
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Weak for a Week?

The period between Christmas and New Year's can destroy your fitness. Proceed with caution.



Uncommon Sense

By Mike Warkentin Managing Editor

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All: Mike Warkentin/CrossFit Journal



The holidays: where hard training can be derailed by hard partying.

The week between Christmas and New Year's is the Death Valley of fitness.

I'd wager more pounds are gained and more fitness lost in this period than during any other eight-day stretch of the year that isn't spent on an all-inclusive cruise ship.

Many people simply stop caring about a lot of things when the mistletoe goes up, and between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1 they treat their bodies like a '93 hatchback that's a week from being written off.

"Fuck it. It's Christmas," might as well be a line from *Deck the Halls* for the amount of times you hear it spoken directly before a Jell-O shooter slithers down the throat or a chunk of chocolate melts in the mouth, not in the hand.

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To be sure, many athletes have earned the right to cut loose and behave like it's Mardi Gras on Bourbon Street. A year of hard work certainly warrants a bit of time off and

a respite from a strict regimen. If Rich Froning wants to rip into a cheesecake this Christmas, I'll gladly buy it for him.

But for others, the season is just another way to validate bad behavior that was probably happening in previous weeks, if to a lesser degree. For these people, fitness is a scratch-and-claw affair in which hard workouts are balanced with hard partying, and a week off can set them back a few months or even derail them completely. Guilt and fear of going back to the gym are byproducts of a week of excess. Neither is good for fitness.

Other people have made legitimate changes over the year only to slide back into old habits during the holidays, much like a smoker who lights up with his high-school buddies "for old times' sake" and soon finds himself sucking down a pack a day once again. For these guys, the season isn't an end-of-year party but the beginning of a new fight to stay on track.

And finally, those of us who make up the fat part of the bell curve sometimes just get lazy. Or drunk. We of the 405-lb. deadlift, 20-round Cindy and sub-five-but-plus-four Fran make some bad choices, and we regret them the next day as we wonder whether we'll manage to stay on Page 6 of the Open Leaderboard this year.



Fight Gone Bad or Night Gone Bad?



Wherever you fall on that spectrum, you have a choice over the next seven days: You can choose to party like David Lee Roth circa 1984, or you can hit the gym and then party as hard as you can while still planning to hit the gym the next day.

Obviously, working out is only part of fitness, and it's supported by nutrition, rest, recovery, hydration and distinctly limited amounts of gin. But if all goes awry and you succeed only in getting to the gym over the holidays, it's better than nothing. As a bonus, if you're planning to go to the gym, chances are you'll pass on the seventh cupcake or the 12th pull on the beer bong. If you have no plans for the following morning, the chances of streaking through the neighborhood increase exponentially with each drink consumed.

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From Dec. 25 to Jan. 1, success can be measured in pounds, while failure is often measured in ounces.

So make a plan for the next seven days. Pull out the calendar now, and mark off time for family and fun, as well as fitness. If you're worried about sticking to the plan, post your commitment publicly or tell a reliable friend at your affiliate so he or she can use a barbell to pry you off the couch for a workout. Lean on your coaches, especially when dizzy after a holiday Fran.

But make time to work out. Fitness waits for no man or woman, even one nursing a savage hangover.



About the Author

Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal and the founder of [CrossFit 204](#).