

HOLIDAY HEALTH CHALLENGE 2021

WEEK 3



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Welcome to Week 3 of the Holiday Health Challenge!

Two weeks down!

As we enter week 3, take a look back on how the past two weeks have gone. Look over the information you've been given, and see if there is something you've forgotten or fallen away from that maybe you can add back into your routine.

This week's themes are "Just Say No", adding some stairs or other cardio to your ADLs (activities of daily living), and practicing mindfulness, both in your workouts and with eating. Take a look at the handouts attached, and incorporate what you can into your life.

We hope you find these simple ideas helpful in your journey to stay on track and improve through the holidays. If you need anything for this week – other ideas for increasing movement (easier/harder/different), different mindfulness ideas, etc – or anything in general, please reach out to your team leader or myself. My email is murbanski@westfieldymca.org

Don't forget to fill out raffle tickets at the front desk if you met your weekly goal!

If you didn't pick up your fridge magnet with 100 calorie snack ideas, you can still get one from the front desk.

your bonus challenge this week: take a new class or workout in a different room than you typically do (Functional Training room, big or little weight room, Wellness center (Nautilus), gym)

Yours in good health-

Michelle

How to Practice Mindful Fitness

Finding flow in a world full of distractions takes some work. It involves staying in the present (without judgment), so you concentrate on what is happening here and now versus focusing on the past or future.

1. Have a Purpose for Each Workout

Too often we exercise to lose weight, but that isn't something that's going to happen during any one workout. We need something to hold onto right now.

Having a purpose will give you something to focus on, something to work for and, therefore, something you can feel good about. Some examples of workout purpose are:

To finish your planned workout

To strengthen specific muscles (e.g., "I'm going to focus on working all the muscles in my lower body")

To challenge yourself (e.g., "I'm going to focus on working as hard as I can during my interval workout")

To work out for a certain period of time or burn a certain number of calories

To work on a specific area of fitness (e.g., "Today I'm doing cardio to burn calories and build endurance")

2. Pay Attention to Your Body

One way to stay present is to pay continuous attention to your body while exercising. Notice the repetitive strike of your foot on the pavement if you're running, for instance. When strength training, consciously focus on how each muscle feels as you use it.

This is not about comparing your body to the exerciser next to you. Instead, it is intended to get you to focus on what you are experiencing during the physical activity. So, turn off the music and TV and give your body your sole attention.

3. Remember Why You're Exercising

If you find yourself rushing through exercise, thinking of all the things you should be doing instead, remember why it's important to do your workout. Reflect on why you have made exercise a priority and how will this workout help you right now:

This workout will help me have more energy for my day.

I'll feel really good about myself when I finish my workout.

I'll sleep better tonight after this workout.

I deserve to take care of myself and exercise is part of that.

I'll feel much less stressed if I exercise.

How to Practice Mindful Fitness—Continued

4. Slow Down

Remember, you set this time aside specifically for your workout, so give yourself permission to actually do it. Take your time with each activity, each movement, particularly strength training exercises.

Focus on your form, on the upward motion, and the downward motion. Think about your posture, your core, and the rest of your body, including the muscles you are targeting.

Focus on feeling each muscle contract and relax. See just how much you can get out of your exercise time.

5. Remind Yourself to Breathe

Breathing is the simplest way to deal with stress and bring you to the current moment. You're exercising right now and that's all you have to do. You'll deal with "the anything else" later.

If your mind wanders during your workout or you keep watching the clock, close your eyes and take a breath to bring yourself back to the moment. Use the breath as an "attention anchor" to help you refocus.

6. End on a Good Note

Remember all the good things about the workout and how good it feels when you're done. Give yourself time to cool down and take time to stretch the muscles you worked.

If you can, take a moment to lie down at the end of the workout for a final relaxation. This is your chance to really feel the effects of your hard work.

A Mindfulness Eating Exercise: Simple Instructions

If you've heard about mindful eating but aren't sure where or how to start, here are instructions for a brief mindfulness eating exercise.

The following exercise is simple and will only take a few minutes.

Find a small piece of food, such as one raisin or nut, or a small cookie. You can use any food that you like. Eating with mindfulness is not about deprivation or rules.

Begin by exploring this little piece of food, using as many of your senses as possible.

First, look at the food. Notice its texture. Notice its color.

Now, close your eyes, and explore the food with your sense of touch. What does this food feel like? Is it hard or soft? Grainy or sticky? Moist or dry?

Notice that you're not being asked to think, but just to notice different aspects of your experience, using one sense at a time. This is what it means to eat mindfully.

Before you eat, explore this food with your sense of smell. What do you notice?

Now, begin eating. No matter how small the bite of food you have, take at least two bites to finish it.

Take your first bite. Please chew *very* slowly, noticing the actual sensory experience of chewing and tasting. Remember, you don't need to think about your food to experience it. You might want to close your eyes for a moment to focus on the sensations of chewing and tasting, before continuing.

Notice the texture of the food; the way it feels in your mouth.

Notice if the intensity of its flavor changes, moment to moment.

Take about 20 more seconds to *very slowly* finish this first bite of food, being aware of the simple sensations of chewing and tasting.

It isn't always necessary to eat slowly in order to eat with mindfulness. But it's helpful at first to slow down, in order to be as mindful as you can.

Now, please take your second and last bite.

As before, chew very slowly, while paying close attention to the actual *sensory* experience of eating: the sensations and movements of chewing, the flavor of the food as it changes, and the sensations of swallowing.

Just pay attention, moment by moment.

Using a mindfulness eating exercise on a regular basis is *only one part* of a mindfulness approach to your diet. The liberating power of mindfulness takes deeper effect when you begin to pay mindful attention to your thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations, all of which lead us to eat. Mindfulness (awareness) is the foundation that many people have been missing for overcoming food cravings, addictive eating, binge eating, emotional eating, and stress eating.

HIT THE STAIRS!

This week, try adding some stair climbing to your routine. If watching TV, do some flights during commercials, or between episodes. Make multiple trips when bringing things upstairs. Climb while you brush your teeth or have a few minutes to spare. Take the stairs at the doctors office or mall or any other errand where it's an option.

And if you don't have any stairs, or struggle with them? Do some high knees or try some up-downs on a single step or sturdy step stool for 45 seconds, with a 15 second break (repeat, repeat..!). A few minutes a few times a day will get raise that activity level.

The Y has lots of stairs to use, including some that go right up to the roof! Starting at the bottom, you'll climb 51 stairs – a little more than 3 flights.

Want to boost the benefit? Carry something somewhat heavy in one hand as you are climbing (keep the other hand close by or on the railing)

You set your target...how many flights (or mini sessions of high knees or up-downs) can you fit in today?

Benefits of Taking the Stairs

According to [Duke University](#), climbing stairs requires around 8 to 11 kilocalories of energy per minute, a high amount compared to other forms of moderate-level exercise.

In fact, walking up stairs can be twice as taxing as brisk walking and 50 percent more difficult than lifting weights or walking up a steep incline. In addition, peak exertion is attained at a quicker rate than by just walking, which explains the labored breathing after only a few flights up.

Increases Heart and Lung Function

Climbing stairs can strengthen your heart and lungs, allowing you to take in more oxygen and replenish your muscles with oxygen-rich blood. Over time, an increase in heart and lung function can improve your overall endurance.

One 2019 study, published in the journal of [Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism](#), found that just a few minutes of stair climbing in short intervals throughout the day can boost cardiovascular health.

Healthy Bones, Muscles and Joints

Trekking up stairs can improve bone, muscle and joint function. Not only will it help to build strong and lean leg muscles from engaging your glutes, calves, quadriceps and hamstrings, but it will also strengthen your bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

In citing the benefits of taking the stairs, [Duke University](#) notes a strong correlation between stair climbing and bone density in postmenopausal women. In a 2018 study in [Menopause](#), researchers also found that climbing stairs led to a reduction in arterial stiffness in postmenopausal women with stage 2 hypertension.

Read more: [Does Stair Climbing Build Muscle?](#)

Calorie Burner and Health Booster

This may seem like an obvious benefit: Stair climbing can help you burn calories. As a matter of fact, according to [Harvard Health Publishing](#), even at a slow pace, you'll burn calories three times faster climbing stairs than walking on a level surface.

After learning about the various benefits of taking the stairs, it's no surprise that this physical activity can improve your overall health, reducing the risk of diseases such as diabetes, colon cancer, hypertension, and more, while strengthening your immune system.

Furthermore, regular cardiovascular exercise can lower your risk of developing chronic health problems such as high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.

Climbing stairs can also improve the amount of good cholesterol in the blood. There's no doubt that taking advantage of the nearest staircase can have its health benefits.

Just Say No

It takes about 3500 calories to gain a pound. Sounds like a lot, right? But if you tack on an extra 350 calories a day (easy to do during the holidays), you could be talking up to 4 lbs over the course of the challenge.

A simple way to keep the calorie consumption reasonable and maintain that weight is to simply say no to a few small things daily. **Your challenge this week is to say no to two things every day this week that you might want to eat or drink.** They do not have to be the same two things each day – you decide!

Here's a couple examples of what you could save by saying no:

1 oz serving of sour cream and onion potato chips...150 calories

Glass of red wine ...174 calories

TOTAL: 324 calories

Tall Caramel Frappucino, no whipped cream...260 calories

3 chocolate kisses...69 calories

TOTAL: 329 calories

Abstaining from a couple things daily can have a big impact, longer term. It can also help build the habit of not giving in to every urge or craving.

If you're curious what you're saving by saying no, check out:

www.calorieking.com/us/en/foods/

(not every food is listed – you can always try another online calorie calculator)