

# Our Peaceful Times

ISSUE #2: FROM PEACEFUL HEALING THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE 860-349-HEAL

## **HOLIDAY STRESS**

Here's a pleasant little test to help determine just how stressful your holiday season will be.

Okay, get into a comfortable position that doesn't require a lot of effort on your body's part. Feet on the floor, hands and newsletter comfortably in your lap, head balanced squarely on your shoulders. Now take a deep breath in so your belly expands, hold it a few seconds, and exhale slowly, feeling every part of your body soften and relax. Breathe that way again, noticing your shoulders release and lower, your fists and jaw unclench, and your eyelids sleepily drop so the words on the page are fuzzy and dreamlike. Keep breathing in this mindful way for a few minutes. How do you feel? Peaceful and relaxed? Wonderful. Now I want you to ponder these words:

*the holidays are here.*

If you're smiling, you passed the test, go out and enjoy the season! However, if you have a headache and are grinding your teeth, repeat the exercise above, except for the holiday part, and read on.

For many people, this time of year can mean stress, depression, and many other draining emotions. It doesn't matter what holidays you celebrate, or don't celebrate, we are all onboard this season's sleigh ride, but in some ways we can decide whether we'll be riding along with the wind in our face or lying facedown in a snowdrift with slush in our shorts.

We've put together a few of our favorite pastimes which may help ease the stress of the holidays so you can be well-rested and fresh for the Y2K riots.

With that thought comes our first suggestion.

**Laugh!** Make the season fun! A man named Norman Cousins was diagnosed with a serious illness with a 1 in 500 chance for recovery. He read that disease is fed by negative emotions, so it only made sense to him that positive emotions like laughter, hope, and love could heal. After periods of hearty belly laughter from funny movies and books, his pain was greatly reduced and he slept through the night. In time, he became the 1 in 500 who recovered from the disease! How does this tie into the holidays? Laughing at holiday stress is good for the body mind, and spirit!

**Simplify.** Change that huge holiday party you were going to throw (or attend) into a quiet evening at home, complete with your favorite dinner, a hot lavender bath, and nothing but the glow of candlelight (keep all the electric lights off). Order gifts by catalog. Keep the decorations, cooking, and work to a minimum. In short, whatever you do, make sure it's simple, relaxing, and enjoyable.

**Slow down, stop, and smile.** Turn off the TV, put away the newspaper, douse the hype with eggnog, and take time to truly enjoy the season. Every year, when all is said and overdone, people stare at the mountains of wrapping paper, dishes, and credit card bills and ask, "What the heck happened?" This year, enjoy every moment as it comes along. Go for a drive and enjoy the festive lights with loved ones, bake cookies with the kids, and watch the Charlie Brown special for the 900th time. Life won't stop by to visit again, so we'd all better listen for the doorbell.

**Be healthy.** This time of year especially, we need to take care of our bodies as well as our minds. They're connected, without a doubt, and when we affect one the other is soon to follow. Keep eating healthfully. Contrary to popular belief, the holidays can't be a non-stop feast. Set aside a few special meals/occasions when you can eat without guilt, but keep meals sensible the rest of the time. You'll feel healthier, and that alone brings peace of mind. Also, try walking, exercising, practicing meditation (like the breathing exercise above), Tai Chi, Yoga, or other forms of healthy stress reduction. Want an easy and pleasant way to manage stress? Get a massage! It's too easy to "wait until after New Year's". Your body and mind need you *now!*

**Help others.** Donate time, clothes, food, compassion, and love to others this season. Taking a moment to make a small difference in someone's life far outweighs the good and bad the holidays have to offer. Sending a kind card to a family member or friend, dropping off a batch of cookies at St. Vincent De Paul Place in Middletown, even letting a car or shopper get in line ahead of you makes a world of difference. The most precious gifts cost nothing, and you will always receive much more than you give, we promise you.

"Peace on Earth" starts with our peace of mind, body and spirit, so in all the rush and hurry, please remember to take care of **you** this holiday season, because we can only heal the world after we heal ourselves.

*Our body is not limited to what is inside the boundary of our skin. It is much more immense. It includes even the layer of air around our Earth; for if the atmosphere were to disappear for even an instant, our life would end. There is no phenomenon in the universe that does not ultimately concern us, from a pebble resting at the bottom of the ocean, to the movement of a galaxy millions of light years away.*

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step*

*Happy Holidays, Jamie and Jenn*