

SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

Let's face it! The Holidays can be stressful! We look forward to them, getting together with friends and family, holiday parties, wonderful food that we usually cook once a year, decorating, shopping, musical events, and all of the things that come along with this time of year. At the same time strained relationships with family and friends, financial woes, and the need to have "the perfect celebration" can cause a lot of stress. Stress can lead to overeating as a way to sooth, calm, and celebrate.

Believe it or not, you don't need to put your healthy lifestyle on hold for the holidays. This is the time of year that you need to treat yourself with taking care of yourself and not using this time of the year to take a break and slip back into old habits. You can set yourself up for success and feel really good about yourself in January instead of feeling the need to start another year of resolving to lose weight, or "get healthy" again.

This doesn't mean that you have to throw tradition out the window and eat boring meals or feel deprived during the holidays. Let's take a look at some of the foods that are eaten during this time of the year. Roast turkey is actually healthy and can be prepared in many ways to stay within a healthy eating plan. The key is portion control and moderation. Even if you eat a bite of everything on the table you can still eat a healthy amount and not feel deprived. Is it really necessary to eat a second and third helping of the dressing, mashed potatoes or pumpkin pie? Fill up on the veggies, the turkey, the salads, and take small portions of the candied yams, the buttery mashed potatoes, and those things that are filled with sugar, fat, salt, and carbs.

My struggle was not with the meal at the time we all sat down together; I had difficulties with the left-overs. If this is your struggle go ahead and prepare all the wonderful things you love to cook but have containers ready for your guests to take home the leftovers. I know it sounds like sacrilege, but if there are left-overs calling your name throw them out. Better in the trash can than on your hips!

Finding time to include exercise during this time is very important. Think about where you were when you started, and not wanting to have to go through the start process again. Adjust your activities to include family and friends. If you have to skip your usual workout time why not go for a walk with the family in the neighborhood after dinner. Include a trip to a park or a hiking trail into the family time. My family started participating in the "Turkey Trot" a 5K race (run / walk) on Thanksgiving day. Depending on where you live there are many organizations that put on a "Turkey Trot" as a fundraiser. You are helping others, getting in your workout, and having fun with family and friends all at the same time. This is the time of the year to use smart alternatives in your everyday activities such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator, parking far away from the entrance, taking little walking breaks during your work day. Be creative and think how you can change up your routine to include energy burning activities.

Take time to plan for the holidays. Don't let them take you by surprise. If you know that there will be only treats or unhealthy food at parties you are going to eat a healthy snack before you go. Offer to bring something that you can eat to the party. Others will thank you! Try packing a healthy lunch instead of having to go out to eat. Make sure you do not go to events and parties hungry.

It may take extra work, but you can stick to your healthy lifestyle during the holidays. You do not need to abandon the progress you have made for a couple of months of overindulgence. Work on distressing your holidays. Think through the things that are "must haves" and let go of the rest. Make yourself a priority during this time. Limit time with saboteurs and stressful people in your life that demand so much of you during this season. Work on a budget of what you have available in the months to come and keep within it. Let the gift you receive this holiday season be one of self-care and good health. Put yourself first so

that you are there for others and be honest with what you really can do during this time. Make the holidays about quality time for everyone in the family including you.

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