



MAINTAIN DON'T GAINSM



'TIS THE SEASON TO LIGHTEN UP



WEEK FOUR

Welcome to Week four of 'Tis the Season to Lighten Up. Last week's newsletter gave you some great strategies for improving your confidence and motivation to maintain not gain, as well as ways to keep your energy level high during the holiday season. But all too often, our energy level becomes weighed down by high stress and over-commitment, leaving us frazzled rather than dazzled during what should be a wonderful time of year.

While some stress is a fact of daily life, the holiday season is a predictable time of high stress levels. With greater expectations and increased responsibilities, holiday cheer is often accompanied by holiday stress. This week's newsletter will help you uncover the cheer amidst the chaos by providing ideas and strategies for planning, managing your time and managing stress.

A Season of Balance, Joy and Good Cheer: **Planning for Less Stress**

A little bit of planning can go a long way to keep stress at bay. Make a commitment to put a plan in place to take care of yourself and the holiday details. With some preparation, balance, joy and good cheer can continue to be three common themes of the season as you lighten up.

Take a few moments to think about the sources of your holiday stress. What was your holiday season like last year? How would you like to see this year's holiday season be different?

List a couple of your stressors here:

Plan your self-care routine.

- Plan some "me-time" in your daily calendar. Maintaining your foundation of healthy habits is especially important over the next few weeks. Don't look at these basic self-care habits as optional.
- Eat well and don't skip the "good-for-you" stuff. Limit your caffeine, sugar, fat and alcohol, while indulging in lean protein, fruits, veggies and whole grains. Don't forego the "good stuff" to indulge in the "all-the-extra-stuff." Consider planning your menus and make things ahead to store in the freezer.
- Be active. Whether you do it all at once or in small increments, make physical activity part of your daily calendar. Doing less is better than doing nothing at all.

- Get enough sleep. Adequate sleep will help you maintain your weight, your emotional wellness and your health. If you have a difficult time getting to sleep, limit your caffeine intake after lunch and give yourself some down-time to relax before bedtime.

Plan your time.

- Create a master calendar of events and activities that you want to do this holiday season.
- Organize your time by ranking items as high, moderate and low priority. Focus first on the high priority items. Review your low priority items and remove them from your list, if possible. Reschedule commitments and appointments that can wait until after the holidays for January.

The material contained in this Newsletter has been selected to provide general background and useful information regarding maintaining weight or avoiding the cumulative effects of gradual weight gain during the holiday season. It is not intended to be complete or tailored to your specific needs. You should discuss the information, facts and tips with your doctor. You should not engage in physical activity, which may have injury and health risks associated with it, until you confirm with your doctor that it is appropriate for you. If you experience any pain or discomfort, call your doctor. The material contained in this Newsletter is not designed to replace either medical advice or medical treatment.

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A Season of Balance, Joy and Good Cheer: **Planning for Less Stress**

- Work to maintain your personal and time boundaries. Learn when to say “no.” (It’s easier than you think!)
 - Share household responsibilities with your family. Trying to be everything to everyone is a sure way to a stressful holiday season.
- Plan your finances.**
- Create a financial budget for gifts, travel and activities... then stick to it.
 - Communicate your plan to your family.
 - Start a holiday savings account for next year.
- Examine your current expenses to see what is absolutely necessary.
- Plan for simplicity.**
- Shop for gifts online or by mail.
 - Instead of buying gifts for all of your family and friends, suggest an exchange-a-favor present. Or draw names from a hat and choose one recipient.
 - Plan for holiday parties at a local restaurant, or organize a potluck dinner instead of doing all the food preparation.
 - Take advantage of pre-cut produce and ready-prepared foods whenever possible.
- Remember that saying “no” is an option.
 - Free yourself from technology for at least one hour each day (i.e., computers, pagers, cell phones, wireless handheld devices, pda’s, etc.)

Holiday Stress Survival

Breathing for Balance, Joy and Good Cheer

Planning for less stress is one thing— coping with it is another. There are many ways to cope with stress that range from calling a friend to taking a bubble bath. But what can you do when you need to relax **RIGHT NOW**?

Breathing is a simple strategy for managing stress. Here is a down-to-earth breathing exercise that can be done anywhere, anytime to cultivate a sense of calm.

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your spine upright.
2. Place your hand on your stomach to help you breathe from your abdomen, rather than your chest.
3. Notice your breath as it flows in and out of your body.
4. As you inhale, imagine that you are breathing in calmness and relaxation.
5. As you slowly exhale, imagine yourself breathing out frustrations and tension.
6. Continue for as long as necessary.

Highmark Resources

Highmark’s online programs can help you cope with the stresses of the season. Choose from:

- HealthMedia® Relax™
- HealthMedia® Overcoming™ Depression™
- HealthMedia® Overcoming Insomnia™

When you are ready to begin, it only takes a few minutes to get started. Here’s how:

1. Go to Highmark’s website at www.highmark.com
2. Choose your member website.
3. Complete the login process, entering your user name and password.
4. Choose the “Your Health” tab and then click on “Improve Your Health.”
5. Choose the program in which you wish to enroll.

Coping with the Holiday Blues

For many people, this time of year can mean more than stress. It can also be a time of sadness, loneliness and anxiety. Known as the “holiday blues,” these feelings can be caused by a host of factors including grief, stress, fatigue, financial constraints and unrealistic expectations.

Look for uplifting activities in which to get involved to help you cope with holiday-related stress and depression. Speak with your personal physician and seek professional help, if your “holiday blues” are not transient.

- Set realistic expectations and goals for the holiday season, focusing on the true meaning of the season for you.
- Don't overextend yourself, and set a manageable pace. Accept that you can't do everything.
- Plan special activities every week to have something to look forward to and enjoy.
- Volunteer time to a worthy charity or cause. Or look for ways to lend a helping hand: help out an elderly neighbor, work at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter or volunteer to read to children at your local school or library.
- Give yourself permission to be sad sometimes. It's okay not to feel “jolly” all the time.
- Establish new holiday traditions that help you look forward to the future rather than compare to the past.
- Surround yourself with a supportive, caring network of friends and family. Reach out to your circle of support and ask for help when you need it.

Are you S.A.D.?

If you notice periods of excessive sleep and depression during the winter season, you may suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Other SAD symptoms may include excessive daytime fatigue, extreme carbohydrate cravings and weight gain.

Light therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy and physical exercise have all been shown to be effective treatments for SAD. A balanced diet, which includes small amounts of protein at each meal, will keep blood sugar levels balanced to help you avoid highs and lows in your mood. A mental health professional can help you identify your symptoms and provide treatment. Changing to natural spectrum light bulbs has been shown to be help with SAD.

Small Steps for Less Stress

Think of three ways that you can maintain balance in your life and survive holiday stress.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Don't forget to self monitor...

Check your weight to see if you are achieving your goal of maintaining, not gaining.

Date: _____

Weight: _____

HOLIDAY RECIPES LIGHTENED UP

Potato Pancakes with Yogurt-Dill Topping

Number of Servings: 4

1 cup plain nonfat yogurt
 8 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
 1 scallion, thinly sliced
 1-1/4 pounds baking potatoes, peeled and shredded
 2 medium carrots, shredded
 1 medium onion, shredded
 1 egg, lightly beaten
 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 3/4 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
 4 teaspoons olive oil

1. To make yogurt dill sauce, stir together yogurt, 6 tablespoons of dill and scallion in medium bowl. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. In a large bowl, combine remaining 2 tablespoons dill, potatoes, carrots, onion, egg, flour, salt and pepper, and stir well.
3. Spray large nonstick skillet with nonstick cooking spray, add 2 teaspoons of oil, and heat over medium heat. Scoop potato mixture, 1/2 cup at a time, into pan and flatten slightly to make one pancake. Add as many more pancakes as will fit into pan without crowding and cook 3 minutes per side or until browned. Transfer to prepared baking sheet. Repeat with remaining 2 teaspoons oil and potato mixture.
4. Bake pancakes for 5 minutes, or until cooked through and crisp. Serve pancakes with yogurt-dill sauce.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: 218 calories, 6g total fat, 3g dietary fiber, 7g protein, 36g carbohydrate, 502mg sodium

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Marinated Crudités

Makes a large vegetable tray

3 to 4 garlic cloves, pressed
 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
 1 cup red wine vinegar
 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
 4 tablespoons honey, or to taste
 2 tablespoons dry mustard
 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
 1 teaspoon celery seed
 Pinch red pepper flakes

Approximately 8 cups assorted fresh vegetables – whole green beans, mushrooms, baby carrots, sugar snap peas, baby squash, yellow or red pepper strips, cauliflower florets, grape tomatoes, etc.

1. Press the garlic cloves using a garlic press.
2. Combine all ingredients, except vegetables, in a medium bowl and whisk to combine, or shake together in a covered dressing jar.
3. Pour dressing over assorted fresh vegetables and marinate in a non-metallic container in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours before serving.
4. Drain vegetables thoroughly and place on a serving platter or vegetable tray.

Nutrition Facts Per 1/2-cup Serving: 45 calories, 2g total fat, 2g dietary fiber, 1g protein, 8g carbohydrate, 35mg sodium

HOLIDAY RECIPES LIGHTENED UP

Creamed Spinach

Number of Servings: 4

- 1 cup silken tofu
- 2 packages (10 ounces each) frozen whole leaf spinach
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup unflavored soy milk

1. Line colander with several thicknesses of paper towel. Add tofu and set aside 10 minutes to drain off excess liquid.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine spinach and 1/2 cup water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium low, cover, and cook seven to 10 minutes or until just tender.
3. Drain spinach in colander. Using back of large spoon, press against spinach to remove as much water as possible. (You should be able to remove at least 1/2 cup.)
4. Place drained spinach in food processor and process until almost smooth. Add drained tofu, salt, pepper, nutmeg, and process until smooth.
5. Add soy milk and process until just combined. Serve hot.

Nutrition Facts Per serving: 94 calories, 2.9g total fat, 3g dietary fiber, 9g protein, 10g carbohydrate, 691mg sodium.

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Bruschetta Salad

Number of Servings: 4

- 1-1/2 pounds large tomatoes (about 3), cut into thin wedges
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 3 ounces crusty Italian or French bread, preferably whole wheat, cut into 12 slices
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and halved
- 3 ounces part-skim mozzarella cheese, cubed
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced basil leaves

1. Place tomatoes in salad bowl; sprinkle with salt and pepper, and toss gently. Then drizzle with olive oil, lemon juice, and vinegar. Cover and let stand at room temperature 30 minutes.
2. Preheat broiler. Arrange bread on a baking sheet and broil 3 to 4 inches from heat for 1 minute on each side, or until lightly toasted. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Then rub each slice of bread with a cut clove of garlic and cut bread slices in half crosswise.
3. Add mozzarella, basil and toasted bread to tomatoes and toss to blend well.

Nutrition Facts Per serving: 186 calories, 8.3g total fat, 2.9g dietary fiber, 9g protein, 21g carbohydrate, 513mg sodium

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