

# Keeping it sane over the Silly Season

Wellness over the Silly Season is not just about what we eat and drink, but also about how we *feel*!

In particular how we feel about ourselves. The better we feel, the more likely we are to make decisions that serve us well.

Individually we all respond differently to the challenges presented at this time of the year – the pressure goes on with a perceived lack of time, (a shortened time frame) a seemingly overwhelming presence of food and alcohol, more events to attend, and little time for self.



## *The pendulum scale of behaviour extremes*

Ideally we would all love to be sitting in the middle – somewhere either side of the middle is just fine – it's not perfection we are trying to achieve but a balance between relaxing and enjoying ourselves without throwing reckless abandon to our wellness causing self-harm and neglect.



**VITALITY WORKS**  
Sanitarium Workplace Health

## How you can manage yourself

You have to know what is ok for you and what is not – put a stake in the sand and set your personal boundaries – these are the lines that, no matter what, you are not prepared to cross. Some examples of boundaries that work are:

- **Alcohol:** “My normal boundary is not to drink more than 2 nights a week, and never more than 3 units a night. For December 1st to January 10th I allow myself 3 nights per week max.”
- **Nutrition:** “My key areas of concern with nutrition are that I have a sweet tooth and I always eat way too much of any food on Christmas day or at BBQs. So for this period I set two boundaries:
  1. I only have desserts 2 days per week and I REALLY enjoy them when I do;
  2. One plate policy – I do not go back for seconds no matter what.”

What we know is that we all eat more than we think and we generally have terrible recall of exactly what we have eaten – the worst time to make a decision about eating and drinking is when the situation is right in front of us and we have no guiding principle or boundary. Remember that with alcohol added to the mix we introduce a threat – as our judgement is the first to go when we drink.

## How do I determine my boundaries?

One of the ways we determine our boundaries is experience – in a quiet moment think about what you feel comfortable with (knowing what you are uncomfortable with is a great determining factor of boundaries for most of us). These are personal to YOU – relevant to what you eat and drink – be realistic, you want to enjoy yourself, feel comfortable



and be in integrity with yourself. If you use this exercise to set rules that are punitive or deprivational you are going to bust these boundaries and not feel good about yourself!

This is NOT about willpower or dieting or giving up anything – it's about creating a plan that works for you and gives you the power of choice. Having a plan empowers you to know how to handle yourself around food and alcohol in a busy time of year, and not having to constantly negotiate on the spot achieves peace of mind.

One of the ways we recommend you can manage this time of the year is to plan ahead!

## So how do I plan?

Pick a time and day when you know you will be free from distractions, e.g. Sunday afternoon for 10 minutes and get the diary out for the next 7 days (i.e. Monday till

Sunday). We have attached a planner for you to use AND we have included a row for exercise to commit to as well!

Knowing what your boundaries are around food and alcohol, write down the events that you have on and mark in when you will be eating out, nights you will be drinking etc. If you have a limit of 2 nights per week to drink and 4 events involving alcohol happening that week the great thing is you will know very clearly where you will and where you will not be drinking – you can volunteer to be the driver!

### TIP

*Planning ahead means you don't have to constantly negotiate on the spot.*

If your boundaries are around limits on takeaways – one of the great outcomes of planning ahead is that you can pretty accurately determine where your takeaways will be – perhaps a night with no opportunity to cook yourself a meal between work and an event.

## Don't make it complicated

If you are now looking at your plan and thinking, "But I have 4 events this week on different days and I want to drink at them all and eat dessert, I am going to miss out" – what exactly are you going to miss out on? The whole point of having a plan is that you make it work for you. You are the master of your wellness and instead of hopelessly falling into the round of drinks, eating and events, adding endless kilos and stressing your liver out, you take control and make it work for you!

The peace of mind this offers you is priceless.

## if at first you don't succeed...

When you sit down the following Sunday and look at planning for the coming week – have a quick review of the previous week – what worked for you and what did not? There is no such thing as failure, only feedback. This is a good time to make some adjustments and changes to your environment that support your wellness plan, e.g. if you found someone handed you a drink on a planned alcohol-free night and you drank it – what would work better? Take an alcohol free drink with you rather than rely on others to supply it for you. Take something you really enjoy such as a refreshing sparkling water.



You don't have to go into long explanations with anyone you refuse food or drink from. Someone else without boundaries may find you threatening and want to 'unharness' you. Keep it simple, just say, "No thanks I don't feel like it".

## Remember, detox diets don't work!

There is not a single scrap of evidence that they work. Imagine your body is a swimming pool and your liver is the filter – you can't take it out and scrub it clean – but what you can do is take the stress off it, e.g. less alcohol, saturated fat and caffeine. Detox diets are seldom just about detoxing – we find that most people actually use them hoping to find a rapid weight drop.

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## Remember the benefits of exercise

Exercise is a wonderful stress buster and one of the few ways you can really boost your metabolism.

You MUST make time for exercise – without question

there will be a few sneaky calories you will be thinking about over the New Year – but don't confuse the purpose of exercise as being used to 'undo harm you have done to yourself'. We all need to move the body, day in and day out, so think about exercise as something you choose to do to be your best self. Renew yourself and strengthen your body with exercise.

3 or 4 days before you head back to work, get up a bit earlier to get your exercise in.

That way it's not a huge struggle to get up and exercise when you go back to work – use your time off as an opportunity to really nail it as a habit!