

# Find the Reason for the Season

10 ways to reduce stress this holiday season

By Amanda N. Wegner



With all the trappings and trimmings, it's tough to keep your mind, body and spirit tuned during the holidays. But with a little change in perspective, it's easy to minimize the stress. Here are 10 ways to find your true reason for the season.

## 1. Meditate

To minimize stress and have more fun and enjoyment, Candace Luma Suarez, MS, owner of Luma Light Healing, which offers soul-directed energy healing, suggests meditation. "Connecting with yourself first will allow you to connect more easily with friends and family, and to know what activities will bring you joy, and what activities you may want to avoid."

Begin with a small amount of time first thing in the morning. Continue for at

least 21 days to make it a habit. If you're new to the practice, try a guided meditation. A Web or iTunes search will bring up some great options, and Candace offers one of her own on her Web site, [www.lumalighthealing.com](http://www.lumalighthealing.com). "You don't have to be an expert at

meditation to get the benefits,” says Candace.

Similarly, adds Katie Licht, a local registered yoga teacher, you can center yourself with breath awareness. Lying, sitting or standing, create long, full exhales by drawing the abdominals toward the spine. On inhale, release the abdominals slightly for a full breath where the belly, ribs and chest expand.

## 2. Move

“Begin each day with movement,” says Katie, such as yoga, running, walking the dog, dancing or Tai Chi. Movement on any level increases endorphins, oxygen and circulation; eases muscle tension; lowers stress hormone levels; and even improves digestion.

## 3. Begin with gratitude

“Give thanks for anything good in your life,” shares Katie. Fresh air, your silly cat, the way your kids hug you, or happy memories can start your day off right. “Beginning the day with a positive state of mind allows you to have more tools to handle stress,” adds Katie. “Small things are put into perspective because as a whole, life is good.”

## 4. Eat right

Our bodies are efficient, amazing machines when given the right balance of fuel. Practice moderation of sugar, caffeine, alcohol and heavy foods. Eat veggies, fruits, whole grains and organic meats for well-balanced energy. “Don’t deprive yourself of holiday goodies, just start with nutrient-rich foods first,” Katie advises.

## 5. Create your own traditions

“It’s a two-step process,” says Mary Coughlan of SageHeart Life Coaching. “Be willing to let go of what doesn’t work for you, even if Aunt Gertrude insisted it was necessary.” Create traditions for you and your family that truly represent your feelings and values to enrich your season.

“If you’re doing something simply because you think you ‘should,’” says

Pat Barone, Catalyst Coaching, “the idea is coming from outside yourself and may not have meaning for you. Be ruthless. Make your holiday only what you want it to be.”

## 6. Give of yourself

A gift of a thing says you value the person and that gift represents your love. Consider skipping the middle man and show your love directly with your whole-hearted attention, time, accessibility and acceptance. “These are some of the faces of love,” says Mary.

## 7. Make it personal

Consider personalizing gifts to offer your time or assistance, Mary suggests.

## 8. Make deadlines

Pat finishes her holiday cards by December 5 and mails long-distance gifts by December 13 because “structure organizes chaos.”

## 9. Simplify

During the holidays, Sandra Remus, Body in Balance, has small intimate gatherings where she cooks a great meal, makes a tasty cocktail, and chats with friends through the night. “It’s easy for me to over-plan,” she says. “I keep thinking I need one more thing, where instead, a few well-made items taste so much better.”

Send cards, but pare down the list. Make one or two kinds of holiday treats instead of 10. Gather at a nice restaurant before the holidays to minimize the work involved with putting out a feast at home.

## 10. Re-treat yourself

Create a special “retreat” for yourself amid the chaos. “One of the reasons I have such fixed deadlines is that I complete everything I need to do, including any early cooking I can, by December 22,” says Pat. “Then December 23 is my retreat day.” Book a massage, visit a spa, have lunch with a friend, or do something else you enjoy. Make it a day of total relaxation. **mb**

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