



Staying Sane in Crazy Times

Financial worries can trigger a tendency to eat for comfort. The holidays provide lots of opportunities to overeat. The combination could be a recipe for nutritional disaster.

In times like these, our good habits are especially important. Getting sleep and exercise, along with making healthy food choices, is a way to stay balanced. It will help you weather the storm. When you give these things up and make random choices, it is easy to feel ungrounded and vulnerable.

It's challenging. It seems like the logical choice would be to make more time by giving up "our time," but those are the very things that sustain us. Time to sleep, exercise and eat well is not frivolous or selfish time. If you give it up, you ultimately lose time as you become less focused, less clear, and your energy and mood plummet.

Get enough sleep. Resist the urge to stay up late and get more done. Leave parties at a reasonable hour, at least most of the time. Develop a bedtime routine that helps settle you and get you ready for sleep.

Get regular exercise. Keep up your usual activities. Get out for your walks. If necessary, adjust the timing to take advantage of daylight. This could be a good time to walk on your lunch break. Get to the gym or your usual classes. Exercise is a good stress reducer, and it makes you feel happier.

Make healthy food choices. Be intentional about what you put in your mouth. When you indulge, enjoy it with all your senses and then let that be enough. Make sure that the base of your diet is loaded with fruits, vegetables (especially greens) and whole grains. They stabilize your energy, body systems and will help detoxify the occasional splurge.

Find quiet time. If you have a meditation or journaling practice, keep it up. Make time for stillness; it refuels you. Doing all you do takes energy - replenish it regularly.

Be intentional. Have a strategy or plan. Make conscious choices. If you don't, you are likely to end up being controlled by outside influences. Think before you say yes. Pause if needed. Choose intentionally. Have fun!

Liquid Calories Carry a Double Punch

A calorie is not always a calorie. Where it comes from makes a difference. Eating solid foods reduces your hunger but liquid calories do not. Studies indicate that when you eat a high calorie food like nuts you automatically compensate by eating less of something else. This doesn't happen with liquids.

We are not entirely sure why this is, but the theory is that the hormones that control appetite respond differently with liquid calories. Ghrelin, a hormone that makes you want to eat, drops more and stays down longer after eating a solid food than a liquid one.

That means that liquid calories are double trouble. They have a sneaky tendency to pile up more than we think, *and* those calories don't contribute to filling us up. Even from my early dietitian days I was surprised that people could drink 1,000—2,000 calories of juice, alcohol or sodas. These days coffee drinks and sweetened teas help keep the totals high.

The easy solution is to drink non-caloric beverages. But watch what you choose. Water and green tea are great choices. Unsweetened coffee and tea are good in moderation if you tolerate the caffeine. I don't recommend artificially sweetened drinks because some studies show those could mess with the body's internal sensing of when it's getting calories. Whatever the reason, I'm convinced that artificial sweeteners make us crave sweets and ultimately eat more.

The China Study

If you enjoy reading about diet and are willing to have your ideas challenged, add [The China Study](#) by Campbell and Campbell to your reading list. This controversial study done in the 1970's gives compelling evidence that animal proteins, even in small amounts, increase the incidence of Western disease (heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, etc.). The author suggests that food politics and lobbying by the food industry are the reason that his results were dismissed. His claims track well enough with Marion Nestle's book [Food Politics](#) to ring true for me.

I was already trying to eat more vegetarian meals. Reading this made me aware of how much I was leaning on eggs and cheese when limiting meats. Now my goal is to eat vegan half the time. I guess the book impressed me! I think that when we do eat meat it should be grass fed and that poultry should be free range and naturally fed as well.

Give Yourself the Gift of Health

The holidays can be one of the hardest times to stay on track with healthy food and life choices. To help you feel your best through the season, I'm offering a holiday strategy session—an hour consultation (in person or by phone) for \$75.

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy?

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!

