



## **Soothing the Season... Natural Remedies to Ease Stress During the Holiday Season**

The holidays are here! There are office parties, social engagements, gift buying, children's recitals, holiday meals, travel, and financial decisions – all tapping on your shoulder and demanding attention. Before you know it, you're tired, overwhelmed and hardly a joy during the holiday season. What should you do to de-stress and unwind? Where to begin?

Most importantly, we have to resist the speediness around us. We are always forced to perform, to always be doing and going during the holidays. We really need to remember to slow down and breathe.

A consistent routine can also help alleviate anxiety. We don't know what to expect at any given time so we are always running on adrenaline; getting into a pattern can ease anxiousness.

While slowing down and adhering to a schedule may be two tactics to help deal with life's pressures, it's equally important to remember exercising, getting a massage, practicing yoga, and doing meditation can also help to take the stress out of the holidays and truly make it a joyful season for all.

Time and time again exercise has proven its ability to effectively reduce anxiety. Here's why: In cases of chronic panic and anxiety, the hormone cortisol is continually released and blood sugar levels take a nose dive, resulting in even more anxiety, fatigue and mood swings. Exercise counteracts this by reducing cortisol levels and balancing blood sugar levels.

Getting a massage releases endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemical, which can ease anxiety and stress. And by helping muscles truly relax, massage lowers blood pressure, increases deep sleep, reduces fatigue and increases energy. Like yoga, massage can also induce a meditative state or heightened awareness of the present moment, manifesting in emotional and spiritual balance.

Practicing yoga and meditating have thousands of years of anecdotal evidence behind their anti-anxiety effects, and the scientific research is consistently growing. One 1999 study calculated the role yoga played in the life of 50 first-year medical students in reducing anxiety during routine activities and prior to exams. Students practicing yoga showed significantly reduced anxiety levels after yoga practice, even on exam days. The yoga subjects also achieved a considerably high number of passing exams compared to the control students. "The breath, movement and posture are harmonized to remove physical blocks and tension in the body, promoting physical, emotional and spiritual well-being," Cass says.

Additional studies suggest medication can also induce greater immunity. How's that for holiday joy?



So where do you begin if the anxiety and stress seem to be ganging up on you? The first step: control your diet. Anxiety is fueled by diet. Make sure to eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and protein. Better yet, avoid refined sugars, caffeine and alcohol, which are empty calories that can over-stimulate the system and ultimately increase stress. Ingesting pesticides, chemicals and food additives overwhelms the liver and then it can no longer efficiently clean the blood. This imbalance contributes to anxiety.

Let's not forget that good night's sleep can always do a body good – think chamomile, skullcap, hops, passionflower and lavender for nightcap teas. Natural remedies may be the key to skating your way through this holiday season with the grace and ease you always include on your holiday wish list. This year, with a little natural help, you just might get them.