



Timely Information for Personal Success

Reduce Your Holiday Stress This Year

By *Tim Lencki*

The approaching holiday season is a time we look forward to spending with our families, gift giving, picking out a Christmas tree, etc. Or is it?

According to the American Psychological Association some of the leading causes of stress during the holiday season are lack of money, the pressures of gift giving and lack of time. That's unfortunate because things like gift giving and spending time with loved ones should be enjoyable and stress-relieving, not stress-inducing.

The American Council on Exercise says that one of the most effective ways to relieve stress is through exercise. Exercise can reduce your stress level in two ways – physically and mentally.

- ◆ Physically, exercise improves your cardiovascular functions by strengthening and enlarging the heart, increasing oxygen throughout your body, and by lowering your blood levels of fats such as cholesterol. This leads to a reduced risk of heart conditions, stroke, or high blood pressure.

- ◆ Mentally, exercise provides an outlet for negative emotions, promoting a more positive mood and outlook on life. It does this by producing chemicals called endorphins, which are powerful pain-relieving, mood-elevating substances released in the brain.

Aerobic activity will get your heart pumping along with those endorphins – promoting a reduction in stress. Find an activity you enjoy! Don't force yourself to do something you will dread. Strength training should also be part of your exercise program. Be sure to work each of your major muscle groups weekly. Find a friend or personal trainer to give you some suggestions. Finally, stretching exercises relax tense muscles and increase blood flow. Try to stretch each of your major muscle groups daily.

Don't think that if you can't commit to a strict fitness routine, then it's useless to do any exercise at all. Remember that something is better than nothing. Make exercise a priority and enjoy this holiday season. It is a wonderful time of the year.

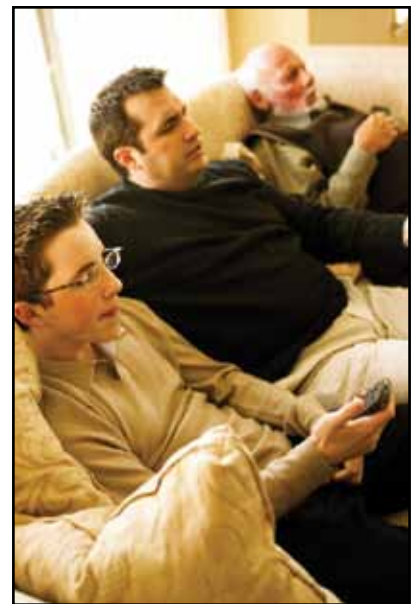
Tim Lencki, MS, CSCS, is a strength and conditioning specialist, author, and speaker.

Enjoy a Healthy Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving may be a little ways off yet, but you may still be thinking about the excessive calories you will be consuming. If you're like most people, sitting on the couch watching football will follow up the meal – and that's not a good model for a healthy day!

For many people the holiday season involves more than just one day of unhealthy eating. It's the *cumulative* effect of all the parties, co-workers bringing

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Healthy Recipe: Gingered Cranberry-Raspberry Relish

INGREDIENTS:

- One 12-ounce package fresh cranberries
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup crystallized ginger, minced, (choose soft nuggets over disks, if possible)
- 3 cups raspberries, (2 pints), fresh or frozen (not thawed)

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 58
- Carbohydrates: 15 g.
- Protein: 0 g.
- Sodium: 2 mg.
- Fat: 0 g.
- Fiber: 2 g.

DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Pulse cranberries in a food processor until coarsely chopped. Transfer to a medium bowl. Stir in sugar and crystallized ginger. Gently stir in raspberries — it's fine to crush some of them.
- 2 Cover and refrigerate for at least 3 hours to combine the flavors. Tip: Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 week.



LifestyleTIPS[®]
 2010[©] Impact Publications, Inc.
 PO Box 322, Waupaca, WI 54981
 Phone: 715-258-2448
 Fax: 715-258-9048
 Website: www.impact-publications.com
 Email: info@impacttrainingcenter.net

Publisher: Scott Kolpien
Health Consultant: Tim Lencki
Managing Editor: Mike Jacquart

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Questions and Answers

Holiday Season Tips

Q: How can I enjoy holiday parties and not gain weight?

A: Start eating the healthy offerings first. For example, vegetable sticks (without dip), fruit pieces, etc. Then move to some of the less healthy offerings. You will be less likely to overindulge if you have already filled up on some of the healthier items.

Q: Should I wait until January to start exercising?

A: Don't put your fitness goals on hold until the New Year. If you can't exercise as often this holiday season, then adjust appropriately. Don't use the excuse that if you can't do a full workout, you won't do it at all. Instead accept your limited availability and simply reduce the frequency and/or duration of your workout. It's better to do something rather than nothing at all. ❖

— Tim Lencki

...Healthy Thanksgiving

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treats, and the fast food meals you consume because you are too busy for a healthy homemade meal. When you add it all up, it leads to unwanted pounds that you will have to lose in the New Year.

Here are some simple suggestions you can make for the upcoming holiday season so you don't have to worry about shedding those extra pounds.

- ◆ Fit all your food on one plate. Sample small portions and try not to go back for seconds. Wait until later.
- ◆ Exercise before you eat. Before you head out to your Thanksgiving destination, do some kind of physical activity. Take a run, XC-ski, get on a bike, or lift weights. Gaining weight means you consume more calories than you expend over time. Get out and expend before you consume. You'll be able to eat a little more and feel better about yourself.
- ◆ Make some food substitutions:
 - Turkey, white meat, no skin (6 oz.), 180 calories 3 g. fat – versus – Turkey, dark meat, with skin (6 oz.) 370 calories 20 g. fat;
 - Cranberries (boiled in sugar) (1/2 cup) 100 calories, less than one gram fat – versus – Jellied cranberry sauce (1/2 cup), 220 calories, less than one gram fat; or
 - Pumpkin pie (1/8 pie), 340 calories, 15 g. fat – versus – Pecan pie (1/8 pie), 500 calories, 25 g. fat.

Remember that a few small changes over the course of time (a holiday season) can make a big difference. Have a wonderful holiday season! ❖

Source: www.acefitness.org.