

**'TIS THE SEASON ... TO TRY TO KEEP OFF THE EXTRA WEIGHT!**



MERYL BRANDWEIN

**B**y the time you read this, we will have officially entered “the holiday season.” For some people the most challenging part about this time of year is figuring out who was naughty and who was nice. For the rest of us it’s about trying to balance holiday shopping with holiday parties, and trying to maintain a healthy eating and exercise routine. Unfortunately too often the latter seems to fall by the wayside during this busy time of year. It’s no wonder why people gain between 5 to 15 pounds between Thanksgiving and New Years!! Regardless of what your holiday schedule looks like, now is not the time to skimp on you! Taking the time to plan not only your workouts, but also your meals will make the difference between weight maintenance and weight gain during the season. While we may know what we should be doing, too often we allow those excuses to win us over. Sure it’s easy to let your workout slip, and then suddenly the healthy diet is out the window as well. The purpose of this article is to offer advice that makes sense and to provide suggestions that are easy to incorporate into your daily life. **The key is to commit to following the guidelines; otherwise they are just words on a page.**

**PLANNING IS THE NUMBER ONE KEY TO SUCCESS!**

It is by far the most crucial tool that will help you get through the next four to six weeks without lobbing on the pounds. Schedule your workouts just as you would schedule any other appointment in your day. Keep your meals light and simple. If you allow yourself to get hungry those red and green M&M’s are going to seem awfully appealing!! Don’t allow shopping or party time to interfere with your exercise routine. It’s far too easy to allow the workouts to slip and once this happens the excuses begin to pile up like gifts under the tree!! Make the commitment to yourself to stay on track!

**DON’T ALLOW YOURSELF TO GO TO A PARTY HUNGRY!**

Plan for the parties. Going to a party famished is a surefire way to set yourself up for sabotage. Party food is laden with fat and sugar. Once you get a taste of a sugary treat your body is going to want more and more. Having a small meal, a salad with some protein for example, or a portion of chicken/fish/turkey wrapped in a piece of lettuce prior to going to the party will allow you time to make smarter food choices once you’re there. By incorporating this strategy,

you will make better decisions about what it is you want to eat. It’s not about deprivation; it’s about moderation. Don’t act like this is the LAST time you are ever going to get these wonderful foods. Too often people go to parties and think they are never going to eat delicious food ever again! Try to fill yourself up on the healthier choices like the veggies and lighter fare and then take a small plate of some of the items that are particularly appealing, or are more indulgent. . You can taste what you like, but fill up on the food that’s healthy!

**BE PREPARED FOR TEMPTATION, AND LEARN HOW TO RESIST IT.**

In other words...Will power! It takes a lot of motivation to pass up the temptation there’s no doubt about it. Engaging in what’s known as “self-talk” can help you get through these weak moments. Visualize a game plan in your head. Make a mental picture of how you see yourself interacting throughout the event. Believe it or not there have been studies done on this very technique. The result: The individuals who set specific goals along with a corresponding mental picture of how they wanted the party to play out were the most successful at resisting the temptations.

**BWARE OF THE EMPTY CALORIE: ALCOHOL!**

Of course indulging every so often isn’t such a bad thing. But this time of year between the eggnog and the hot toddies, those calories really add up. Alcohol has lots of calories, lots of sugar and is metabolized to fat very quickly. Three reasons alone that will have you avoiding those few extra drinks! Party tip number one... dilute your drink. If you are drinking wine, or a mixed drink, dilute it a bit with some seltzer or club soda. If that isn’t your thing, then try to stick to one drink, and then switch to club soda or seltzer and add just a splash of some fruit juice, and a lemon or lime and sip on those for a while. Going to the party with the best of intentions will quickly fizzle once you have a few drinks. The more you drink, the less in control you will be. That pumpkin pie will be much harder to resist after a few eggnogs!!

Though short and simple, incorporating these strategies into your holiday routine, will guarantee you won’t have to use your holiday money to super size your wardrobe! Enjoy!!

*I would like to take a moment to thank all of the readers of SportsLink for your support and kind words throughout these months. Wishing all of you a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous new year!!*