

Healthy Holidays!

Facilitator's Guide



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Healthy Holidays!

(Event Length: 60 minutes)

Event Description: It's almost here – holiday time! Is this your favorite time of year? Or, like many, do the holidays mean overindulgence, stress, and weight gain? Learn to approach this holiday season from a healthy perspective so you can really enjoy it. Get control of your calendar, celebrations, eating, holiday preparations and more. Commit to having the kind of holiday you want this year, and leave with concrete strategies for making it happen.

Primary Use: Learn to enjoy the holidays with a new, healthy perspective

Target Audience: Appropriate for anyone who wants to celebrate and be well

Timing	Topic
15 min.	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions and needs• Assessment
10 min.	Creating a new mindset
10 min.	Recognizing and preventing stressors
10 min.	Learning to approach food and eating differently
10 min.	Staying active during the holidays
5 min.	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action Planning• Evaluation

Notes to Facilitator: Instructions to you are in italics. Information for you to relay to participants is in normal font.

15 minutes Introduction and Assessment

Flip Chart

Slide 1

Welcome participants and introduce yourself to them. Ask the participants what they hoped to come away with from today's workshop. List their responses on the flipchart.

Slide 2

PG-pg. 2

Comment on any of their needs that will not be covered, if any, and state that if time permits, you will ask the group for its ideas at the end of the session. Review the workshop objectives:

1. Identify opportunities to make this holiday season healthier than past years
2. Create a healthy new mindset about how you approach the holidays
3. Recognize the typical stressors in your holiday season, and learn ways to prevent or minimize the distress
4. Describe techniques for approaching food and eating differently this year
5. Identify ways to maintain your activity level during the holidays
6. Commit to taking action to make this holiday season healthier and more enjoyable

PG-pp. 3-5

Direct the participants to the assessment in their participant guides, and have them indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with each statement on pages 3 and 4. Instruct them to record their answers in the spaces provided on page 5, total each column, and complete the rating for each category.

Ask the participants how they scored. Have them share the areas they do well in and those needing improvement. Relate the latter to their objectives in taking the workshop which you have noted on the flip chart. If you don't see every area needing improvement listed among their objectives, comment on that, and ask if the assessments results surprised them. Explain that you'll be covering all the areas during the workshop.

10 minutes Creating a new mindset

Slide 3

PG-pg. 6

State that to have a new experience this holiday they need to begin with a creating a new mindset; that is, they must know what they'd like to happen and be open to making change. Ask the following questions to engage the group in a discussion:

- Can you describe how you would like the holiday to be this year? What would be different for you? *(Be sure they focus on what they want, not on what they don't want.)*
- Can you think of any traditions you'd like to re-evaluate? Are you and your family open to change?

Suggest that to start with they avoid thinking of this time of year as one long season. Doing so gives many people an excuse to deviate from their normal routine for several weeks. Rather encourage them to behave as normally as possible, taking each special event as it comes. In between parties, dinners, concerts, and other activities, they should maintain their routines as much as possible.

Slide 4
PG-pg. 6

Ask them when the season starts and ends for them. Solicit several opinions on this. Encourage them to make the season as short as possible if this would help them.

Point out that another successful approach is to set goals for themselves around their weight, activity and exercise, and dealing with stress. Ask if anyone does this already, and if so, what his/her goals are for this year. Share your own intentions, as well: e.g., I will exercise three days/week or I will have all holiday food gone by January 2.

Slide 5
PG-pg. 6

Explain that other ways to change their thinking may involve the following:

- Avoid all or nothing thinking. For example, ten minutes of exercise is better than no exercise, and eating one hors d'oeuvres is better than eating five (and none, if that would mean depriving yourself).
- Avoid giving and requesting food; consider re-gifting food items to a non-profit group, bringing them to a potluck, or serving them at your own holiday party.

10 minutes **Recognizing and preventing stressors**

PG-pg. 7

Direct participants to the PG, and give them one minute to list everything they can think of that has caused them stress during the holidays in the past. Solicit their ideas, and note them on the flip chart. Comment on how easy it was for them to generate such a long list in just one minute.



Slide 6
PG-pg. 8

Explain that you have several strategies for avoiding or minimizing stress. Review the following points:

- Be selective with what events you attend, setting your priorities.
 - It's okay to say no or rotate events from year to year. Think quality, not quantity.
- Plan around your favorite activities by putting them in on the calendar first.

- Get enough sleep to minimize stress, maximize productivity, and maintain good judgment.
 - Burning the candle at both ends only makes us unproductive; we make more mistakes and generally function at a lower level.
 - Most people need 7-8 hours of sleep per night to do their best.

Slide 7

PG-pg. 8

Continue with these ideas for using time well:

- Look for time savers. *Ask the group for their ideas. Add the following if needed: order preprinted holiday cards, have gifts wrapped by the store, or order pies from the bakery.*
- Delegate tasks and don't pass up any offers of help. If necessary, ask for help! This gives family members more responsibility for their holiday experience and gives you more time to relax.

Slide 8

PG-pg. 9

Tell the participants that another major source of stress at holiday time is money. Review the following points:

- Establish a budget and stick to it. Involve the family and avoid competitive gift-giving. *Ask the group who's good at managing the holiday budget and how they do it. If not mentioned, suggest making gifts and decorations, buying only for the children, setting spending limits for gift giving, or drawing names and buying for one person.*
- Remember what's important; keep your intention in mind.
 - Stay focused on today and this year, not the past.
 - Don't let others' agendas derail you.
 - Set boundaries with family members, if necessary.
- Don't strive for perfection.
 - No one will remember every detail.
 - People will remember how they felt more than anything else.



10 minutes Learning to approach food and eating differently

Explain that the holidays are notorious for weight gain, although the numbers are often overstated.

- While the average weight gain is only a little over a pound, not the five plus we usually hear, most people never lose the weight.
- This accumulates to more than ten pounds every decade!

State that now you'll now look at ways we can avoid the gain altogether by addressing parties and events, holiday food preparation, and food strategies in general.

Slide 9
PG-pg. 10

Begin with parties and events. Ask how many special events they estimate they attend during the holidays. Find out how many they host. Review these points:

- Don't go to parties overly hungry. Saving some calories during the day for the big event is fine, but it's best to have a low calorie snack before you leave.
- Be selective with food. Look it over before starting. If you can get the food anytime, consider passing it up. Do enjoy the vegetables and fruits that are offered and small tastes of the holiday treats.
- Use a small plate and a tall, narrow glass as studies show people eat and drink less when they do.
- Limit alcohol – it's a depressant, negatively affecting mood and judgment, and it adds calories.
- Don't overdo the appetizers; they're not very filling, yet tend to be rich.
- Focus on family and friends. Strive to meet as many people as possible, or catch up with those you haven't seen recently. Avoid the visual cues, and stand away from the food.



Segue to preparing holiday foods by referring those who said they plan to host a holiday dinner or party. Explain that studies indicate the following:

- People eat more when larger quantities of food are offered than they do when smaller amounts are presented.
- More variety leads people to eat more. When presented with bowls of M&Ms, study participants consistently ate more of the multi-colored M&Ms than they did of the single-color candies, even though the taste was the same.

This suggests the following strategies for preparing holiday food:

- Make smaller quantities so less will be eaten at that meal and leftovers will be minimized.
- Limit the variety offered. For instance, rotate the favorite foods you make from year to year, such as cookies.

Ask participants to comment on how they could use these strategies.

Slide 10

PG-pg. 11

Instruct participants to read page 11 of the PG for these and other ideas on how to prepare holiday food. Ask the group what ideas they could incorporate this year. Solicit any other suggestions they have to lighten their holiday meals.

Slide 11

PG-pg. 12

Ask the participants if they have already begun to notice the abundance of food that seems to appear during the holidays. Ask where it seems to show up. Offer the following strategies for eating during the holidays:

- Maintain your regular diet as much as possible, especially on days when there are no special events.
- Keep snacks healthy, focusing on fruits and vegetables.
- Wear a belt to monitor fullness, and stop eating when it feels tight.
- Don't succumb to food pushers. *Ask the group about their experience with this. Engage them in a discussion about why people do this, being careful not to judge others. Talk about ways they can handle this pressure, using the PG for ideas. Get their suggestions for approaches, as well.*
- Don't use food as stress relief. Be aware, because food and stress are abundant during the holidays.



10 minutes **Staying active during the holidays**

Open by explaining that the last area they will address is being active. Ask them what their exercise routine is when it's not holiday time. Then ask the participants if it is usually any different during the holidays. State that maintaining their level of exercise is essential to their enjoyment of the holiday. Have them give you reasons why this is so: to burn any excess calories consumed and to manage stress.

Slide 12

PG-pg. 13

Begin by stating that in order to be successful at staying active, they need to ask, "how can I?" rather than state "I can't." The question indicates that they are open and receptive to receiving a solution, whereas the declaration has already made staying active an impossibility. Assure them that creative ideas will come when they simply open their minds to the possibility. Review these points:

- Be creative and flexible. Modify your regular routine as needed.
- Cut your workout time in half, if necessary, but don't cut it out altogether.
- Make it easy to be spontaneous by keeping your work out gear in the car or at work.

- Consider all your options. Pull out your old exercise videos or get the stationary bike out of the garage.
- Do some effective multi-tasking. Return calls on your cell phone while taking a walk.

Explain that an easy way to burn more calories is to use NEAT – non-exercise activity thermogenesis. State that thermogenesis is the production of heat through activity and is critical to burning calories, according to Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN.

Offer these suggestions to build activity into their day:

- Stand rather than sit and pace rather than stand.
- Talk on the phone while ironing, folding laundry, or doing other household chores.
- Take the stairs anywhere you can.
- Walk to see co-workers rather than call or email them, if possible.
- Be less efficient at home to take the stairs more often.
- Park at a distance, and make several trips to the car.

Slide 13
PG-pg. 13

Remind the participants that exercise is a great way to manage stress. Make the following points:

- Yoga is a wonderful relaxation technique that provides physical benefits while harmonizing the body with the mind. It enables people to perform activities efficiently while enhancing overall satisfaction.
- A brisk walk allows you to spend quiet time alone or talk out your stress with a loved one.
- Music is a terrific mood enhancer, so include dancing in your holiday and let the movement energize you.
- Aerobic activity is an effective way to release excess emotion after a stressful day.

Ask the group for any ideas they have about using exercise to relieve stress.

Suggest that this year they give and request gifts that promote activity and fitness. Offer the following ideas:

- Passes to a gym or fitness class
- A gift certificates to a sporting goods store or a salon
- A session with a personal trainer
- A exercise DVD or a meditation CD
- A book on hiking

Slide 14

PG-pg. 14

State that one last strategy they can use to be more active is to plan events with activity in mind:

- Include holiday activities that get people moving.
 - Set up a caroling event or tree-trimming party.
 - When dividing family holiday tasks, choose to decorate or shop for the family.
 - Volunteer for a local charity and serve meals, wrap gifts, or deliver holiday baskets.
- Make family outings and events active.
 - Walk off your dinner, go skating, or clear the room for dancing.
 - Plan a hike with your out-of-town guests.

PG-pg. 15

Refer participants to the charts in the PG. Get their feedback on the calories expended vs. calories consumed. Make sure they understand why it isn't enough to be active if they want to manage their weight. They'll need to combine smart eating with exercise to avoid holiday weight gain.

5 minutes Action planning

PG-pg. 16

Direct participants to the PG, and read the instructions for the action plan aloud. Give them a few minutes to complete the plan, then invite each person to share their intention or one goal they set.

Slide 15

Close the session by thanking the group for their active participation and sharing the closing quote with them:

“Eating everything you want is not that much fun. When you live a life with no boundaries, there’s less joy. If you can eat anything you want to, what’s the fun in eating anything you want to?”

~ Tom Hanks

PG-pg. 17

Ask the participants to complete the evaluation form found page 17 of the PG. Invite the participants to ask any questions they have. Solicit ideas from the group before sharing your own thoughts.