

## 6 Weight Maintenance and Healthy Holiday Tips

*Laurie McLeod, Artist, Author, Presenter and Entrepreneur*

Once again, holiday time is upon us. And amidst the many joys of gathering with loved ones and colleagues for special events, lies that inevitable truth - the season is an avalanche of temptation for our tastebuds. From the ever present platters of cookies, to your Aunt's famous homemade fudge to punchbowls full of holiday grog, the dizzying array of tasty choices leaves us to wonder: how do we keep to our fitness and weight loss goals without missing any of the fun?

### Here Are Some Supportive Ideas:

#### Know You Can Do It

The simple, best thing you can do for yourself as you enter the holiday season is to make a complete and gentle commitment to staying on track. Mark the first holiday gathering as the moment you choose your own well being over the taste of that marvelous something (or that ENTIRE marvelous something- since you have the choice to eat just some!) that is beckoning to you. Making consistent healthy food and exercise choices is a fundamental act of declaring that you deserve to look and feel your best. You do!

#### Take One Meal, One Event, One Day at a Time

Remember that you don't have to forgo the holiday treats for the entire season. Take one day at a time and one event at a time. Be measured and thoughtful about your eating choices. And don't beat yourself up for anything, no matter what you do.

## Stay Aware/Slow Down

A simple way to eat less is to chew more. A little miracle happens when you do this – food lasts longer in your mouth and the same amount of food gives you the same or a bigger shot of pleasure. If you've been in the habit of eating fast for a long time, eating slower can at first feel awkward and new. But it will be worth it. Eat slowly, chew thoroughly and don't forget to breathe.

## Get Plenty of Rest/Get Plenty of Exercise

With social schedules now packed full of additional events, it is easy to let slide the importance of getting enough exercise. What helps here is to remember that short periods of exercise done frequently are just as effective, if not more effective than an hour done a few times week. Keep your thinking flexible about how you can build in short periods of exercise into pockets of day. Take a ten minute walk at lunch. Park your car at the far end of the parking lot and walk briskly to your destination. Get up from your desk and do simple, cheerful laps around the office (no one needs to be aware of what you are doing- or invite them to join you!). Skip the elevator and take the stairs. When you get home from work, crank up your favorite song and start dancing. Walk or jog in place or do stretching exercises if you watch TV. All of these simple ideas can ring a whole new level of oomph into what might previously have been a sedentary day.

And don't forget to get enough rest. Holiday parties are often in the evening – don't let too much holiday cheer get in the way of getting your regular forty winks. Being tired makes it harder to want to exercise and can make it easier to slip into eating sweets. Outsmart both of those tendencies by simply making sure you get enough sleep each night.

## Focus on People and Experience

Remember that the real reason we gather at the holidays is to be together. Focus on the people you care about and take the time to drink in the good company that surrounds you. Nourish yourself with the affection and respect that exists in all good relationships. If you are giving gifts to friends, neighbors, coworkers or relatives, do things like cook or clean for them, walk their dogs, rake their leaves, wash their car, or sit with a needy family member instead of buying material things. And don't forget that that same affection and respect starts with yourself.

## Breathe and Enjoy

Whether you're wondering how to navigate that irksome cousin at a family gathering or trying to keep a lid on your love of divine pecan pie, remember that the simple and best tool we have is to simply breathe. Breathing fully reduces anxiety and stabilizes your body chemistry, inviting an internal ease that makes the whole wide world feel softer. Breathe often, breathe deeply, breathe easily and keep your joy afloat during the holiday season.