

Stay Feis Fit During the Holidays & Winter Blues

Jeanne Weller highlights how to stay fit and active over the Christmas holiday period, while keeping your eyes firmly on your Irish Dancing goals for 2021

1 GOALS!



2 REST!



3 DIET!



Jeanne Weller fell in love with Irish Dancing at the age of six and competed at the World level individually and with teams. As she finished her competitive career, Jeanne's passion turned to wanting to focus on the fitness required for excellent dancing that many dancers miss in their training. She went on to pursue a bachelor's degree in Exercise and Fitness along with becoming certified in Personal Training and Group Exercise. Feis Fit initially designed customised dancer training programmes as well as running Irish Dance boot camps in the USA. The programmes' success helped many dancers achieve and exceed their competitive goals. Jeanne prides herself on helping dancers enjoy the challenges of Irish Dancing in a positive and supportive community. Feis Fit's successful programme is now globally recognised with offerings for customers online and in person.

Jeanne Weller

December is a wonderful month filled with holiday celebrations, family and friends. Whether you have just finished your regional qualifier or are 'amping up' for an upcoming competition, you need to keep your eye on the prize in December and January. This is a time when Christmas celebrations and the winter blues may get in the way of staying Feis Fit!

1 Get clear on your goals for the month, write them down and review them often

Imagine this story: Pretend you want to drive somewhere. You don't really know where, but you want to go somewhere you 'feel good'. So, you get in your car and start driving. You aren't sure where you are going exactly, so you start looking around, nowhere in particular. You see another person driving who looks like they know where they are going so you start following them.

You follow them for a while but realise you are not really getting anywhere, so you decide to change your course. (Good thing they did not freak out and see you following them!) A couple of minutes later, you see a

restaurant that has a sign saying 'Come on in' so you decide to stop there. You go inside and order something from the menu, but you still feel like you should be doing something else. What is it?

What does this have to do with setting goals?

When you go through your month without any goals or intentions, it can feel like driving around without any destination in mind. Since you do not have a destination in mind, it is impossible to know when you have arrived there or where you need to go in the first place. You end up looking around at your peers, at social media and at others to see what you should be focusing on. But if you are focusing on someone else's dream, you are not following your own.

That is why it is important to get clear on your own goals. Instead of mindlessly going through the month, pause and ask yourself what YOU want to accomplish? Is a major competition coming up and you want to improve your stamina this month? Is your Oireachtas season over and you want to recover in the first two weeks, then start working on getting

stronger than ever in the second half of the month? Do you have goals outside of dancing?

Whatever goals you decide for yourself are OK; the important part is that you get clear on them.

When you have clear goals, write them down, and review them every day, it is like driving to a destination you have always wanted to go, instead of simply following the other cars around you. You are going where **YOU** want to go.

2 Schedule-in 'post-competition' recovery time

Repeat after me, "It's OK to relax and enjoy life a bit after a major." Many Irish Dancers are 'type A', high-achieving perfectionists. As soon as one competition is over, they are on to the next. Leading up to a major, dancers are working exceptionally hard and that is great!

After a major, it is recommended to take one or two weeks of active recovery. You need this both mentally and physically.

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"Jeanne! Are you saying I should lay on my couch all day for one or two weeks while drinking eggnog and eating cookies?"

Not exactly... An active recovery week includes movement at a lower intensity than your usual rigorous training schedule. For example, it may include walking or jogging, biking, swimming, or perhaps a cardio dance class. It gives your body a chance to repair itself and a week for you to mentally recharge too.

3 Eat healthily at home then enjoy some of your favourite treats at holiday parties

I have a confession. I **LOVE** Christmas cookies. If Christmas cookies were healthy, I would eat them with extra frosting every single day for the rest of my life. You feel me?

Now do I eat Christmas cookies every day? Nope! I know that if I eat them every day, my performance will decrease both mentally and physically. Maybe you have the same love/

hate relationship with Christmas cookies (or a different favourite holiday treat)?

That is why I am going to teach you the one plate rule. When you are at home, you eat healthily. That does not mean some strict diet plan, but rather you fill up on mostly whole foods like vegetables, fruits, protein, healthy fats, minimally processed carbohydrate sources, etc.

When you are at holiday parties or have a special holiday event, you get one plate of whatever your sweet-loving heart desires. But one plate only! That way you get some of your favourite treats, but you are also fuelling your body right most of the time. The one plateful also helps you take a moment to reflect on

4 PLANNING!



5 LOVE!



what you really want to eat at events as opposed to just eating it all because it is 'there'.

4 Have a training plan and practice schedule in place

Imagine I told you to go and make a tiramisu. No recipe, no ingredient list, just to go get it done. You may feel kind of lost and uneasy about getting started. "How the heck am I supposed to make something if I don't know how to do it? I don't even know what that is!"

That is kind of what training and practising without a plan looks like. Instead of taking time to plan out what you will need to do to get where you want to be, you throw together a bunch of

random exercises and go through the motions in practice.

Then you wonder why you are not getting anywhere. If you do not have a training and practice plan, you are making tiramisu by trying to throw a bunch of random ingredients into a bowl, hoping it will turn out OK.

Now, if reading this feels like I'm somehow inside your brain and you want some help with a plan, reach out to me on Instagram **@areyoufeisfit** or email me at **feisfitonline@gmail.com** and I'll help you out.

Otherwise, you can create your own plan. If you are creating your own plan, make sure to be as detailed as possible. That means listing which days you will do which exercises and having an outline of what you will focus on in practice.

5 Show the people around you how much you care and love them!

The best part of the holidays (besides Christmas cookies) is getting the opportunity to give to others. Look around and find moments where you can bring joy to another person.

Do something kind for a friend, your teachers, your parents, or even a stranger to show them your care. This does not have to be something big – simply saying 'thanks' or giving a genuine compliment goes a long way. **IDM**

As always, if you have more questions over how you can better balance your training this month, or anything else related to improving your strength, conditioning, or technique, shoot me a message on Instagram @areyoufeisfit.