



## Holiday Health Tips

by Olivia H. Miller

### EASY WAYS TO SHRUG OFF STRESS

Are you one of those people who – like many of us – swear that the next holiday season will be different? You know, slower, calmer, more peaceful? But is the cold fog of dread starting to creep in as the days get shorter and you-know-what is right around the corner? Oh, no here come them ole holiday blues again, mama!

Well, no need to panic. Below are some simple tips to help you make it through the frantic holiday season with a touch more grace and ease.

### B-R-E-A-T-H-E!

Can you see yourself standing in a long line at your least favorite store, impatient, tired, frazzled and annoyed? Treat yourself to five blissfully slow, deep breaths. Pay attention to each inhalation and exhalation. It won't make the line move any faster – sorry! – but it will have a calming effect on your mental state. And don't wait for a long line to breathe. Enjoy a few rounds of conscious deep breathing several times a day.

### SHRUG IT OFF

So you're stuck on the holiday treadmill and can't get off. Find a quiet place (bathroom, bedroom, closet, your car). Inhale as you raise your shoulders in an exaggerated shrug; silently say, "oh." As you exhale, drop your shoulders and silently say, "well." A couple of rounds of "oh, well" breath in coordination with the movement of your shoulders can help release some psychic holiday burdens. Oh, well...



Shoulder Shrugs

### E-Z NECK STRETCHES

The holidays can be a pain in the neck – literally and figuratively. A lot of tension gets stored in the neck, which causes muscles to constrict and results in headaches and fatigue. Before you reach for more aspirin, try a few simple neck stretches (bonus points for closing your eyes as you do them):

With your chin level and shoulders down, inhale and turn your head slowly to the right, pause for a moment; on the exhalation, turn your head slowly to the left, pause; repeat for a few more rounds.

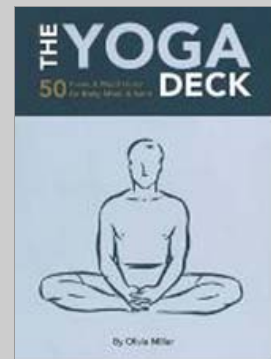
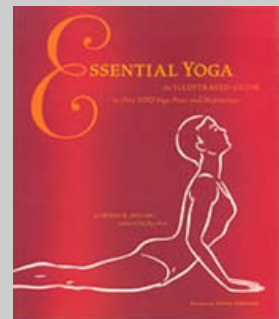


Olivia H. Miller [www.ohmworks.com](http://www.ohmworks.com) lives in Marstons Mills. She is the author of eight health and wellness card decks and ESSENTIAL YOGA, a comprehensive guide to the practice of hatha yoga, published by (Chronicle Books)

She facilitates private and group Stress Buster sessions for businesses, conferences and meetings.

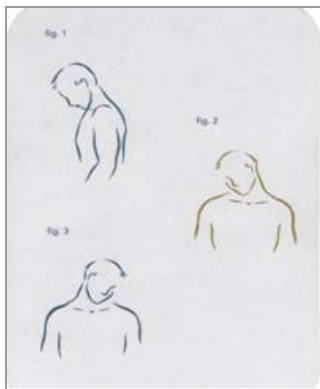
She is also the editor of Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches? (Beacon Press) and teaches workshops on the first steps to getting published.

Visit Olivia H. Miller at [www.ohmworks.com](http://www.ohmworks.com)





Neck Rotation



Neck Rolls

With your head facing forward, inhale and on the exhalation gently drop your right ear toward your right shoulder; inhale and raise your head to center; exhale and gently drop your left ear toward your left shoulder; repeat several more times on each side. Ahhhh...

Inhale and on the exhalation, drop your chin toward your chest (without overstretching); inhale and look up toward the ceiling; repeat several more times.

If you don't feel better, repeat two more times and call me in the morning.



Neck Flexion

#### FORWARD BEND

An easy way to release tension is to bend forward. While seated in a stable chair, separate your legs more than hip-width apart and place your hands on your knees; slowly begin to lower your head and upper torso. Go as low as you comfortably can. (Note: If you have high blood pressure or any eye problems do not let your head go lower than your heart.) If you wish, let your arms hang. Your breathing will be shallow but breathe. When you decide to come back up (take your time, this is good for your complexion!), make sure your head comes up last so you won't be any dizzier than you normally are this time of year.

#### BACKWARD BEND

If you need more energy, you can drink another double espresso or you try this instead. Stand with your legs about hip distance apart; knees slightly bent. Place your hands on either side of your low back, palms against your body and fingertips down; look up toward the ceiling and do a slight backbend. Don't overdo it; this isn't an Olympic tryout...bend to where you feel a nice stretch along the front of your body.

#### SMILE

It's amazing how quickly your mood can change if you turn up the corners of your mouth. And you can do it anywhere, anytime...even during the holidays. Try this. Close your eyes and frown. Move your head as if saying "no." How does that make you feel? With your eyes still closed, smile. Gently shake your head as if saying "yes." Feel any difference? Spend a few minutes a day doing

“mouth yoga.” You’ll feel better...and it won’t cost you anything, you get to keep it and share it with everyone. Now that’s a gift!

#### GRATITUDE

‘Tis the season to be overwhelmed, overtired and overextended. And that can make us overgrouchy. Stop and take a moment every single day to find one thing you are grateful for. Gratitude = Happiness. So, take a few deep breaths and finish this sentence:

I am grateful for\_\_\_\_\_.

#### TTSP

That stands for my favorite truism: This too shall pass. When all else fails, close your eyes and say it like you mean it: “This too shall pass.” Some day it will be January.

So there you are – breathing, stretching, smiling, grateful and philosophical. Holidays? Bring ‘em on!