

Remember when you were a little kid and after thanksgiving the world became magical?
Think back... really think...
I am sure it wasn't candy...
The cookies were pretty... but that was not the reason...
Pies? Probably not...

What really got your attention were the lights, the music, the decorations, the colors, the chill, the fire in the hearth.
Most important, the people that came around to visit at this special time of year. The hugs, the love, the kindness.
Holidays are about fellowship NOT food.

Lets look a few of our excuses to indulge, and think them out...



The food looks and tastes so good!

It's true—there will be plenty of terrific foods. But will you feel good *after* you eat them?
Imagine yourself overindulging. How do you feel afterwards?
Was the taste really worth it? Could you have received the same pleasure with a smaller amount?
When Aunt Jean comes up to say hi, do you want your mouth stuffed to capacity to be the thing she remembers about you?

It's a special occasion. It only comes once a year.

This occasion only come once a year. But the parties, events, and gifts of food never seem to end, and continual splurges add up to inches.
Stop and decide which ones are really worth the splurge.
You probably have a "party" outfit; you do want it to fit so the next group of pals can see you in it, right?

Everyone else is eating.

Just because everyone is eating does not mean that you have to eat everything too. If everyone else was jumping off a bridge would you too?
If you really look around some people are over eating, most are not, some have not gotten food yet, leave some for the next guy.

The hostess will be offended.

Choosing smaller portions shouldn't offend anyone.
In fact since the hostess is probably your friend she would probably be proud if you ate less, friends want friends to succeed.
If you want to score points with the hostess, compliment her on her decor, she will remember the kind words not the full mouths.

I should have desserts for the guests in my home.

Keeping your favorite desserts at home usually spells disaster.
When treats are in the house, more of the dessert usually ends up in you, rather than your guests.
Instead of using your guest as an excuse,
Lets show respect for our guests by having a healthy option on hand to help them fit into their holiday outfit.

I'll get back to my healthy eating plan tomorrow.

This thinking is okay, *as long as it is realistic*. Make sure an occasional splurge does NOT become a repeated
Remember TODAY IS THE TOMORROW YOU PROMISED YESTERDAY.

Plan a system of attack.

- Bring a low calorie appetizer to the office party.
- Don't go shopping on an empty stomach.
- Use healthier substitutions and make a low-calorie, low-fat dessert for the family gathering.
- Budget calories throughout the day, so you can afford to spend a few more at the party.
- Burn extra calories in a longer-than-usual exercise session.
- Stay focused by getting 7-8 hours of sleep nightly.
- Stay hydrated.
- Keep a sparkling water in your hand at parties, so your hand is too occupied to grab the passing treats.
- Stand on the other side of the room visiting, instead of hovering around the food tables.
- Stand up straight pull I n your tummy – posture not plundering.

Stay positive.

Everyone makes mistakes, so there will be times when even the most disciplined person will slip.

Don't worry or stress during these mishaps—it is critical to get back on track.

Staying positive is half the battle.

Navigating food events

Don't Go Hungry

Eating small, regular meals the day of your event can help you stay full and energized so you're less likely to eat something on impulse.

Control Your Portions

If you're served a larger-than-necessary portion at a sit-down event, push the extra amount to the side of your plate and stop when you've eaten an appropriate amount. At a buffet, choose a small plate and stick to right-sized servings of lower calorie, nutrient-rich foods. When you're done, you're done.

Search Out The Healthy

Just about every party has healthy food. Lean roasted meats, shrimp cocktail without sauce, raw veggies, and leafy greens are some good examples. For beverages, drink water, or stick with calorie-free soda, sparkling water, sugar free iced tea, or coffee.

Eat Mindfully

Chew, chew, chew, and savor every wonderful flavor. It typically takes the stomach 15 to 20 minutes to signal the brain that you've had enough food. Get the most out of each bite by eating slowly and give yourself a chance to note when you're full.

Choose Wisely

If you've reached your weight-loss goal and you're exercising regularly, you may want to splurge with a small serving of something wonderful you only get once a year (say, your Aunt Patty's coffee cake). On those occasions when you have a few bites of extra calories, don't waste them on anything that isn't extraordinary.

Skip Seconds

Double helpings mean doubling up on calories. Once you've finished one right sized serving of healthy food, move away from the main table and join a lively conversation, or otherwise enjoy the company of those around you.

Rethink Your Drink

Alcoholic beverages are loaded with calories. If you've reached your weight-loss goal and choose to indulge, stick with one or two, and make them light beers, 4 oz glasses of wine, or cocktails made with spirits and zero-calorie mixers. Best yet, volunteer to be a designated driver: Your friends (and your waist) will appreciate it.

Bring Your Own

If you're attending a potluck, picnic, or tailgate party, bring something healthy that you can enjoy on Program. One suggestion: a southwest style salad made with greens, tomatoes, scallions, green peppers, and taco seasoned ground turkey.

Consider Non-Edible Gifts

When you're visiting over the holiday season, hand soaps, candles, potpourri, and pre-arranged flowers or plants are a nice alternative to food gifts.

Feed Your Spirit and Your Relationships

Social gatherings strengthen bonds between people, and food doesn't have to take center stage. Engage in good conversations and concentrate on really getting to know someone. Over the holidays, plan non-food-based activities like volunteering, attending parades, kids' arts and crafts, pumpkin patches, and cultural events. Get together with friends for healthy walks and sports activities. You'll appreciate new traditions and make lasting memories to cherish.

Set Limits and Stick to Them

Determine what you can do in specific, realistic time frames and commit only to what you know you can accomplish without making yourself crazy. Remember: It doesn't help anyone when you're stressed out and off track with your positive lifestyle. When time gets tight, make sure you have plenty of your favorite Meals within easy reach so you don't skimp on healthy, filling nutrition.

Care For Yourself

Imagine yourself at the next celebration glowing with calm happiness and sparkling health. You can be that person when you treat yourself well, with thoughtful nutrition, plenty of water, regular calorie-burning exercise, and healthy sleep every night. When others see you at your best, you're carrying a powerful message about living well—and that's something to celebrate.

Inspire Others

If being unhealthy has caused you to avoid the spotlight at social events in the past, you can find yourself a little nervous about joining the party. People may notice your positive changes in both appearance and attitude. Relax and enjoy the chance to model healthy behaviors such as wise nutrition choices. People may even ask you what you're doing. Why not share your secret: healthier living



When You're the Host or Hostess



Modify Your Favorites

When you're cooking food yourself, you don't have to give up traditional party favorites when you can make healthier versions of them. Mashed cauliflower makes a tasty alternative to mashed potatoes. Try sautéing in broth instead of butter. Use sugar- and fat-free ingredients whenever you can.

Ask For (and Accept) Help

Encourage your friends and family to get involved in the planning and dole out some tasks. Send your spouse to the store (with a very specific list!) while the kids clean assigned areas of your home. Don't be afraid to ask your guests to bring a dish for all to enjoy. And when someone offers to take on a favor, say yes!

Be Leery of Leftovers

When you're cleaning up, if possible, delegate the task of packaging leftovers to someone else while you wash dishes, sweep up, or take out the trash. Send cake, pie, and extra goodies home with friends or take them in to the office for co-workers. For healthy items, portion them out into ready-made Meal portions and refrigerate or freeze them to save you time later.

Procrastinate with Purpose

If you're baking or preparing calorie-rich foods for a gathering, wait and do so at the last minute so you spend less time looking at and smelling them.

Focus on Your Non-Faves

If you're preparing party food, make it something that's easier for you to resist. For example, if your weakness is chocolate, go with fruit. Not a huge fan of coconut or licorice? Bake macaroons or anise-flavored cookies.

Using Your Head:

Behavioral Tricks to Keep You on Track

Emotions and Eating

Holidays, parties, and other events are often a combination of fun, food, and emotion. Good food usually accompanies good feelings. Emotions play an important role in our eating patterns. At big events, we eat to create or enhance pleasurable feelings: to bond with others, to recapture the past, and to comfort ourselves. But just as real is the other side of the story: Out-of-control eating creates great emotional pain for many of us. Years of unhealthy choices have made us feel unhappy, tired, discouraged, and even ashamed. The trick is to learn how to experience the good feelings without overeating. This takes time, so be gentle with yourself and seek progress, not perfection.

Being Prepared

If you're on a healthy eating plan, parties and events will put your commitment to the test.

What if someone offers me my favorite food?

What if someone gives me a hard time about my choices?

What if my in-laws start to stress me out?

What if I am bored or tired?

By mentally "walking yourself through" the situations you're likely to encounter at the event, you'll be better prepared to handle them with serenity. With a little commitment, handling food-laden social festivities will become easier and more enjoyable.



Control What You Can:

Yourself ~~ The best way to get through a tough situation is to adjust how we respond to it. Here are some powerful behavior modification tools recommended by experts and easy to use—at parties and events, or anywhere!

Breathe Deep

One of the easiest and most powerful ways to handle an unhealthy eating urge is to stop and take a few deep, cleansing breaths. Close your eyes and concentrate on slowly filling and emptying your lungs as your mind quiets down and you reboot your awareness. Open your eyes and continue enjoying yourself.

Distract Yourself

If you're thinking obsessively about the food, switch gears. Try joining an interesting conversation. Play a game with a child or reach out to someone on the sidelines.

“Urge Surf”

A food craving is like an ocean wave. It builds, crests, crashes gently onto shore, and fades away into the sand. As compelling as the urge is, it's temporary: If you don't give in, you'll find the feeling passes in a few minutes.

Walk it Out

Avoidance and physical activity give food cravings a practical one-two punch. Remove yourself from the temptation and take a walk then return to the event refreshed, re-energized, and ready for more fun.

Talk it Out

Talking about the urge to eat with someone who understands can provide relief as you recognize it's not a sign of weakness or failure to have these feelings from time to time. Plus, that person can give you valuable support as you stick to healthy choices.

Counterthink

Our inner dialogue can get us into trouble when we worry that refusing food or drinks will hurt or offend someone, or call attention to ourselves in a negative way. Likewise, we may tell ourselves that if we have a bite of cake, it's all over and we've failed in our attempt to get healthy once again.

This negative self-talk can be counterbalanced by more constructive thoughts, such as, “It's going to be tough to avoid having dessert at this party, but I'll be okay. I have techniques I can use, and my health goals are definitely worth it.”

Be Assertive

Say the worst happens—a pushy person pressures you to eat something you know isn't in line with your health goals. You can stand up for yourself: You have the right to be heard, and don't have to apologize or explain yourself to anyone. You can respectfully communicate your wishes, thoughts, and feelings, and not have to feel hopelessly at the mercy of anyone who doesn't understand how critical healthy eating is to your well-being. “Thanks, but no thanks : I'm completely committed to eating healthy right now.”

