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Healthy Holidays

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Healthy Holidays

Every year, many of us look fearfully towards the holidays, experiencing anxiety just thinking about it.

We know how challenging it will be to face the mountains of delicious seasonal food, the crazy party and event schedule, not to mention the sedentary nature of winter time compromising our regular fitness routines. The bad news is: many of us have no idea how to enjoy the holiday season and stay healthy, active and fit at the same time. The good news is: It is possible!

First, I would like to challenge you to adopt a new mindset and make a couple of key choices right now. Tell yourself: 1) I want to engage in total wellness transformation to live my life to the fullest for the rest of my life — not just for some six-week diet or fitness program or holiday survival plan that won't last. 2) I believe that once I adopt a transformative lifestyle perspective and mindset, I will be able to adopt healthier behaviors by making regular positive choices. This will, in turn, empower me to be able to make it through any festivities or any other life circumstances, because these healthy behaviors have become my default for any situation.

Second, there are five key foundational behaviors and principles that will assist you in getting started with your transformational life journey to a healthier and happier you and will assist you in creating a default foundation. This new mindset and behavioral pattern will help you to go through this holiday season (and any other season of life) in spectacular, healthy fashion.

PRINCIPLE 1: Move more, sit less.

If you have the option of standing versus sitting, stand. If you have the option of walking versus driving, walk. If you have the option of moving

about versus standing, move about. Regular daily physical activity and structured exercise should become a part of your foundational identity and daily routine. Include cardio, strength and flexibility and make a non-negotiable date in your calendar, just like any other appointment.

PRINCIPLE 2: Be mindful and intentional.

Focus. Reflect. Choose wisely. Follow-through. (A practical example of this is: when you stand starving in front of the buffet, pause and ask yourself: Is it time to eat now? What have I already eaten today? What is available here that categorizes as healthy? etc.)

PRINCIPLE 3: Half is enough. Ideally serve yourself only half of what you think you want to eat.

(A practical example of this is: You see a delicious brownie on the buffet table. Rather than serving yourself one piece, you use the serving utensil to cut it in half and only serve yourself half.)

PRINCIPLE 4: Drink water. Always choose drinking water over anything else: at home, at a party and in restaurants. Cold or hot herbal teas are a good option, too. Infuse your water with lemon, lime or mint. Drink a glass of water when you first feel hungry.

PRINCIPLE 5: Something positive is better than nothing. Get away from the all-or-nothing concept. If you can't get an hour workout in, then do 10 minutes and you will still reap positive benefits. If you forgot to eat fruits or vegetables during the day, add a tomato for dinner. ■



▲ Dominique Gummelt

Dominique Gummelt is director for Andrews University Wellness.