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## 4 Commitments You Can Make to Have Happy, Healthy Holidays

It's holiday season once again. Depending on who you are, that either means it's the most magical and wonderful time of the year - or the most dreaded.

Or, if you're like me, it's both. I. Love. Holidays. I am obsessed with the time from October through New Year's Day. Everything seems to be brighter and more fun.

But, as an adult, it's no longer just making pilgrim hats out of construction paper and weeks-long breaks from school. The stress of trying to mesh your normal life with social obligations, parties, and the financial strain of all those gifts can really put a damper on your holiday spirit.

The holidays also have the annoying side effect of throwing your workouts and diet way off track. In recent years, I've found myself longing for the holidays to be over by early December. I don't want to feel like that!

So, this year I'm challenging myself (and you) to take the stress out of the holidays. My goals are:

To actually enjoy my favorite time of the year.

To maintain a gym routine and not stray too far from my normal eating habits.

Here's how I'm going to accomplish those goals:

### 1. By Saying Yes and No to the Right Holiday Events

Stop cramming every weekend between now and New Year's Eve with parties you'd rather not attend. This time of the year should be fun, but it seems more often than not, we spend much of the season going to events due to feelings of obligation.

But a lot of the holiday invites are not mandatory and, in fact, no one would miss you if you didn't go. Why would you force yourself to attend a huge, hours-long event spent trying to make small talk with a bunch of people you don't know while checking your watch every five minutes to see if you spent enough time there as to not look rude when you leave? Uh, Practicing saying "no" to the stuff that does not put you in the holiday



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*NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with PROJECT: PFC's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.*

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Practice saying "yes!" to the plans that excite you, like when your best friend from high school comes into town and wants to have dinner. The special, once-a-year get-togethers that you enjoy are what make the holidays fun. Don't skip those!

And don't feel badly about prioritizing time spent watching A Christmas Story with your kids or simply relaxing on the couch. If instead of going to a party, you'd rather go to the gym or sit on the couch in your pajamas and shop online, then do that. Say you already have plans (shopping in your PJs does count as a plan) and don't feel guilty about it.

### 2. By Making Myself a Priority

As soon as our schedules get a little weird, the first two things to be thrown out the window are diet and exercise. It takes time to work out and it's easier to grab whatever food is around, rather than take the time to



either make or go get a healthy meal.

But the truth is, I miss my workouts. And if I eat a few too many less-than-healthy meals in a row, then I feel terrible and my mood is awful. I've come to realize it would just be better for me (and everyone who has to deal with me) if I take the thirty to sixty minutes to work out or the ten minutes to go get a flipping salad, instead of eating the candy corn in the office kitchen.

If you need at least three workouts a week to feel healthy, then get them in come hell or high water. If you can't stay on your cooking schedule, then make plans to try a healthy meal service or prep meals in advance. If you're feeling tired and frazzled, then go to your yoga class that always leaves you feeling mellow. Take care of yourself so you can actually feel good through the holidays and not like a grumpy bloated version of yourself.

### **3. By Making No Excuses**

Or maybe it's not that it's hard to fit in your workouts and to eat right. Maybe, especially if a healthy lifestyle is something you are still trying to adopt whole-heartedly, you are using the holidays as an excuse to skip the gym and eat every piece of pecan pie you encounter.

If that's the case, stop that sh\*\* right now. Do you really want to be faced with the tight pants, the gut rot, and the feeling of desperation that shows up around New Year's Day when you realize you totally undid a good six months of work in the course of eight weeks? Probably not.

### **4. By Enjoying the Parts of the Holidays I Love**

Celebrate the time of year. Just do it selectively. I would never tell anyone not to eat their favorite foods on Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanzaa, etc. That's ridiculous. And I can say that because I spent many a Christmas and Thanksgiving trying to find a steamed vegetable and a lean piece of non-fried turkey to eat because I didn't want to go off my diet even for one meal. Do not be that person.

Unless you have a bodybuilding show or a weightlifting meet the next day, there's absolutely no reason you can't enjoy the holidays with your family and eat the foods you love that are special to this time of year. Just don't waste the experience on foods you can eat any time.

Go for the pumpkin pie, the cranberry sauce, or the fried turkey - if those are things you truly enjoy. But, don't drink the eggnog if you don't even like the stuff. Then, the next day, get back to normal.

So to summarize: I'm planning to maintain my exercise routine, eat seasonal foods but not go crazy, and actually enjoy the holidays in the way that I most enjoy them. I will do this by:

1. By Saying Yes and No to the Right Holiday Events
2. By Making Myself a Priority
3. By Making No Excuses
4. By Enjoying the Parts of the Holidays I Love

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