

How to keep on track even in the toughest social situations

I've found these 6 strategies help me and my clients stay on track even in the toughest social situations:

1. Don't deviate from the norm. If you know you're going to attend a lavish holiday party, begin your day as you would any other. Don't skip meals to save calories and get to the party famished. Eat a protein- and healthy-fat-packed snack an hour before your holiday meal like celery sticks with almond butter or a green smoothie with a scoop of vegan protein. Protein and fat help cut cravings for sugar and processed carbs.

2. Start your holiday meal with smart food choices. Beginning with soup, fresh veggies or a salad and avoiding appetizers filled with refined flour and other unhealthy choices can prevent cravings. Volunteering to bring something to every gathering you attend guarantees there's a healthy choice.

3. Limit alcohol, especially on an empty stomach. Alcohol reduces your inhibitions and can lead you down a slippery slope of making bad choices. Most types of alcohol are also filled with sugar and empty calories. Instead, ask for sparkling water with lemon or lime to drink before the meal and enjoy a glass of alcohol with the food.

4. Focus on the social interaction rather than dwelling on food. I like to sit next to someone I find genuinely interesting and engage in conversation with them and help the host with clean-up and serving the food so you stay engaged and less focused on the food.

5. Practice mindfulness. Take a couple of deep breaths before your meal and chew every bite slowly. Really focus on the

flavors, colors and smells of your food. Try to put your fork down between bites. Practice ending the meal feeling satisfied yet energized and comfortable.

6. Remember your goals. Think about the way you want to feel before you hit those holiday parties and dinners. If you want to feel great, you're less likely to indulge in foods and activities that make you feel less than great. But if you do happen to slip, don't beat yourself up. Guilt is a toxic emotion that creates more damage. When things get off the "plan" (which they do), simply make a gentle U-turn. Sometimes treating yourself to sugary and other pleasure foods is exactly what the moment calls for. If you indulge a little, that's fine. Did you enjoy the process? How did you react to the food that you ate? Pay attention and move on and getting back to the foods and activities that make you feel great.