

Enjoy the Holiday Season Seriously?

How exactly does one “enjoy the holiday season”? You might be thinking, “time with family, good food, friends, presents, snow, and a Christmas tree.” All these things are present during my holiday season - and yet - through it all, I struggle to really enjoy myself. I am aware that many people are alone, struggling to survive, and cold – that I should thank my lucky stars. That being said, most of the time I feel anxious, out of sorts, and am waiting for January 2nd. My routine is busted and “family time” is a plethora of unspoken weird vibes!! In spite of the shaky beginning, this article is not going to be about the holiday blues. I am guessing there are many of you who have had similar feelings during this time of year, so I want to explore and suggest new avenues for “enjoying the holiday season”!

First and foremost, I need to remember the precious word “no” and use it. During this season, I tend to agree to way too many social gatherings. Why do I do that? The truth – I am afraid of not being included in...whatever. Somehow I think that if I don’t come to your party, you will no longer like me and you won’t invite me again. I am also afraid to miss out on anything that might be fun. Intellectually I know this is an immature belief....but at an emotional level that is truly what I am feeling. Solution: I have to risk and trust that my friends and family will love me even if I do not do what they would like me to do. By being more attentive to allowing space in my schedule, I feel less anxious (because I will have more energy) and more free to enjoy the things I do decide to do.

Next is the money issue. I realize no one likes talking about personal finances. However, does it really make sense to go into debt (or more debt in my case) to buy presents? Again...why do I usually make that obvious negative choice? Because I am afraid of what people will think of me. Or - I am worried they will think that I don’t care about them if I don’t get them something nice. Here again

is the fact that I don't trust that people truly like me for me, and that our relationship (whether personal or professional) is not based on how much I spend on them. By choosing to only buy what I can truly afford, I have the opportunity to lessen my anxiety even more (I have yet to do this...this is just my plan).

Finally, there is "self-care". What does it take for you to truly take care of yourself? What does it mean to you "to be true to yourself"? Here is my answer in a nutshell – trust my gut!! The part of me "that knows". You know what I mean. I need to check in with myself regularly every day. I ask myself questions like: Are you really hungry or are you just wanting to escape with food? If I plan on exercising (something I have done to such an extreme, I have multiple joint issues) and my body is tired, I pay attention and choose to rest (sometimes). When something or someone upsets me, I ask myself "what do you need"? I know this may sound corny to some of you, but trust me on this – if you use food, drugs, alcohol, spending, busyness, exercise, sex, or gambling as a means of coping with your feelings, stress, boredom – or whatever you want to name it – you are out of touch with you!! Hence, the need that needed to be met never happens because you are using something "outside" to fix a problem on the "inside". They (food, drugs, etc.) may seem to work in the short term – but the unmet needs are still unmet, and you are left with the consequences of your choices.

Well, you just read my three-fold plan to help me to enjoy the holidays. You may be one of those people who just love the holidays from beginning to end...good for you!! Really!! If not, hopefully some of these suggestions speak to you and/or make you think about what you can do differently to be good to yourself and "Enjoy the Holidays"! Good luck!! (Please feel free to email me, I would love to know how you are doing: cpavell@fitnesspluswellness.com)