

## How to Maintain Your Waistline & Your Sanity This Season

Most people have a love-hate relationship with the Christmas season &ndash; we love the Christmas spirit and the family, friends, fun and festivities, but as the pace picks up we get overwhelmed both physically and financially. We end up with too much on our plates, both literally and figuratively! I&rsquo;ve had to examine my holiday choices more than usual this year, first because of unusually high time demands in my business, and second because my weight has started to creep up (when I&rsquo;m really happy I eat more and put on weight &ndash; an unfortunate combination!).

Here are some things that I&rsquo;ve been doing to keep things in check, with great results so far &ndash; I&rsquo;m sure that they will help you, too:

### 1) Focus on people, not food

The late, great business and life philosopher, Jim Rohn, passed away last Saturday. He left me and so many others with countless gems of good advice, some of which came from his very wise mother. Young Jim used to look forward to banquets and parties as chances to chow down on someone else&rsquo;s tab, until his mother taught him that these are social opportunities, not stuff-yourself-as-much-as-you-can events. Have a snack before you go to a holiday event, so that you don&rsquo;t arrive famished, and consciously focus on connecting meaningfully with as many people as you can, rather than on the delectable trays of hors d&rsquo;oeuvres that pass by, or the piles of goodies on the buffet.

### 2) Take time for the things you love

I&rsquo;ve discovered a new holiday joy this year. It&rsquo;s our first Christmas in Canada with our adopted dog Faro, a rescue from the Los Cabos Humane Society. I walk him twice a day, and every night just before midnight we go for a long walk in the cold air, checking out the latest Christmas displays on neighborhood houses. I feel like a little kid again, stopping to take in the sparkling lights, the Santas and Snowmen &ndash; sometimes I even laugh and exclaim out loud (Faro thinks I&rsquo;m nuts). It&rsquo;s my secret treat that breathes delight and stress relief into this busy time.

Which are your most treasured holiday moments? Do you love to sip apple cider in front of a fire? Are you nuts about the Nutcracker ballet? Do you love to decorate the tree, or your house? (Armando and I had so much fun this year decorating in stages, every night over an entire week, spreading out the fun and celebrating each step).

Identify what brings you the most joy and be sure to reserve time for those moments &ndash; and really enjoy them when you&rsquo;re living them.

### 3) Follow the golden rule of food, and limit your access

I frequently refer to this golden rule (&ldquo;Eat when you&rsquo;re hungry, stop when you're full&rdquo;), taught to me by a dietitian when I was 19, as the reason why I&rsquo;ve essentially stayed the same size for almost twenty years. It works like a charm, and it&rsquo;s only when I abandon it that the waistbands of my pants start to pinch and produce the dreaded &ldquo;muffin-top&rdquo;. As I mentioned, I eat more when I&rsquo;m happy, and we also discovered a passion for Indian food (especially Naan bread) this year that regularly caused me to overrule the golden rule.

To limit the expanding effect of holiday treats on your body, resolve to pay close attention to your body&rsquo;s cues. Are you truly hungry, or just eating because it&rsquo;s in front of you? Distance yourself from food stations/locations at holiday events, and if you can, plan to have little if any treats in your own home. We don&rsquo;t have a single delicious treat in our cupboards, other than a gingerbread cake which I baked one day (knowing full well that Armando would finish it in under 24 hours, minimizing its threat to me).

#### 4) Get out of the gift trap

Do you really have to buy a gift for everyone? No, you don&rsquo;t! In fact, if you suggest a no-gift policy to most people, they will breathe a huge sigh of relief. The holidays are about love and loved ones, not about pushing your way through crowded malls and spending your last (or future) pennies. Give a donation to charity as a family or business, in lieu of gifts, and resolve to spend quality time together instead. Some years my sisters, who normally live thousands of miles away, and I plan a laughter-filled group dinner out while we&rsquo;re all together, instead of spending time and money shopping for each other.

#### 5) Reschedule for January whenever you can

A group of girlfriends and I were tempted to go to a ritzy holiday networking party this week, a 5-course meal at a lovely restaurant . It sounded fun, and surely would have been, but it wasn&rsquo;t cheap, it would have eaten up a rare holiday night off, and it would have added another 2000 plus calories to the several thousand extra that are already scheduled in for the season. We decided that it would be saner, healthier and cheaper to get together in January instead, and I just recently rescheduled dinner with another friend for the same reason.

Do you really have to do it all, now? It&rsquo;ll seem much less sad to take down the Christmas tree if you know you&rsquo;ve got fun social things to look forward to in the first weeks of the New Year.

Resolve to enjoy this season, and give to yourself by resolving to minimize the negative effects on yourself, your health and your life. If you&rsquo;ve found ways to minimize the stress and maximize the fun, let me know &ndash; I&rsquo;d love to hear about it!

About Dr. Biali

Susan Biali, MD is an internationally recognized medical doctor, wellness expert, life coach, speaker and flamenco dancer. She has performed for and taught celebrities, and speaks and dances across North America. Today, Dr. Biali helps free others to live a happier, healthier life by unveiling the blueprint that they already carry inside. Dr. Biali blogs for PsychologyToday.com and appears regularly in media, including Fox News and CTV, Global and CITYTV networks in Canada. Her opinions have appeared in Self, Fitness, Hello!, The Medical Post, Reader's Digest Best Health, Chatelaine and The Chicago Tribune. She is the author of Live a Life You Love! Seven Steps to a Healthier, Happier, More Passionate You (Beaufort Books, New York). To order her book, click on these links to Amazon.com and Amazon.ca.