

A countdown to Christmas Eve:

1) **Wake up and smile!**

It may be grey and dark outside. You would probably prefer to stay under the hot covers instead of going outside in the cold! Well, here is what you can do to turn your mood around: SMILE!! When you smile, even a fake smile will increase levels of happy-hormone in your body and you will feel better!

2) **Eat Curry!**

The hot, spicy taste of foods is not a taste sensation but a feeling of pain. The body's reaction is to release endorphins - naturally occurring opioids that produce a feeling of wellbeing. So, add spicy yummy curry dishes to your meal plan, but go easy on the lamb, pork and mutton and the high-fat, creamy dishes served in many Indian restaurants.

3) **Hydrate!**

With Christmas comes celebrations, and with celebrations comes alcohol. Therefore, do yourself a favour and hydrate! Drink lots of water! You will get enough calories with all the alcohol as it is, so leave out all juices, energy drinks or sodas. Remember to drink an extra glass of water for every coffee or tea, as they dehydrate your body. Make water your friend this month!

4) **Stretch in the morning when you wake up.**

Wake up your body, it has been asleep too. It will boost circulation and warm you up. Do it in bed or first thing when you get up. When you stretch, ease your body into position until you feel the stretch and hold it for about 25 seconds. Breathe deeply to help your body move oxygen-rich blood to those sore muscles. Don't bounce or force yourself into an uncomfortable position. You will feel good and energised the whole day!

5) **Don't skip breakfast.**

Studies show that eating a proper breakfast is one of the most positive things you can do if you are trying to lose weight. Breakfast skippers tend to gain weight. A balanced breakfast includes fresh fruit or fruit juice, a high-fibre breakfast cereal, low-fat milk or yoghurt, whole wheat toast, and a boiled egg. What do you eat for breakfast?

6) Treat yourself to an early Christmas present!

I know, I know...Christmas is all about giving and selflessness and all that, but who says we should forget ourselves in the meantime? Go out and do something nice for yourself! Get yourself that thing or treatment you have been wanting for a long time! Just make sure it wasn't on any of your wish lists ;-)

I made myself an appointment at the hairdressers.
What about you?

7) Be bad

Now that you have gone out and done something good for yourself, it is time to be bad! Forget all the rules and should/could haves. Go to the Christmas market and have gromperkischelcher, glühwein and all that. Go and have fun! Enjoy it!

8) Exercise!

Good health and fun exercise go hand in hand. It is important to get your heart rate up and exercise. Do yourself a favour at least once a week you get a good sweaty, grasping for air kind of workout. High intensity interval training or HIIT is really good for that!

Check out www.hiitme.lu Find something you think is fun with some great people and a great instructor! Then you will stick to it!

9) Dance it out!

Remember Meredith and Christina? For them, dancing it out could solve any problem! Just get up and move that body! No matter where; in the shower, while getting dressed, even in the office, on the toilet, in the car, it doesn't matter! It will put a smile on your face and also on the people seeing you, maybe they'll join you ;-)

If someone doesn't appreciate it, then you don't want that person in your life anyway!

We get so stiff in our life and are so worried about what other people might think. I can promise you that dancing it out from time to time can improve your health!!

10) Financial Health

Over the Christmas season, financial health is as important as physical health. Try not to overspend. Create a budget and stick to it. I know it can be hard, but you will be grateful in the end. And don't forget sales start in January!

11) Stress less

Take a deeeeeeb breath and exhale as much as you can. When we are in a stressful situation taking a deep breath gives instant relief. Try it, it works! Christmas is often a stressful time, so do yourself a favour and breathe! Try to avoid situations where you know you will stress out or give yourself a massage to relax. Do whatever works for you to stress less! TODAY!

12) Take a good look at your relationships!

Any relationships you have with your partner, your family, your colleagues, your friends - they are all supposed to serve you in some way and to give you energy and laughter's! Take a good look at all your relationships and end the ones that no longer serve you. Some people just drain the energy out of you. Do yourself a favour and let them go! Surround yourself with people who give you energy and who inspire you!

13) Give someone a compliment!

How does it make you feel when someone says something nice to you? It makes you feel really good, doesn't it? Today I want you to try to give someone a compliment! You know they will be happy but the funny thing is that YOU will feel great too! Give it a try!

14) Have a glass of wine.

A glass of red wine a day is good for you. A number of studies have found this, but a recent one found that the polyphenols (a type of antioxidant) in green tea, red wine and olives might also help protect you against breast cancer. It is thought that the antioxidants help protect you from environmental carcinogens such as passive tobacco smoke.

15) Mindful living.

You've probably heard it before: "BE IN THE NOW", haven't you?

Mindfulness is slowly becoming a household name, but HOW do you become mindful?

It's by paying attention to the little things around you! It's to slow down and FEEL, SEE, TOUCH and SMELL. Use your senses! Observe everything around you! The noise of the keyboards typing away, or taste every sensation of the apple you are about to eat. Become conscious about a touch and really feel it! Pay careful attention and learn to really focus on simple tasks while doing them, whether it's flowering plants or ironing your clothes.

What else can you think of?

16) Laugh and cry.

Having a good sob can be so cleansing! I usually cry like a baby when watching romantic comedies. They really get to me. But I feel so free afterwards, so free and cleansed. Do you know that feeling?

The same goes for laughing. Having a good belly laugh boosts your immune system. Can be really helpful this time of year with the cold weather!

So, laugh and cry away!

17) Be nice to yourself.

Give yourself a compliment. Look at yourself in the mirror and say something nice to yourself. It can be as simple as "my hair looks nice today". Do it now and notice how it made you feel!

18) Call a good friend

What better time than Christmas to call a friend? Maybe someone you haven't talked to in a while? It can make you feel really good and can be super enriching to your soul. It can even prevent you from turning to stress-induced habits like overeating. It is the best and easiest way to feel good about yourself!

So, who can you call?

19) Fresh air & Breathe

Go outside and breath some fresh air! It's so good for you and you will feel great and energised throughout the rest of the day. So, use your lunch break or go for nice walk before work in the morning and get some nice fresh air!

20) Ask for help!

One thing strong and successful people have in common is that they ASK FOR HELP! Unfortunately, a lot of people have pride and don't want to show weakness by asking for help. Well, it is ok to ask for help! Nobody thinks you are weak! On the contrary. It takes a lot of strength to show vulnerability. It can be scary, I'll gladly admit to that! But it makes us better people.

Do yourself a favour and don't let the weight of the whole world stand on your shoulders! Do yourself a favour and ask for help!!

21) Moisturise!

In our busy schedule we forgot to take care of ourselves! Here is some advice! When you come out of the shower while your skin is still damp, apply moisturiser on your whole body! Once you do it every day it becomes a routine and you can hardly shower without doing this ritual!

Especially in winter when the weather is cold and the skin gets very dry it is even more important. In general, most of us shower too often, myself included, which washes away the natural oils we have on our skin. So, you need to rebalance the skin by moisturising! It will make you feel fresh and stay connected to your body!

22) Sleep!

It's no news that sleep is important for your health. When you sleep your body rests and restores. Sleep is also really important for your mental health. The brain also needs to rest and to process everything that has happened during the day. Make sure to get enough sleep! Good quality sleep - every night!!

Christmas is around the corner and if you are dreading all the food or stressed out about being with your entire family that you haven't seen in ages, then make sure you get enough sleep! With enough sleep you will be able to manage the stress better and to make healthier choices for yourself!

23) Veggies & fruit

We cannot talk about healthy living without talking about vegetables and fruit! They are too important not to mention. Make sure you find little tricks to add in vegetables and/or fruit into EVERY meal!

What are your little tricks?

24) Get your YOGA or PILATES in!

For your last healthy tip I would like to advice everyone to add yoga or Pilates to your exercise routines! Getting a good sweaty workout is important but so is building strength and flexibility and a calm mind! These things can be accomplished by doing yoga or Pilates! There are lots of free videos online to follow, but make sure you do get a qualified teacher at least once in a while to check that you are doing it right. For yoga and Pilates classes in Luxembourg, please check www.claremariepilates.com