniques from cognitive therapy to help keep eating and exercise plans on track. Here's how the theory goes: change your thoughts and you change the feelings and actions that result from these thoughts.

We are all familiar with self-defeating thoughts. Beck suggests a three step approach to changing these derailing thoughts.

STEP ONE: On an index card, list the reasons why you want to eat healthy and exercise regularly. Be specific.

STEP TWO: Once written down, read them regularly, starting out first thing in the morning, and carry the card with you, glancing at it throughout the day to prevent slip-ups.

STEP THREE: Put motivating phrases on the index cards, to help you stick to your goals.

According to Beck, the cards can help you, "change your thinking at a crucial moment so you can make a different decision," and I would add, have a more favorable outcome. She also states that you have to say to yourself, "I'm going to fit the rest of my life around diet and exercise, not vice versa. It doesn't work to have an already busy life and fit diet and exercise into it. You have to make it a priority."

All this may sound easier said than done. But it is certainly worth the try! After all, you've worked very hard all these weeks and months to eat healthy, perhaps lose weight and exercise regularly. **Don't let that first bite of mom's pumpkin pie be the beginning of the end of all your previous efforts!**

DEALING WITH CRAVINGS

The card system can also be useful in dealing with **cravings**. Make a list on your card of distractions or alternative actions to eating, and do one or two of them before giving into the **cravings**. "It really works," says Beck. She adds, it strengthens your "resistance muscle" and when repeated works to gradually build a new habit or behavior.

PLANNING AHEAD

One of my favorite techniques is to **plan ahead**. **Plan** what you will eat and when you will exercise. Done with repetition, **planning** will help turn your behaviors into healthy habits for life!

Make meals and snacks **deliberate** activities. Sitting down and eating your foods with enjoyment, instead of eating on the run will legitimize the act of eating, and will go a long way to help you reach your health goals.

So think positively, feel good, preplan, and act deliberately.
And the season may just be "merry and bright" after all!

Wellness Tip

Practice Time Management

Make time for the things you want to do, not just the things you have to do.

Nutrition Tip

Be Realistic

Trying to lose weight during the holidays can be quite a challenge. Instead, setting your goal to maintaining your weight during the holidays will be more realistic.

Fitness Tip

Crunched for time with the holidays approaching? Try breaking up your workout into smaller 10 minute blocks of time to accommodate your busy schedule.

Try this back-to-basics mini-workout three times a day. Perform as many sets as 10 minutes will allow.

(MAKE SURE YOU HAVE BEEN WALKING AROUND AND ARE WARMED UP BEFORE YOU BEGIN!)

1. 10 jumping jacks
2. 10 squats
3. 10 push-ups (place knees down to modify exercise)
4. 10 crunches
5. 10 walking lunges (one rep is lunging right then left)

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