

EMOTIONAL *and* HEALTHY EATING DURING THE *Holidays*

by Rachel Brown, RD, LDN



THE HOLIDAYS NO LONGER
HAVE TO BE SYNONYMOUS
WITH WEIGHT GAIN. TAKE
CONTROL AND EAT DELICIOUS
FOOD AROUND THE HOLIDAYS!

“THE HOLIDAYS”

To some of you the word “holidays” alone can strike a nerve, increasing your blood pressure and just plain stress you! The holidays are a time for celebration, a happy time when we think of the blessings in our lives and enjoy the company we have around us.

You and you alone can make or break your holiday into a joyous occasion or a time of stress and emotional eating. Your mind is a powerful tool – if you decide to let a few things “roll off your back” and not let them ruin your entire day, month or holiday – it won’t. Even if everything around you is chaotic and falling apart, if you decide that you can control what you are able to control and let go of the things that are not in your control then the stress did not win, you won.



PLAN AHEAD

One of the more effective ways to stay in control of your weight during the holidays is taking charge by bringing an appropriate yummy dish you made yourself to the party. This way you know there is something at the party you can eat and your host is sure to appreciate one less dish they have to prepare.

POSITION YOURSELF

Do not act like you are the bodyguard for the dessert table. Step away from the desserts! Go across the room. If the party is good enough, and hopefully you are enjoying quality events, you will forget about the boring dips and remember that interesting new guy or girl you just met. If the occasion has dancing, dance! People will notice if you are having fun or scowling in the corner. Dancing will also help keep you away from adding on pounds at the food table and will help you burn calories while making new friends on the dance floor.



ALCOHOL

The fastest way to gain weight is drinking your calories! Did I get your attention? Is this your plan? There are many reasons alcohol and moderation go together; no one wants to see the inner contents of your stomach displayed on the dance floor.

The more you drink that holiday beverage, the more calories you are consuming without even getting the benefit of feeling full from it and knowing when to stop. Be smart about your beverage choice. The choice is clear; literally, clear liquid drinks will usually be lower in calories than those that are creamy or dark in color. Plan to order diet tonic water/diet soda or crystal light as a mixer with your hard liquor instead of a simple syrup or regular soda.



PORTION CONTROL

A frame of mind that is good to have at these events is, "I've had that before and know what it tastes like," then move on and save those precious calories for something new and worth it. If you take a bite and realize it is not the best thing your taste buds have tried, stop and don't take another bite of it. That dish and those calories are no longer worth it.

There is a fresh new concept that relates that the satisfaction of food after the first bite declines dramatically after each subsequent bite, thus the more you eat, the less satisfying it is. This is also where mindful eating comes into play. Enjoy your food by eating slower; enjoy each bite figuring out the flavors, textures and smells. When you start appreciating these elements further each time you eat, you will notice you will eat less in volume and enjoy more delicious foods.



In between each alcoholic drink, drink water. This tactic should slow down your consumption of alcohol and help keep your head clear, saving precious calories that are wasted senselessly by drinking them. Eat your calories, do not drink them.

NEW TRADITIONS

Just because that ancient family recipe calls for large amounts of artery clogging fat in the dish does not mean if you update the recipe to the 21st century it will not taste just as good or even better. After all, change is good. Embrace the past by making a nod to the history of the recipe and updating it for today. Who knows, this could be the new favorite and if it is healthier, you are doing a favor to your family recipe for generations to come.



Utilize herbs, spices, garlic and lemon juice; these are calorie-free gifts from Mother Nature to completely change the dish! Start new traditions –after a large family gathering or meal, add a physical activity to the mix: a group walk, football game or hiking. These activities after a meal can be a welcome addition. Walking after a meal will help aid in digestion and boost energy.



EMOTIONAL EATING

The only person controlling emotional eating is you. Whether you believe it or not, you are the only person that has control over your thoughts and actions. Take control of yourself and your thoughts. There is significant influence and constructive power in positive thinking. Once you have a powerful, positive mindset and attitude – nothing can stop you.

Keep a food journal – not only write what you are eating and the amount but write the emotions you are feeling during this time. If you write down these thoughts and emotions you are feeling you may discover and work through those emotions on paper and not take them out with food. Food and comfort are not and should not be synonymous. Food will not give you comfort. Comfort, relief, serenity are all derived from your perception of the thing that is stressing you. In other words; you are in control of how you deal with stress.

Emotional/stress eating will do nothing for you but stress you out later and sometimes lead to stress eating. This is not a good cycle. When you are stressed, go for a walk, call a friend, paint your nails, take a bath, clean the house, drink an herbal tea and distract yourself. You deserve to find joy and happiness during the holiday season!



About the Author:

Rachel Brown, RD, LDN, is a registered dietitian at the Centennial Center for the Treatment of Obesity in Nashville, Tenn. She counsels weight-loss patients, pre and post-op, on their journey to healthier lives.

Membership Application

OAC Membership Categories

(select one)

- Individual Membership: \$20/year
- Institutional Membership: \$500/year
- Chairman's Council Membership: \$1,000+/year

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(optional, but only accessible by OAC members)

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To order bulk copies of OAC resources, members can purchase educational packages. If you'd like to order resources, select one of the below packages.

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- Deluxe Package**
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Make a tax-deductible donation to the OAC when joining as a member. Your donation helps the OAC's educational and advocacy efforts.

- \$5
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Tampa, FL 33614

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MEMBERSHIP



Building a Coalition of those Affected

The OAC is the **ONLY** non-profit organization whose sole focus is helping those affected by obesity. The OAC is a great place to turn if you are looking for a way to get involved and give back to the cause of obesity.

There are a variety of ways that you can make a difference, but the first-step is to become an OAC Member. The great thing about OAC membership is that you can be as involved as you would like. Simply being a member contributes to the cause of obesity.

Why YOU Should Become an OAC Member

Quite simply, because the voice of those affected needs to be built! The OAC not only provides valuable public education on obesity, but we also conduct a variety of advocacy efforts. With advocacy, our voice must be strong. And, membership is what gives the OAC its strong voice.

Membership Benefits

Benefits to Individual Membership

- Official welcome letter and membership card
- Annual subscription to the OAC's publication, *Your Weight Matters Magazine*
- Subscriptions to the *OAC Members Make a Difference* and *Obesity Action Alert* monthly e-newsletters
- "Bias Buster" Alerts, alerting specifically to issues of weight bias
- Immediate Advocacy Alerts on urgent advocacy issues and access to the OAC's expert advocacy team
- Ability to lend your voice to the cause

