



FINISH 2015

on a high

Whether you're re-visiting the New Year's resolutions you set back in January, or looking for energy to get you through the festive season, here's how to wrap up the year on top.

WORDS KIMBERLY GILLAN

GET STRONG

Cardio isn't the only thing you need if you're trying to get bikini-ready. "In order to get the most out of your cardio, you need a base of strength first," explains physiotherapist Michael Dermansky. "You need good strength in the major propulsion muscles, such as your gluteus maximus, your thighs, quadriceps and calves to do cardio effectively. Not only does it prevent injuries to your joints, but it also gives your body shape and tone - exactly what you want for summer."

CREATE A GRATITUDE JAR

Keep a jar in a central location in your house with a pen and notepad next to it, and each time you walk past it, write down something you're grateful for. "When you learn to stop and appreciate what you have and where you are, your life feels fuller," explains life coach Kate Caddie. "You no longer reach for the next exciting moment, because the present is where it's at!"

DE-CLUTTER YOUR FOOD STORES

If you want to eat healthily this silly season, then it pays to have an organised fridge and pantry. "Aim for minimally processed foods and toss anything that's passed its use-by date," suggests Louise D'Allura, a professional organiser from The Revamp Experience. "Remember prime real estate is eye level so keep the healthy foods you want to eat in this location."

REST YOUR EYES

End of year work deadlines can mean lots of time staring at the computer screen, which isn't great for our eyes. "When we stare at screens for too long, the protective tear film in our eyes thins and the eye dries out," explains Doctor Anna Siu, senior optometrist from Personal Eyes. "This can result in irritation and discomfort, not to mention fatigue, eyestrain and headaches." Get up from your desk every hour for a quick walk around the office to protect your eyes.

SHIFT YOUR FOCUS

Forget focusing on what you want to lose and zoom in on how you want to feel. "So instead of saying 'I want to lose five kilograms' say, 'I want to feel confident, energetic and beautiful,'" suggests Naomi Arnold, a life and wellness coach. "This simple shift into a more positive mindset can be so much more motivating."

CAP YOUR SUGAR INTAKE

Between lollies, chocolates, desserts and champagne, it can be a sugary time of year, but naturopath Gauri Yardi from Empowered Natural Health advises against too much of the sweet stuff. "Eating half a box of chocolates may seem like a good idea at the time, but you will experience a sugar high followed by a crash, leaving you feeling exhausted, foggy and irritable," she points out. "Try to enjoy a smaller portion and eat sweets slowly and mindfully, concentrating on savouring the beautiful tastes and textures in every mouthful."

BREATHE EASY

Feeling overwhelmed? Lay down for five minutes of deep breathing to feel instantly calmer. "Put one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. As you slowly and deeply inhale, aim to have the hand on your stomach rising before the hand on the chest does," suggests osteopath Claire Richardson. "As you exhale, aim for the hand on the chest to drop before the hand on the stomach does." Do five deep breaths, then five normal breaths and repeat it a couple of times and feel a sense of ease.

KNOCK OFF SOME SQUATS

You don't have to wait for a gym session to knock over some squats. "Every time you sit down, stand up again," suggests Richardson. "Do this up to five times and by the end of the day, you've done about 50 squats!"

TRICK YOURSELF TO SLEEP

If you need a good night's rest, Elina Winnel from My Sleep Coach has the following tips:

- Smile when you're off to bed. "It might sound silly, but when you smile, it's a lot harder to have stressful thoughts," explains Winnel.
- Be mindful of self-talk. "Replace statements like, 'I'm struggling to cope' with, 'I'm coping really well given what's on my plate'," says Winnel. "It will ease up your stress levels and the production of cortisol, which can inhibit sleep."
- Breathe deeply into your lower belly. "It will help trick your nervous system into a state of relaxation," she adds.

TAKE A REST

Rest days are just as important for building muscle strength as weights. "The growth in the muscles occurs when you rest, not when you exercise, so the rest between training days allows this growth to occur," explains Dermansky.

STABILISE YOUR ENERGY

Eating low-GI and high protein foods, such as nuts, wholegrains and lean meats, will help you stave off cravings. "These foods improve the amount of body fat that is lost during weight loss while preserving muscle mass," explains Professor Manny Noakes, co-author of the *CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet* online. "You'll also benefit from stable energy levels, rather than the blood glucose spikes and crashes high-GI foods cause."

BALANCE YOUR YANG WITH YOUR YIN

The busy Christmas period is a "yang" time of year according to Chinese medicine. "To maintain energy and endurance, keep this yang quality balanced with yin activities, such as meditation or time in nature," suggests Shura Ford, registered acupuncturist and herbalist from Ford Wellness Group. "Set aside quiet time for yourself to nurture your energy and vitality, and bring balance into your day."

MAKE A FITNESS APPOINTMENT

Whether you see a Fernwood personal trainer for a new program, sign up for a boot camp or try a new class, Natasha Vasilevski, personal trainer at Fernwood Preston, says locking it into your schedule increases your chances of working out in the silly season. "If you lock in a time, it's like going to the doctor - it brings more accountability," she says.