

Happy Healthy Holidays!

Let's enjoy the holidays by following a few simple guidelines:

Breathe: A few minutes each day of relaxed breathing, learning to breathe with the diaphragm and relaxing the muscles of the chest and shoulders, can be very effective at building the power of the Lung and it will engage your relaxation response.

- If you feel the holiday stress taking hold, stop and take a **deep breath:** breathe in through your nose, and think of breathing in all the way to your belly, taking in as much air as possible. Once the lungs are completely full, hold the lungs full for a count of five. Once you have counted to five, exhale through your mouth from the very bottom of your Lungs until they are completely empty.



Eat Well:

- **Eat regular meals during the season** – do not starve yourself during the day to be able to indulge in a larger meal later. This causes your body to go into “starvation mode” – when you eat properly during the day you are less likely to overeat later.
- **Do not go shopping or to a party on an empty stomach** – fill up on healthy foods at home before you go out since you are more likely to eat non nutritious food at your favourite holiday get together.
- **Choose what you love** – when you are at a holiday get together snack on the treats that you really love and leave the stuff you don't. Don't feel bad if you choose not to eat Aunt Jane's pie, she'll forgive you!
- **Drink water** – do not become dehydrated during the day. Dehydration is commonly misdiagnosed as hunger; if you think you are hungry, try drinking a glass of water to see if that does the trick!
- **Moderate your alcohol intake** - When you arrive at a party, grab a sparkling water with a twist, and wait at least 30 minutes before having a cocktail. This will give you time to relax, get comfortable in your surroundings, and survey your choices before starting to indulge. Be sure to have 2 glasses of water for every glass of alcoholic beverage you consume; this will minimize the dehydrating effects.
- **Do not drink alcohol on an empty stomach** – doing so will cause you to feel the effects of the alcohol sooner and will cause you to snack on more high-calorie treats.

If you are hosting:

- Have a variety of yummy non-alcoholic beverages available.
- Serve **vegetables** and (homemade) **dip, fruit platters, & nuts** (almonds, cashews & walnuts).
- Use **Greek yogurt** instead of regular sour cream for creamy dips
- Serve a **fruit pie or crisp** (apple, blueberry, etc.) rather than a nut pie (pecan).
- **Chocolate:** serve the **darkest** chocolate possible. Dark chocolate actually has antioxidant properties, meaning it is good for you.
- If you are serving a traditional holiday feast, serve **sweet potatoes** instead of white. These are high in beta carotene, Vitamin C, potassium, and iron. Don't store sweet potatoes in the fridge: they will lose their flavor!
- Supply lots of vegetable side dishes and vegetarian options.
- Use vinegar based dressings for vegetables and salads instead of creamy options.

Write a list: include what you **want** to do and what you feel **pulled** to do.

- The things on the list that do not match should be taken away – only do what you want to do! When you know what is important to you it becomes easier to set boundaries.
- Sit down with a calendar and give yourself target dates for getting things done.
- This will help you to practice saying no, a skill we all need to practice regularly!

Exercise. This can be difficult as time is limited during the holiday season but it can make a huge difference in your mood and energy levels. You want to aim for a minimum of 30 minutes each day to positively affect your physical and emotional stamina and strength. As long as you are dressed properly you can spend lots of time outdoors when the weather gets blustery!

Involve family and friends – try planning active get-togethers with family and friends such as:

- Walk around your neighborhood to view the decorations
- Go for a hike – urban hiking can be just as fun as rural hiking
- Go for a sleigh ride
- Shovel your neighbor's front porch and sidewalk – this will make you feel good physically and emotionally
- Play hide and seek in the neighborhood
- Stop at a playground and play

Give in a way that gives you joy vs. out of obligation. When you give in a way that comes naturally to you, you stay in integrity with who you are. Here are a few places I like to support – what are yours?

Toronto Humane Society - www.torontohumanesociety.com/

World Wildlife Fund – www.wwf.ca

Ten Thousand Villages – www.tenthousandvillages.com

Grassroots – www.grassrootsstore.com

Stephen Lewis Foundation – www.stephenlewisfoundation.org

Me to We - <http://www.metowe.com/>

Unicef – www.unicef.org

Save the Children – www.savethechildren.ca

Amnesty International – www.amnesty.org

Healthy Gingerbread Cookies – from www.mywholefoodlife.com – a great place for healthy recipes!

3 cup flour – I like almond flour	1 tbsp ginger
1/3 cup + 1 tbsp maple syrup	1 egg
1/4 cup blackstrap molasses	2 tsp cinnamon
1 1/2 tsp baking powder	1/4 tsp cloves
3/4 tsp baking soda	1/4 tsp nutmeg
1/4 tsp salt	4 tbsp applesauce
	2 tsp vanilla extract

- Mix the dry ingredients in one bowl.
- Mix wet in another.
- Add dry to wet and mix only until combined.
- Remove the dough from the bowl and cut into two equal parts.
- Wrap the dough in plastic and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.
- Preheat oven to 350.
- After two hours, remove the dough from the fridge.
- Roll the dough onto a floured surface until it is about 1/4 inch thick. Please use additional flour if necessary.
- Cut dough into desired shapes and place them onto a lined baking sheet.
- Bake the cookies for about 8 minutes and then let them cool a bit before removing.
- Set them aside to completely cool before decorating. Enjoy!

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