

HOLIDAY HEALTH CHALLENGE 2021

WEEK 4



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Whoop whoop...Week 4!

Hi everyone!

I hope you're having continued success with the challenge! If you have a day where you didn't stick to your guns, don't let that discourage you. We all have those days. Use the challenge and your personal goals, as well as your team, to help you get back on track.

We've got some good topics for you this week, especially as those get togethers happen and the holidays creep closer. You'll find a handout suggesting short bouts of exercises through the day, as well as some really short workouts; tips to manage all those get togethers; and how to survive some of the potential not-so-pleasant side effects of the holidays.

Bonus challenge for the week:

One random act of kindness every day. It can be for a stranger, a family member, a friend, a co-worker....and don't forget...for yourself! So hold that door, tell someone something nice, buy someone's coffee, give license to yourself to have a good chill session...so many possibilities!

Keep up the good work. And use your team leaders and teammates as motivators!

Yours in wellness

Michelle

PARTY SMART!

The hustle and bustle of the holidays is upon us. It seems like we're constantly hopping from one party to the next. And as we all know, indulging in all of those carb-packed appetizers, decadent desserts and flowing alcoholic drinks can easily pack on the pounds.

Instead of letting the holiday food and drink get the best of your waistline, here's a few strategies to help you enjoy yourself but still avoid unnecessary weight gain:

Have a plan. Go into holiday parties and gatherings with a focus. What will you allow yourself the most caloric expenditure on – drinks? Desserts? Apps? Or will you just try to moderate everything you ingest? Every gathering does not have to be a free for all. Plus, think about how you feel when you indulge in too much of every possible food or drink. Probably not great!

Don't go hungry. Don't 'save your calories' for the party. Not eating enough throughout the day can cause you to lose control once you get to the party. Instead, eat a protein-rich breakfast to start your day and snack on healthier options, like Greek yogurt, boiled eggs, lunch meat rolls or protein bars throughout the day.

Scout the food. After arriving at the party, don't go to the first food table you see. Take time to walk around and say hello to your friends, while also seeing what food options are available. This will help you choose and balance the healthy and not-so-healthy options, and skip the foods you don't really want. If you know you're going to be making less than healthy choices, take small quantities of things.

Stay hydrated. Making sure you drink plenty of water is key to surviving the holidays. Before going to a party, have a glass or two of water, this will reduce your cravings for both food and alcohol.

Focus on socializing. Avoid overeating by staying away from the food table. Walking just a few steps away can help prevent you from the mindless grazing that often adds up to lots of extra calories. Instead, spend more time visiting and catching up with friends and family. Remember, conversations are always calorie-free!

Make good choices throughout the day and the week. Eat healthy on the day of the party, and get back on track the next day. If you know you have an event/events coming up, try to be a little more conscious of what you eat leading up to it, and afterwards. This should help reduce the guilt if you overindulge a little. Remember the 80/20 rule, and eat healthy 80% of the time, and enjoy some the not-so-healthy stuff 20% of the time. Progress, not perfection!

Tips to take with you to the party or gathering

Opt in. It is good form to bring a holiday hostess gift, so why not bring the gift of healthy appetizers? Great options include shrimp cocktail, hummus with green and red peppers, and a plate filled with fresh berries, grapes and hard cheeses.

Chew on it. Gum may be a good way to keep yourself from picking at foods when you're really hungry. Plus, chewing gum before you walk into a party will give you fresh breath and may delay your first bite or beverage.

Crack up. Dips that are creamy or cheesy are already high in calories and fat, but if you just can't skip them, dip with vegetables instead of higher-calorie crackers or breads. Just a taste may be enough to satisfy that craving.

The glass is half full. Most social gatherings offer high-calorie alcoholic beverages like egg nog, cordials, margaritas and martinis. Wine and beer are lower-calorie options; mixers like club soda and water and condiments like lemons and limes can also help lower calorie totals. Even better: Alternate each alcoholic drink with a large glass of water to cut calories in half and keep you feeling full.

And after the party? Be sure to do what you can to sleep in. Sleep deprivation can have a huge impact on your waistline. That's because lack of sleep increases ghrelin, which is a hormone that makes you hungry and limits the secretion of leptin, which helps burn fat. So be sure to get enough sleep following late-night celebrations by sleeping in or taking a short 20-minute catnap to catch up, otherwise you might find yourself raiding your cabinets for unhealthy options!

And if you're tired before it all begins, take a catnap beforehand. That will help strengthen your resolve to partake, but not completely overindulge in, all the delicious foods and drinks – and will help you enjoy yourself more!

CALISTHENICS CENTRAL!

Our goal to increase activity this week is to sprinkle some bodyweight exercises throughout your day. Try the following:

10 squats & 10 (wall) pushups & 10 jumping jacks, 3-5X/day

Not enough? Up the reps, or try adding a couple other exercises like walking lunges, jumping jacks, mountain climbers or burpees, and create your own mini routines.

Want more, but feeling crunched for time? Read on below.

EXERCISE DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

As we get busy during the holidays, it's SO easy to tell ourselves "I don't have time for a workout today", thinking we have to commit an hour to the ordeal. Don't fall into that trap! Try doing shorter workouts. Some great workout ideas are listed below. Workouts courtesy of the New York Times

The 10-Minute Workout

If you like to run, bike, row or swim — just a little bit — this workout is a great option for you.

1. Warm up for 2 minutes.
2. Pedal, run or swim all-out for 20 seconds.
3. Pedal, run or swim slow and easy for 2 minutes.
4. Pedal, run or swim all-out for 20 seconds.
5. Pedal, run or swim slow and easy for 2 minutes.
6. Pedal, run or swim all-out for 20 seconds.
7. Cool down for 3 minutes.

Do this three times a week, for a total of 30 minutes of weekly exercise.

The 7-Minute Workout

12 exercises deploying only body weight, a chair and a wall, it fulfills the latest mandates for high-intensity effort — all of it based on science. 30 seconds of each exercise followed by 10 seconds of rest.

1. Jumping jacks
2. Wall sit
3. Push-ups
4. Abdominal crunches
5. Step-up onto a chair
6. Squats
7. Triceps dip on a chair
8. Plank
9. High knees, running in place
10. Alternating lunges
11. Push-ups with rotation
12. Side plank, each side

10-20-30 Training

This simple program will help you make the most of a short workout by improving heart health and endurance. Try it with your favorite cardiovascular activity.

1. Run (or bike or swim or row) lightly for 30 seconds.
2. Run moderately for 20 seconds.
3. Run at top speed for 10 seconds. Repeat the sequence 5 times, then rest for 2 minutes and repeat the sequence 5 times again. This routine takes 12 minutes to complete. If you are already in good shape, add another round of 5 repeating intervals. The next day, try a lighter exercise before trying 10-20-30 again.

DEALING WITH THE DOWNSIDES OF THE HOLIDAYS

T'is the season to be jolly, right? A time of get-togethers, happiness and joy...or not.

The holidays can be wonderful, and provide all those things. But holidays and all that goes with them can also be stressful.

COMPARING ONE'S SELF TO OTHERS

Maybe this is a habit of yours regularly, or perhaps it rears it's head during the holidays, but it's a very easy trap to fall into. Here's some tips to avoid it:

Lay off social media. It is a false universe in which people tend to put their best face forward and paint their lives in a very positive way. Guess what? We all have problems, insecurities and stressors.

Water your own grass. Next time you feel badly about what others have that you don't, remind yourself of your strengths.

Accept where you are now, and know that 'If you're going through a hard time (which the holidays tend to amplify), remember that everyone will experience that, at one point or another – even that person that looks so happy and like they have it all. And better times WILL come. Now's a time to try to find gratitude in some area(s) of your life.

STRESS

If the source of your stress is hosting a get together, then keep it simple, and make it your own. If that means ratcheting down the expectations, do it. Your friends and family will not care – and if they do, then they should have hosted!

Stop striving for perfection. Take the time to remember what the holidays are supposed to be about...love and peace. Not the perfect menu, table or gift. If you get joy out of preparing those things, great! But if it causes you added stress, think about whether it's time to make a change.

Obligations stressing you out? Beg off of some of them, and take some time to do what YOU want. Sometimes saying no can be the best thing for you. Time for self care!

LONELINESS

You can feel lonely in the middle of a social gathering. Or you can feel lonely because you are by yourself too much. If you are feeling lonelier because it's the holidays, think of the holidays as simply a time of year, and try to treat it as just any other time.

If you are by yourself too much, do not forget that your YMCA family is here for you! Take a class and enjoy our Y community. Or go to a hopping coffee shop, volunteer somewhere, or try something you've always wanted to.

You are not alone if you find the holidays difficult or overwhelming in some way – the vast majority of Americans feel stress around the holidays. Our culture has created this incredibly high standard as to what the holidays should be, at times forgetting what they are actually about. So take a deep breath in – and a step back from the expectations – and exhale.

TIPS TO MENTALLY SURVIVE THE HOLIDAYS

1. Keep your regular routine.

A change in routine can lead to additional stress. Try to exercise at your usual time, go to meetings that you normally go to, and stick to as normal a diet as you possibly can.

2. Be realistic, and try not to expect the “ideal” holiday.

So many of us have an idealized version of what the holidays should be like and are very disappointed when they don't live up to those expectations. Try to be realistic. Remember, nobody has a perfect holiday or perfect family.

3. Stay connected.

Make sure to leave time to spend with friends and/or family who value you. And if they don't live close by, call them for a “reality check” or some “grounding.” Remember to ask for support if you need it.

4. Throw guilt out the window.

Try not to put unreasonable pressure on yourself to be happy, to rejoice, or even to enjoy the holidays. Likewise, try not to overanalyze your interactions with others. Give yourself a break this holiday season.

5. Focus on today, not yesterday.

There's something about being with family and old friends that makes us become who we were and not who we are. When you find yourself reverting to old childhood patterns with family members, try to walk away for a minute and remember who you are now. Also remember that it's not necessary to play the same role as you did when you were younger, even if others are encouraging you to do so by their behaviors. If there is someone at the get-together who knows what you are like today, make sure to reach out to them and draw them into the interactions. That will help to ground you.

6. Ask for help.

Holidays are often a time people attempt to take on too much or do too much on their own. It's OK to ask for help from family and friends. Whether for decorating, shopping, cooking, or a shoulder to lean on, *ask*.

7. Be good to yourself.

If you're feeling blue, pamper yourself. Do what feels good, and what you want to do. Try to take a walk or spend time alone, if that's what you want. Remember, this is **your holiday, too**, and you can be there for yourself just like you try to be for everyone else.