

HOLIDAY EXPECTATIONS

by Laurene Shields

As I walk away I feel a pit in my stomach. I have one week to spend at home with my family and every year I try to get up for it. I try and make it a good one. The key word here is try! Every year I am disappointed. My expectations of a fun holiday season are squelched. It becomes more of a week long survival course than the happy family experience that is portrayed in all the movies and that most of my friends talk about. I dread coming back to school, the questions - so how was it? Did you have a great time? If only they knew - it was horrible. I felt like a little kid again who couldn't do anything right. I fell back into old patterns that I thought I was long since past, and somehow I ended up feeling terrible about the holiday, about myself, and about my family. Oh there were good moments, but all in all somehow I lost a piece of myself.

Going home for the holidays is revered in our society in songs, movies, greeting cards and in our everyday assumptions of how the world should be but for many people going home is a difficult time - a time of tension and many mixed feelings. First off are the expectations of having a good time and the ever present hope that this time, this holiday, things will be better, things will work out. Then there is the mere fact that holidays bring together most if not all of the family with all of their expectations and quirks. Add to this, traditional rituals, the "shoulds" of participation, the miles away from your friends and/or partner and the week can become a blurrrrrrrrr.

Well let's step back for a minute. To start with what are your expectations for the holidays? Is it something you are doing for yourself, your parents, your partner? What have your past holidays been like? Chances are this one will not be much different unless YOU make some changes. The first change that you can make is becoming aware of how you feel about different parts of the holiday season. What are the parts you like and dislike? If you had a choice which parts would you choose to participate in? If any? Who in the family can you connect with? Who listens to you? Where do you feel safe and supported? Sometimes it's difficult to make basic decisions about what to include in a holiday because we automatically assume we are there for the duration. For example the part that I really love is the quiet time after dinner when I'll get a chance to talk with my cousin Pete who is also struggling with "family stuff" and is away of school back east. I don't get a chance to see him much and it's great to have somebody in the family who understands at least a little bit about me. What I really don't want to take part in is the before dinner "social" where it seems everybody is asking me when I am going to be finishing school, why I am still single and commenting about how I don't come home as much as I used to while the rest of the family frantically runs around trying to get dinner ready and Uncle Bob is in the living room, having had a little too much to drink and telling his "mildly" racist, sexist, homophobic jokes again. But you know I think I could even handle the before dinner social if I had a chance to come home five days ahead of time to help my mom. And then of course there are the two days after, which I will

stay because it seems the acceptable thing to do. Well what I'm suggesting is to begin to make some choices long before the holiday time arrives. Start making a plan by figuring out:

- How long do you want/need to be there?
- What events are you willing to participate in this year?
- What are some things that you could do while you are there that would help you feel sane? Going for walks, listening to music, going for a drive
- Who can you receive support from? Phone calls, visits, familiar books, safe places
- And, how can you limit those activities, experiences, events that are not good for you?

I am deciding for example to only go home two days ahead of time and to phone my cousin before I leave for my parents so that I can arrange to get together with him the second day I am home. I also am taking my Walkman with me and two tapes that I love to listen to which help me relax as well as a book that I am reading on dysfunctional families. I've decided that this time I am going to play the role of an observer and try and watch the dynamics of what goes on around me and write them down in a journal. I am also going to give myself permission to go out for a walk whenever I start feeling like this holiday is just too much and I have two people in my life that I know I can phone and talk to. I am only going to spend half of the social time before dinner with my family and the other half visiting an old friend from high school. I would still feel too uncomfortable leaving the day after dinner so I will stay my usual two days, and I am going to have one of my friends phone me to see how I am doing. All in all I still don't think it will be a hallmark card holiday season but I think I am making some good choices for myself and my final goal is to come back feeling like I have taken care of myself. I am going to let my family know ahead of time that I will only be coming home for four days. I actually feel like I am taking a big step in making these changes. It feels difficult and I am concerned about how my family is going to react. And yet I know that I am making positive choices for myself so I am going to do lots of self-talk even before I leave to keep myself focused. Some of the affirmations that I might use include:

- I am able to make changes around holiday time
- It is okay not to always do things "the way they have been done"
- I am taking care of myself this holiday season
- I am a whole and worthy person, capable of making positive choices for myself.

Self-talk can help combat the many messages which are deeply ingrained and which we all receive around holiday time. It is the one time in our society when people openly follow tradition, follow ritual, and follow old family patterns to create an idealistic image. Moreover, it is also a time when many people feel alone, that they don't fit in, that they are different from their family and that they are not worthy. This year, take the opportunity to make some changes so that you return feeling healthy and whole.

Yoga: Yoking the Powers of Body, Mind and Soul

by Carol Perrin

Are you stressed out? Feeling overwhelmed because you've got too much to do and too little time to do it in? You want to relax but the thought of taking time out stresses you out even more? Maybe it's time you tried a new way of handling stress - Yoga.

Yoga is a system of Indian philosophy. The word itself means to join or yoke. The purpose of Yoga is the joining or yoking of the powers of the body, mind, and soul. Yoga relaxes both your physical and mental states through various physical poses and breathing techniques.

The University offers two different types of Yoga classes, Yoga Kundalini and Yoga Hatha. Through the urging of several friends I decided to try one out. Not knowing anything about Yoga, I simply chose one. Yoga Hatha, and eagerly awaited the first day of class.

Actually, I wasn't extremely excited about it. I really didn't know what to expect. I pictured myself trying to twist my body into complicated, painful poses and feeling miserable.

I was pleasantly surprised when I showed up for class and we spent a good five to ten minutes just lying on our backs, relaxed and breathing deeply. The rest of the class time was spent going through various different stretching postures, similar to the stretches one does before running or aerobics. Throughout these poses we were instructed to clear our minds and totally focus on our breathing as well as the position and feel of our bodies. With each in-breath we were supposed to allow positive energy to enter our bodies and with each out-breath allow all of the negative energy to leave our bodies. If we found our mind wandering to other things we were instructed to bring it back to the present and once again focus on our

breath. We ended the class lying down again, eyes closed, breathing deeply.

I was pleasantly surprised at how much better I felt afterwards. Now I look forward to my class as a great way to relax and tune out from that list of fifty things I was supposed to have finished the day before.

The starting point for Yoga is with the breath. Surprisingly, many people do not know how to breathe correctly. They breathe through the mouth rather than the nose and only fill the upper portion of the lungs. The diaphragm is the principal muscle used in breathing. When you take a correct breath, the lower, middle, and upper portions of the lungs are filled with oxygen. The following exercise is great for relaxation as well as teaching yourself how to breathe with your diaphragm.

Lie down on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. It helps to place one hand on the abdomen and one

on the chest. The emphasis of breathing is on the abdomen, with the chest relaxed. Inhale deeply through your nose and expand your abdomen, keeping your chest and shoulders relaxed. Exhale slowly through your nose while pulling in your abdomen to the back of your spine. Concentrate on maintaining a steady rhythmic pattern. Relax as much as possible and focus on your breath. Try closing your eyes to relax further.

Now that I've diffused the image of a person trying to twist their body into painful, contorted poses and failing miserably, take the time some day to learn Yoga or another type of relaxation technique. In times of stress, Yoga can help you yoke your power of body, mind and soul.



MENTAL HEALTH TIDBITS

by Melanie Steed

ANGER...

* Anger and hostility may jeopardize your health. If you score high on psychological tests you have a greater chance of dying from heart disease, accidents, cancer and suicide contrasted with people who score low on hostility and anger.

NUTRITION FOR LESS STRESS

* There are foods that can actually aggravate our stress response and there are also nutrients that we need to replenish when we are under stress. So in times of high stress, or anytime, it's good to limit your intake of caffeine and alcohol because they tend to aggravate your stress response. Vitamin C rich foods will replenish the vitamin C used by the adrenal glands during episodes of physical stress. Your body also uses more complex carbohydrates and proteins when you're under stress, so eat good sources of protein (peas, beans, fish, lean meats, etc.) and complex carbohydrates (fruits, vegetables and whole grain products). Watch out for refined flours and sugars because these can also aggravate your stress response.

LAUGHTER...

* Norman Cousins, the man who literally laughed himself back to health after having a terminal illness says that "laughter is a form of inner jogging."

THINK YOU'RE A FAILURE?

* Ever feel like you're a failure? Sir Winston Churchill was considered by his father to be so "dull" that Winston's father doubted if he could earn a living. Thomas Edison was described by his teachers as "addled", his headmasters criticized that Edison "would never make a success of anything", and his father thought he was a "dunce". Albert Einstein was prompted by a teacher to drop out of school because of his poor performance in all his classes except math. The teacher then told him he'd never amount to anything.

CRYING...

* Do you know why after you cry you feel so calm? It's because crying gives your nervous, circulatory and respiratory systems a good workout.



EXERCISE AND STRESS

* Aerobic exercise can reduce both longterm and short term stress. It has been shown that after a single aerobic workout a person will feel less tension two to five hours afterward. A person who exercises regularly after many weeks may reduce their characteristic level of stress finding that they no longer become as nervous as they once did. Exercise has also shown to be effective in treating depression (Griest et al., 1979). This is not to say exercise should replace professional help for depression but that exercise is a helpful part of therapy. The "runner's high", a euphoria described by people after they have been running for at least 35 to 40 minutes, may be caused by a release of endorphins, which are the natural pain killers within the body.

ANGER...

* Anger affects the body like this: you release a hormone called norepinephrine which causes your heart to beat faster and your blood vessels to constrict. The result is a higher blood pressure which in turn causes strain on the heart and blood vessels.

"We're so engaged in doing things to achieve purpose of outer value that we forget that the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it's all about."

- Joseph Campbell

WORRYING...

* The difference between a worry and a concern is that a concern is something you can do something about whereas a worry is something you cannot do anything about. So if you can't do anything about your worry you might consider why you would allow a worry to make you so miserable. Another technique in dealing with worry is to take your worry to its logical extreme. Imagine what would be the worst thing that could happen, what you would do if this catastrophe happened and then prepare for it just in case...

STRESS...

* Three things in common for people who seem to cope with stress best are: 1) flexible and hopeful personality factors, 2) a good social support network of family and friends, and 3) a sense of control in one's life.

HOMESICKNESS

by Christina Maguire

Here you are at one of the most exciting and challenging times in your life. You are in college. Football games, parties, new friends, and a great sense of independence abound. You are making your own decisions and running your own life.

Sometimes, however, all of this can be too overwhelming. Adjusting to college life can be one of the hardest times in your life. Homesickness is just one reason this transition can be so difficult. After settling in and the newness of your environment wears off, separation from your loved ones can become very noticeable. Sometimes you find yourself feeling lonely and isolated, missing the familiar faces of home. Not only can loneliness be difficult, taking responsibility for everything you do and don't do can make you feel lost and a little scared.

When I first went away to college, I had a tough time making decisions for myself. Everything from what class-

es to take, to which shop I should have my car serviced at seemed like major decisions to me. Feeling alone, confused and anxious are common feelings that go along with being homesick. There are ways that you can deal with these feelings.

One way is by getting involved in student activities. The first thing that will happen is that you'll meet some new people. Just meeting someone that you can talk to sometimes helps in alleviating those feelings of solitude. It can also be useful in making decisions, because you can bounce your thoughts and ideas off of someone. Sometimes just being busy with activities and people can take some of the time that you might be spending feeling homesick. Joining clubs or organizations gets you involved and puts you in the situation of meeting new people who have similar interests.

Another helpful hint is to simply keep in touch with those at home

This can work real well if a schedule is set up. What I mean by this is having a certain time once a week or every couple of weeks that you will call home or your family or friends will call you.

Writing a quick letter to those you miss will pay off when you receive a letter back from them. I know when I receive a letter from home, it makes my day. Finally, making new friends can be one of the most helpful ways of adjusting to your new home. Sometimes it can appear that everyone else has all the friends they need or want, but looks can be deceiving. There are students on campus just like you. Here are a few tips to help make finding them easier.

- Put yourself in a position to meet people
- Take the initiative to start a conversation
- Give others a chance to talk by asking something about them

Lastly, take advantage of all the campus resources. These people are here to help you and to provide any advice or assistance you need. Some of these support services include the Dean of Students, Student Affairs, Academic Advising, Student Health Center, Health Education office, counselors, tutors, resident assistants and the Career Counseling Center.

Don't forget the most abundant resource on campus - other students. If your life as a college student is not the way you would like it to be, remember that you have the ability to make things better for yourself. Get involved in activities, keep in touch with those at home, make yourself available to meet new friends and walk right in and use the resources here on campus.

Continued from Page 1

they would die, within a relatively short period of time, despite medical intervention, actually died. It has also been observed that when a medicine man uses a counter charm rapid recovery will ensue. Without considering the phenomena of supernatural, can the stress of fear kill? The theory used to explain this phenomenon states that these victims' feelings of hopelessness can actually lead to death. (MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, McElroy and Townsend). Our perception of stressors can have a huge impact on the outcome of our health, albeit not usually that extreme!

An important element contributing to a student's success is perceiving stressors as a challenge or an opportunity. We all look at stress differently. What is stressful to me may not be stressful to you. For example, if a teacher passes out a pop quiz, one person may "flip out," another may become very calm and collected during the quiz but start to shake afterwards, yet another may not be affected at all. A lot of stress or too little stress may make you unproductive or productive depending on you and your perception. Finding that optimal level of stress, but not too much stress is an important skill for maximizing your potential.

So what do you do if you start to show some of the symptoms of too much stress (see list)? First, find out what is it that is causing you the most distress. It could be relationships, work, life changes, school work or that dripping faucet. Who knows?

Second, understand your reaction to the stressor. If it is a long-term stressor, you may be reacting to it with physical symptoms such as headaches, sleep disorders, fatigue, etc. or you may increase behaviors such as smoking, drinking, drug use, excessive laughter and other behaviors.

Third, maintain a positive "self-talk". Your own self-talk can be your best friend or your worst enemy depending on what you tell

yourself. If you beat yourself up by telling yourself you're stupid, unworthy, or you have to be perfect at everything, this is not good! Self-talk can make you hear pound, palms sweat, blood pressure rise, or it can help you "go with the flow".

Fourth, identify what you can control and what you can't. Procrastination sometimes creeps into the area of stressors you can control and can cause you a lot of distress (bad stress). And fifth, learn some relaxation techniques and use them regularly. Techniques such as progressive relaxation, meditation, and deep breathing can do wonders for your mental health.

Instead of letting stress stalk you, take a proactive stance instead of a reactive stance on stress. Evaluate what stressors you want and don't want. Recognize the stressors you can or can't control and be aware of your perception of stress. Then take action on what you can change and exchange stressing out for eustressing out!

Making the Most of Your Time

by Cory Fox

Have you ever had one of those days when it seems that there just isn't enough time to get everything you want or need to get done accomplished? If you have had this feeling, then what you might need to do is some scheduling in your day. Probably the best thing to do is some time management. Here are fourteen easy steps to help reduce some of the burden of feeling rushed or overloaded by the pressure of school or life in general.

1. Set goals for what you'd like to accomplish.
2. Prioritize your goals and activities. Make a "Do" list everyday.
3. Schedule your activities. Give yourself enough time to accomplish those activities.
4. Do the most difficult things early in the day. Start working on big projects earlier in

the day that way you're not so tired.

5. Be aware of your best internal times. If you do certain activities better during certain times of the day keep that in mind for planning your day.
6. Learn to say "NO". Be assertive. Stay on task. Do what you had planned to do.
7. Establish routines for yourself.
8. Ask yourself, "How would things be if I did not do this right now?"
9. Keep a calendar book to enter future commitments.
10. Handle each piece of paper only once. When you work on something try to get it done, unless it's a big project and you're doing it in stages.
11. Use break periods to restore energy.

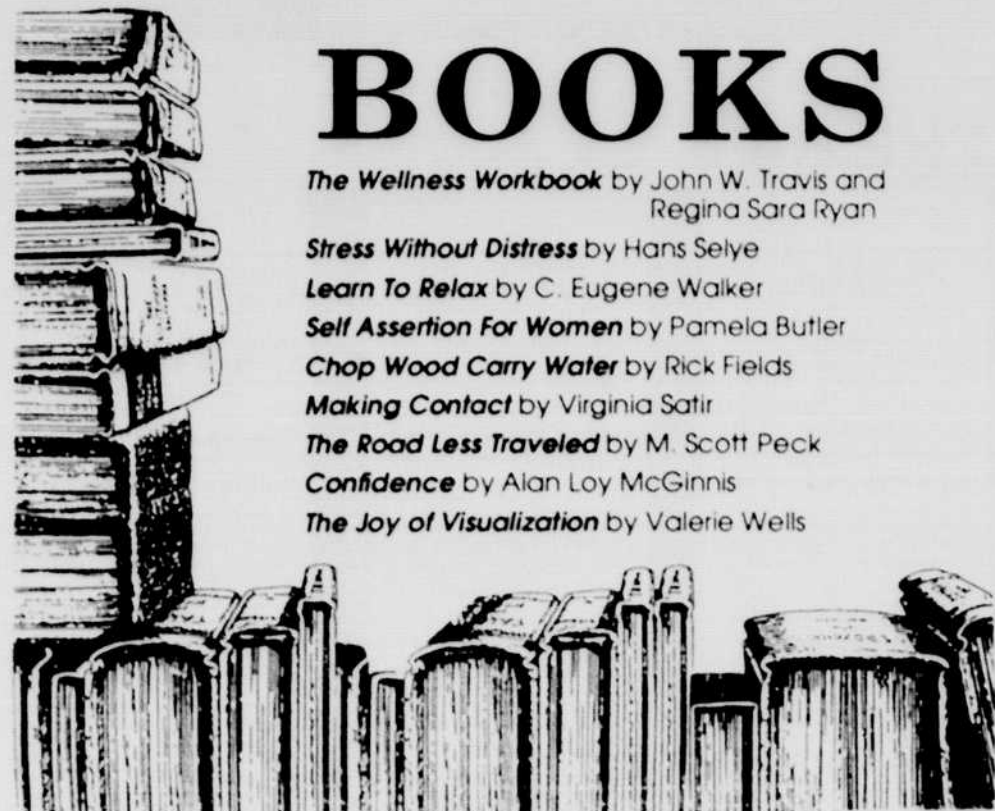
With effective time management, people can plan for the

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