



As you wrap up the gifts for under the tree, does it ever feel like the holidays come pre-packaged with stress, making you unbalanced and irritable? Even the excitement and anticipation of the holidays can cause undue stress on the body and mind, and believe it or not, our bodies don't know the difference between good stress and bad stress.

The holidays often bring extraordinary stress to our lives such as dealing with difficult family members (can you say in-laws?), a higher than usual alcohol or food intake and just the need to get it all done. How can we approach the holiday season in a yogic way, to make ourselves healthier and happier?

If we cultivate an intention to treat ourselves better, we can produce a more centered and enjoyable holiday for ourselves and our loved ones. Here are 5 tips for a healthy, happy and yogic holiday season:

1. **Find refuge in yourself.** By taking the time to practice yoga, you are not only engaging in a sensible and healthy approach to the holidays and your life in general, but you are quieting the mind. The 90 minutes spent on your mat can pull you away from the rampant consumerism and excess that has invaded the holiday season. If you can't take the time for a class, find ten minutes to just breathe, slowly and deeply, allowing oxygen to replenish the brain, and help you

get grounded. Nurturing ourselves helps us to better nurture our loved ones.

2. **Move your body.** Staying active and physical, through yoga or any exercise, can help you stay centered. Exercise helps increase energy and reduce fatigue, so rolling out the yoga mat even when you feel the most zapped will produce positive results.

3. **Be good to yourself.** Take it easy. Get enough sleep. Avoid fatigue and don't overdo it. You're not always in a race, so consider some gentle or restorative yoga during the holidays, even if you're used to being first to finish. Sometimes slow and easy **does** win the race. **d**

4. **Be Mindful.** Be mindful of what you eat, drink and do during this time of year. How many excess pounds are put on between Thanksgiving and the New Year? If you eat well, and exercise, you can splurge on those holiday goodies, but remember all of those extra carbs and sugars will not only pack on the pounds, but make you feel draggy and down. Watch your alcohol intake and try not to over-indulge. Tis' the season to be Merry, but we always pay for excess.

5. **Look Inward.** Take the time to connect with yourself, and find what you really want. We must learn to listen to what is inside, because really, we always have to live with ourselves. Connect to yourself through nature, through music, through yoga or anything else that speaks to

you. Take a nap, take a walk, meditate, practice yoga-- find something that brings you peace and helps you feel centered and grounded.

By listening to our hearts, and taking care of ourselves, we can find inner peace this holiday season. When we feel grounded and balanced, we can put our best foot forward, taking our yoga off the mat and into the world this holiday season.

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