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ASK THE PSYCH DOCS



I AM REALLY WORRIED ABOUT THE HOLIDAYS COMING UP. I ALWAYS HAVE MANY PARTIES AND FAMILY DINNERS TO ATTEND AND I END UP GAINING AT LEAST 10 POUNDS. IF I COULD JUST GET TO THE GYM I WOULD BE OKAY, BUT I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO MOTIVATION TO EXERCISE. HELP!

A. This is something we have heard quite often. Many people struggle with finding both the motivation and the time to exercise. The holiday season is a great time to start working on self-improvement and developing a new routine. We know that exercise has been empirically proven to maintain both physical and mental health, yet many of us struggle to incorporate it as a regular part of our routine.

Here are some tips to try and increase your motivation for exercise. First of all, exercise doesn't need to happen in the gym! There are so many other ways for people to be active. A very useful strategy to improve motivation is to make exercise fun. Pick an activity that you really enjoy, such as joining a sports team or a dance class, buy a bike or take up hiking. Choose an activity that you do not think of as exercise but instead as a fun outing that brings pleasure to your life.

Another helpful strategy is to make exercise a social activity. Join an exercise class with a friend so that you can spend time working out and hanging out together. You are much more likely to head to

the gym if your friend is knocking on the door to pick you up! Additionally, there are many online resources such as social support groups and apps that help motivate, offer community support and allow you to monitor and log your progress.

A third motivator is to make a financial commitment. Prepay for a class or boot camp. Once you have put out the money for an activity you will be more likely to follow through and not risk wasting your hard earned dollars. Finally, try a self-reward system. Extrinsic rewards like treating yourself to something special or something you take pleasure in can be very motivating. Make yourself a deal that for every five work out classes you are entitled to something special like a massage. Before long the physical and mental reward of the exercise and the positive impact it can have on your mood, body and life will become reward enough! Always remember, although it doesn't always feel like it, there is always time for exercise, so be creative and have fun!



Q. MY KIDS' BEHAVIOURS SEEM TO GET MORE UNMANAGEABLE OVER THE HOLIDAYS. WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THEM STAY CALM SO THAT WE CAN ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS?

A. Many people find that over the holidays their children's behaviour can become increasingly unmanageable. Often times, this is because holidays equate to chaos and children are completely out of their regular routine. Staying connected and mindful of your children's moods can help to reduce the potential for challenging behaviours. Use your 'parental radar' to stay aware of your children's cues and clues. For example, let's say you are at a holiday party, it's past your child's bedtime and you notice your child rubbing his/her eyes or becoming more hyperactive. Despite the chaos of the holidays, try to stay on top of these nuances and changes in your child's behaviour. Pay attention to these cues to notice when they need to leave a party, before they have to tell you with their negative behaviours. Staying 'in tune' with your children means paying attention to their needs in order to avert any party-going disasters! Keep in mind, when children are out of their regular routine they are more likely to struggle both emotionally and behaviourally. Attend to your children's behaviour, cues and needs, but mostly be their advocate to prevent these holiday meltdowns.

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