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#### EDITORIAL BY TOM VENUTO

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#### The Holiday Challenge: Will You Step Up To It?

Media reports say that most people gain between 5 and 10 pounds of body fat in the six weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. According to the New England Journal of Medicine, the average amount is much more modest - just over a pound. However, even modest holiday weight gain may be cause for concern: A study by the National Institutes of Health found that this seasonal weight gain - even just a pound - is usually not lost after the holidays; it simply adds to the "weight creep" that "sneaks up" on us as we get older.

Whether its a pound or ten pounds, did you ever ask yourself why does holiday weight gain happen at all? Here are some common answers I've heard:

"I'm too busy over the holidays to work out as often as usual."

"I'm more stressed over the holidays, and the food is there, so I eat more."

"I have at least three parties to attend and then there's christmas and New Year's, so it's impossible to stay on a diet"

"No one can tell me not to enjoy myself over the holidays so I'm just going to eat whatever I want."

These answers all have a few things in common. First, they assume that it's an either/or proposition: You can *either* get in better shape *or* enjoy yourself, but not both. Stated in reverse: You can either deprive yourself of holiday enjoyments or gain weight, but it has to be one or the other. The truth is, "either/or thinking" is a very limiting form of thinking.

Second, these are all excuses or rationalizations. "I'm too busy" for example, is always an excuse, because I have never known someone who was too busy to make time for his or her highest life priorities. The problem is, most people do not

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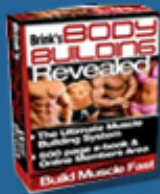
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make exercise or eating healthy a priority. We all have the same amount of time - 24 hours a day - but the way people prioritize the use of time is the difference between success and mediocrity. And remember, words mean little. Actions reveal a person's true priorities.

Third, none of these are the *real reasons* most people gain weight over the holidays to begin with. The real reason is because an intention was never set for the opposite: To get in better shape over the holidays.

Most people set a "goal" to get in worse shape over the holidays. It's not consciously set, of course, as few people would intentionally set out to gain fat. They simply do it by default. In their minds, they accept that it must be just about impossible to stay in shape with everything going on over the holiday season, so why bother?

Once the decision has been made, then the rationalizing ("rationing lies") continues:

"Why should I deprive myself?"

"Family is more important"

"Worrying about diet and exercise during the holidays is neurotic"

"I don't care if I gain a few pounds, I'm going to enjoy myself anyway"

"It's only these two or three weeks that I let myself go wild"

"I'll start the first week in January and lose the weight then."

As a result of this "unconscious negative goal-setting," they *expect* to work out less, eat more and gain a few pounds, and they don't seem to care enough to consider alternatives.

But what would happen if you set an intention and a goal to get in better shape?

What would happen if you decided that it was not an all or nothing proposition and that you could enjoy the holidays and all it has to offer and get in better shape at the same time?

And what if you decided that your health and your body were the highest priorities in your life, because you can't enjoy anything else in life, including family or holidays, if you don't have your health.

Here's what would happen: You would never make excuses again, and *you would get in better shape!*

I'm not all that different from you just because I'm a bodybuilder and fitness professional. I have many of the same problems, concerns and struggles as you do. Although today I always get in better shape between Thanksgiving and New Year's, that's a result of a conscious choice, a close examination of my old belief systems and a lot of action. For me, it all started about six years ago when I started traveling more frequently for the first time.

For most of my adult life, I wasn't much of a traveller and I didn't enjoy flying or staying in hotels. For one thing, I had so many business commitments in the East Coast health club business, that I seldom left town, as I had to "tend to the stores." But I also had a belief that if I traveled, my workouts and nutrition would suffer. After all, it would be hard to stick with my usual bodybuilding diet, and I wouldn't have access to my usual gyms. For these reasons, I never did much travel. In fact, I had flown only once in my entire life up until that time.

Then I was forced to take some trips for business reasons. Predictably enough, my nutrition and workouts both suffered while I was spending time in airplanes and in hotels. With my experience having confirmed my beliefs, I re-affirmed to myself, "See, travelling is nothing but a pain. You just can't stay on a diet and training program when you're out of town."



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After several more trips, I noticed that something very negative happened: I surrendered. I had resigned myself to "not bother" while I was on the road. I let my expectations create my reality.

But I didn't let it go on for long. As soon as I became aware of what was happening, I decided that I wouldn't tolerate it, so I challenged myself and my previous limiting beliefs. I asked myself, "Why the heck not? Why let myself backslide? Why even settle for maintaining? Why not challenge myself to improve while I'm traveling?" The answer was: *There was no reason, there were only excuses.*

From that day forward, I set a challenge for myself: To come back from every trip or vacation in better shape than when I left. Of course there were exceptions, as when I went on a vacation for total R & R. But I never let travel get in my way again. I prepared food that I would eat on the planes so airline food was never an excuse... I only chose hotels that had kitchens, so I could cook my own food. I went food shopping immediately after check-in. I wrote my training schedule in advance... And I actually found myself training harder than usual.

No matter where I was training - it could even be some "dungeon" of a gym in the middle of nowhere - it didn't matter because my mind was focused on improving and looking better when I came home than when I left. I had a goal!

What do you think happened? It's not hard to guess: I always came home in better shape than when I left.

Since then, my "travel challenge" has become somewhat of a ritual in my life. When I'm away from my "home-base" it becomes a "fitness road trip." I search the Internet or yellow pages or ask locals to help me find the most hard-core gym nearby wherever I will be staying. When I get there, I train every bit as hard as if I had a competition just weeks away. I look forward to it now. In fact, this is what led me to my "holiday challenge."

Like many people, I travel over the holidays, so I'm automatically in "travel challenge" mode at thanksgiving, Christmastime and New Year's. But with the additional temptations and busyness that the holidays bring on top of the usual travel stresses, I saw fit to declare a new challenge: "The Holiday Challenge." The difference was that for my "holiday challenge," I pledged to not only to return home in better shape than when I left, but to enjoy the holidays to the fullest at the same time.

These people who think I "deprive" myself to look the way I do would be shocked: I eat some damn good food over the holidays including Pie at Thanksgiving and my mom's famous red and green Jell-O christmas cake. Then on New Year's I'm usually toasting champagne and having a blast with friends or family. The difference is, every other meal stays right on schedule and I work out hard and consistently over the holidays; I don't let everything fall apart just because 'tis the season.'

The idea that you can either enjoy the holidays or stay in shape - but not both - is dangerous and limiting. It's dangerous to your social life, your emotional life and your physical life. Life is not an either or proposition; it's a matter of balance. Success does not mean going to extremes. Success can be a simple matter of re-examining your beliefs, rearranging your priorities, setting goals, changing the questions you ask yourself, re-evaluating your expectations and acting in accordance with all of the above.

Your expectations will become your reality. What are you expecting? Are you expecting to be in better shape after holiday parties, celebrations, banquets, dinners, and desserts? If not, then why not? What's preventing you from enjoying all of the above and still getting in better shape? Do you have a limiting belief which dictates that it's one or the other? Could it be that you never set a goal, intention or expectation to do it? Could it be that you're rationalizing or making excuses? If so, then I challenge you to change it this year... and then keep the change... for the rest of your life.

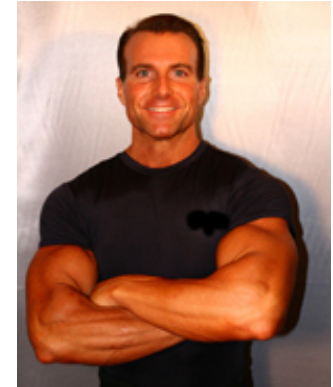
As of this writing, there are just under two weeks until the end of the year. Why not see how much you can improve your physique in the next 14 days, without depriving yourself of any holiday enjoyments or festivities? Just step up your expectations. Step up your standards. Step up your nutrition. Step up your training. Step up your action. Step up to my "holiday challenge" the minute you finish reading this, and just see what happens!

***Eat right, train hard and expect success***

***-Tom Venuto***

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Tom Venuto is a lifetime natural bodybuilder, an NSCA-certified personal trainer, certified strength & conditioning specialist (CSCS), and author of the #1 best selling diet e-book, [Burn The Fat, Feed The Muscle](#). Tom teaches you how to lose fat without drugs or supplements using the little-known secrets of the world's best bodybuilders and fitness models. Learn how to get rid of stubborn fat and turbo-charge your metabolism by visiting [www.BurnTheFat.com](#), home of Burn The Fat, Feed The Muscle and [www.BurnTheFatInnerCircle.Com](#), the Internet's premier members-only fat loss support community. .



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#### QUESTION OF THE MONTH

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**QUESTION:** *Dear Tom: I know what my protein needs are by bodyweight and activity level (about 180 grams), but how much protein can I eat/drink at one time? I have heard that only 30 grams can be digested at a time. I eat 5 times a day like you recommend, but supposing I only ate 3 times a day; that would be 60 grams of protein per meal. Would half of the protein be wasted?*

for the answer, click here:

[http://www.tomvenuto.com/asktom/protein\\_grams\\_per\\_meal.shtml](http://www.tomvenuto.com/asktom/protein_grams_per_meal.shtml)

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### FEATURED ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

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#### **3500 Calories: A Pound of Fat or Six Pounds of Muscle? What the Latest Research Says About Calorie Deficits**

By Tom Venuto, author of  
[Burn The Fat, Feed The Muscle](#)  
and founder/CEO of  
[Burn The Fat Inner Circle](#)

Most fitness conscious people have heard that there are 3,500 calories in a pound of fat, so if you create a deficit of 3500 calories in a week, you lose a pound of weight. If you create a deficit of 7000 calories in a week, you lose two pounds, and so on. Right? Well, not so fast...

Dr. Kevin Hall, an investigator at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda has done some interesting research about the mechanisms regulating human body weight. He recently published a new paper in the International Journal of Obesity that throws a wrench in works of the "3500 calories to lose a pound" idea.

Some of the equations in his paper made my head hurt, but despite the complex math he used to come to his conclusions, his article clearly prompts the question, "3500 calories to lose a pound of WHAT?" His paper also contained a lot of simple and practical tips you can use to properly balance your caloric intake with output, fine tune your calorie deficit and help you retain more muscle when you diet.

Below, I've distilled some of the information into a simple bullet-point summary that any non-scientist can understand. Then I wrap up with my interpretation of how you can apply this data in your own fat loss program:

#### **Calculating the calories required to lose a pound and fine-tuning your caloric deficit**

- 3500 calories to lose a pound has always been the rule of thumb. However, this 3500 calories figure goes back to research which assumed that all the weight lost would be adipose tissue (which would be ideal, of course).
- But as we all know (unfortunately), lean body mass is lost along with body fat, which would indicate that the 3500 calorie figure could be an oversimplification.
- The amount of lean body mass lost is based on initial body fat level and size of the calorie deficit
- Lean people tend to lose more lean body mass and retain more fat.
- Fat people tend to lose more body fat and retain more lean tissue (revealing why obese people can tolerate aggressive low calorie diets better than already lean people)



- Very aggressive low calorie diets tend to erode lean body mass to a greater degree than more conservative diets.
- whether the weight loss is lean or fat gives you the real answer of what is the required energy deficit per unit of weight loss
- The metabolizable energy in fat is different than the metabolizable energy in muscle tissue. A pound of muscle is not 3500 calories. A pound of muscle yields about 600 calories.
- If you lose lean body mass, then you lose more weight than if you lose fat.
- If you create a 3500 calorie deficit in one week and you lose 100% body fat, you will lose one pound.
- But if you create a 3500 calorie weekly deficit and as a result of that deficit, lose 100% muscle, you would lose almost 6 pounds of body weight! (of course, if you manage to lose 100% muscle, you will be forced to wear the Dieter's Dunce cap)
- If you have a high initial body fat percentage, then you are going to lose more fat relative to lean, so you may need a larger deficit to lose the same amount of weight as compared to a lean person
- Creating a calorie deficit once at the beginning of a diet and maintaining that same caloric intake for the duration of the diet and after major weight loss fails to account for how your body decreases energy expenditure with reduced body weight
- Weight loss typically slows down over time for a prescribed constant diet (the "plateau"). This is either due to the decreased metabolism mentioned above, or a relaxing of the diet compliance, or both (most people just can't hack aggressive calorie reductions for long)
- Progressive resistance training and or high protein diets can modify the proportion of weight lost from body fat versus lean tissue (which is why weight training and sufficient protein while on calorie restricted diets are absolute musts!)

### **So, based on this info, should you throw out the old calorie formulas?**

Well, not necessarily. You can still use the standard calorie formulas to figure out how much you should eat, and you can use a 500-1000 calorie per day deficit (below maintenance) as a generic guideline to figure where to set your calories to lose one or two pounds per week respectively (at least that works "on paper" anyway).

Even better however, you could use this info to fine tune your caloric deficit using a percentage method and also base your deficit on your starting body fat level, to get a much more personalized and effective approach:

15-20% below maintenance calories = conservative deficit

20-25% below maintenance calories = moderate deficit

25-30% below maintenance calories = aggressive deficit

31-40% below maintenance calories = very aggressive deficit (risky)

50%+ below maintenance calories = semi starvation/starvation (potentially dangerous and unhealthy)

(Note: According to exercise physiologists Katch & Mcardle, the average female between the ages of 23 and 50 has a maintenance level of about 2000-2100 calories per day and the average male about 2700-2900 calories per day)

Usually, we would suggest starting with a conservative deficit of around 15-20% below maintenance. Based on this research, however, we see that there can be a big difference between lean and overweight people in how many calories they can or should cut.

If you have very high body fat to begin with, the typical rule of thumb on calorie deficits may underestimate the deficit required to lose a pound. It may also be too conservative, and you can probably use a more aggressive deficit safely without as much worry about muscle loss or metabolic slowdown.

If you are extremely lean, like a bodybuilder trying to get ready for competition, you would want to be very cautious about using aggressive calorie deficits. You'd be better off keeping the deficit conservative and starting your diet/cutting phase earlier to allow for a slow, but safe rate of fat loss, with maximum retention of muscle tissue.

The bottom line is that it's not quite so simple as 3,500 calories being the deficit to lose a pound. Like lots of other things in nutrition that vary from person to person, the ideal amount of calories to cut "depends"...

*NOTE: The Burn the Fat, Feed The Muscle program not only has an entire chapter dedicated to helping you calculate your exact calorie needs, it was designed very specifically to keep a fairly conservative approach to caloric deficits and to maximize the amount of lean tissue you retain and minimize the amount of metabolic adaptation that occurs when you're dieting. The approach may be more conservative, and the fat loss may be slower, but it has a better long term track record... You can either lose weight fast, sacrifice muscle and gain the fat back like 95% of people do, or lose fat slow and keep it off forever like the 5% of the people who know the techniques. The choice is yours. For more information, visit: [www.BurnTheFat.com](http://www.BurnTheFat.com)*

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#### **MONTHLY MOTIVATOR**

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#### **Evaluating Your Associations**

**By Jim Rohn**

[www.JimRohn.com](http://www.JimRohn.com)

If you were to evaluate the major influences in your life that have shaped the kind of person you are, this has to be high on the list: the people and thoughts you choose to allow into your life. Mr. Shoaff (my mentor) gave me a very important warning in those early days that I would like to share with you. He said, "Never underestimate the power of influence." Indeed, the influence of those around us is so powerful! Many times we don't even realize we're being strongly affected because influences generally develop over an extended period of time.

Peer pressure is an especially powerful force because it is so subtle. If you're around people who spend all they make, chances are excellent that you'll spend all you make. If you are around people who go to more ball games than concerts, chances are excellent that you'll do the same thing. If you are around people who don't read, chances are excellent that you won't read. People can keep nudging us off course a little at a time until finally, we find ourselves asking, "How did I get here?" Those subtle influences need to be studied carefully if we really want our lives to turn out the way we've planned.

With regard to this important point, let me give you three key questions to ask yourself. They may help you to make better analysis of your current associations.

Here is the first question: "Who am I around?" Make a mental note of the people with whom you most often associate. You've got to evaluate everybody who is able to influence you in any way.

The second question is: "What are these associations doing to me?" That's a major question to ask. What have they got me doing? What have they got me listening to? What have they got me reading? Where have they got me going? What do they have me thinking? How have they got me talking? How have they got me feeling? What have they got me saying? You've got to make a serious study of how others are influencing you, both negatively and positively.

Here's a final question: "Is that okay?" Maybe everyone you associate with has been a positive, energizing influence. Then again, maybe there are some bad apples in the bunch. All I'm suggesting here is that you take a close and objective look. Everything is worth a second look, especially the power of influence. Both will take you somewhere, but only one will take you in the direction you need to go.

It's easy to just dismiss the things that influence our lives. One man say's, "I live here, but I don't think it matters. I'm around these people, but I don't think it hurts." I would take another look at that. Remember, everything matters! Sure, some things matter more than others, but everything amounts to something. You've got to keep checking to find out whether your associations are tipping the scales toward the positive or toward the negative. Ignorance is never the best policy. Finding out is the best policy.

Perhaps you've heard the story of the little bird. He had his wing over his eye and he was crying. The owl said to the bird, "You are crying." "Yes," said the little bird, and he pulled his wing away from his eye. "Oh, I see," said the owl. "You're crying because the big bird pecked out your eye." And the little bird said, "No, I'm not crying because the big bird pecked out my eye. I'm crying because I let him."

It's easy to let influence shape our lives, to let associations determine our direction, to let pressures overwhelm us, and to let tides take us. The big question is, are we letting ourselves become what we wish to become?

To Your Success, Jim Rohn

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## TOM VENUTO'S SELECTED SUCCESS QUOTES

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*"If you don't fail now and again, it's a sign that you're playing it safe."*

- Woody Allen

*"Sometimes the greatest risk lies in playing it safe."*

- Bob Proctor

*"The ability to discipline yourself to delay gratification in the short term in order to enjoy greater rewards in the long term, is the indispensable prerequisite for success."*

- Brian Tracy

*"Visionaries are always willing to sacrifice the present for a better future, myopics always sacrifice the future for instant-gratification, thus they have no future."*

- Gene Landrum

*"We are told that talent creates its own opportunities. But it sometimes seems that intense desire creates not only its own opportunities, but its own talents."*

- Eric Hoffer

*"The moment you decide on a goal to work toward, you're immediately a successful person. You're then in that rare and successful category of people who know where they're going. Out of every hundred people, you belong to the top five."*

- Earl Nightingale

*"Winners 'make' it happen. Losers 'let' it happen."*

- Denis Waitley

*"It's easy to have faith in yourself and have discipline when you're a winner, when you're number one. what you're got to do is have faith and discipline when you're not yet a winner."*

- Vince Lombardi

*"I'm tough, ambitious, and I know exactly what I want. if that makes me a bitch, okay."*

- Madonna

*"What distinguishes what's alive from what's dead is growth, be it in plants or in you ."*

- Dr. Wayne Dyer

*"There's no courage without fear."*

- Eddie Rickenbacker, World War I Fighter Ace

*"In most of the areas where you don't think you can, you never really tested yourself to find out if you could!"*

- Pete Siegel, sports hypnotherapist

*"With the wrong attitude, you can transform everything into a problem. With the wrong attitude, you can turn molehills into mountains. With the wrong attitude, you can turn any experience into the hardest time. With the right attitude, you can transform problems into solutions. With the right attitude, you can turn mountains into molehills, With the right attitude you can turn the hardest times into the most rewarding of experiences. "*

- Richard Bandler

*"Tell me who your best friends are, and I will tell you who you are. If you run with wolves, you will learn how to howl. But, if you associate with eagles, you will learn how to soar to great heights. "A mirror reflects a man's face, but what he is really like is shown by the kind of friends he chooses." The simple but true fact of life is that you become like those with who you closely associate-for the good and the bad."*

- Nelson Mandela

*"Each time we face a fear and step into advertisy our self-esteem grows, and each time we get a success behind us, we become more confident of overcoming the next hurdle. In the end, with a series of successes under our belts, we will understand that there is nothing that we cannot do."*

- Geoff Thompson

*"The promise of the future is not free. There is a price to be paid for any future reward. The price the future extracts from us involves discipline, labor, consistency and a burning desire to make the future better than either the past or the present."*

- Jim Rohn

*"Sooner or later, we learn this truth and come to understand that there is a price for everything in life. What this means is that you always have to give up something in order to get something in return."*

- Robert Ringer

*Visualization is simply the creation of strong mental image of the thing desired, the perfecting it each day until it becomes almost as clear as an existing material thing. Then the visualization tends to materialize itself - that is, it begins to build around itself actual material conditions corresponding with the mental framework. The thing to do in visualizing is to bring the positive imagination to see and feel the thing as actually existent.*

-William Walker Atkinson

*"Most people have latent ability enough to accomplish wonders, but often only a fraction of this power is aroused; it lies dormant unless fired into action by some great inspiration, emergency, or by some life crisis which drives them to desperation, and forces them to make a supreme call upon their interior forces. None of us know what wonderful things we could do if an emergency great enough, imperative enough, were to make a sudden call upon us. It is from this great within that the power comes which does immortal deeds. We are conscious that there is something in us, but not of us which is never sick, never tired, which never goes wrong."*

- Orison Swett Marden

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