



Holidays

The holidays can be a very difficult time for those of us dealing with eating disorders. The emphasis on spending time with family members we may struggle with, the focus on an endless variety of foods and eating traditions, as well as strong emotions, can present a number of challenges to our recovery. Take a deep breath and ask yourself what kind of holiday you want to have? What would you like to have different from past years, what enjoyment do you miss from past holidays? Who do you feel more positive and energetic when you are around, and who leaves you feeling drained, self-critical?

Here are a few tools to help you have a more peaceful and recovery focused holiday.

1. Predict times of high stress and places that cause you high stress, in other words, be prepared and make choices about where you will attend and where you won't ahead of time and stick to your plans.
2. Plan self-care time, time to regenerate and relax and refocus on your recovery. This may be talking a walk, going to the movies, attending a meeting, calling a friend in recover, meditation time, or anything else that gives you a time out to recharge.
3. Plan to eat three meals a day to help reduce the chance of a binge or focusing on food too much. Allow yourself to continue your regular recovery "routine".
4. Plan to continue your regular exercise routine. This will allow you to maintain the structure you have created.
5. Allow yourself some "treats". Deprivation is not self-care and is more likely to lead to resentments, binges, or further restrictions.
6. Make a phone list and carry it with you so you can make support calls whenever you need to. This can also be a form of service work as you reach out to others in their recovery who may need support as well.
7. Think about doing some volunteer work or 12-step work to reach out to others and be able to let go of the self- focus that can sabotage our recovery.
8. Consider making an extra effort to begin each day with some prayer and meditation, even if just for 10 minutes. This can set the tone for the day and be something that can help you to find your balance again quicker when needed later in the day.
9. Make a plan about boundaries that may need to be set with others. This can include food boundaries "Thanks for your concern, but I won't get into a debate about my weight. Please leave it up to me to decide about the portions and foods I will eat."
10. Make use of coping or positive self- talk statements. This can include "I have a right to say no" "I know I can handle this situation" "I am honoring my recovery by making this choice", "I am worth taking special care of myself during this season", and "I don't have to do this perfectly but can focus on doing a few positive healthy things each day." You can also follow this up with a gratitude list at the end of each day, no matter how small it may be.
11. Remind yourself if you binge, purge, overeat or restrict, that this behavior will decrease with healthier attitudes and eating practices. This can help you to not punish or beat yourself up around relapses. *Remember that it is only you that remains responsible for your health and recovery, not family, friends, partners or sponsors.*

Wishing you all a healthy, peaceful and recovery filled holidays.

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