

As we reach the climax of the holiday season, we often begin to feel overwhelmed, fatigued, or even depressed. We may even wonder if all the stress is worth it.

This year, give yourself the gift of physical and emotional health and wellness by practicing deep breathing. The busier and more stressed-out we feel, the shallower our breath becomes. This creates a vicious cycle of depriving ourselves of the additional oxygen we need to combat stress and keep our immune system healthy. Many studies have shown that slow, deep breathing calms the autonomic nervous system (responsible for our unconscious body functions) and lowers blood pressure. It also helps to quiet the mind and enable clearer thinking.

***Here is a breathing exercise you can try right now!*** Sit tall, lifting the chest and letting the shoulders relax down and back. Keep the ears lined up over the shoulders. Relax the belly and let the diaphragm expand as you slowly inhale, for a count of 6. When the lungs are full, hold the breath in for a count of 3. Exhale slowly and completely, for a count of 7 (yes, the exhale should be longer than the inhale- to release toxins). Hold the breath "out" of the lungs for a count of 2 before beginning the next breath. Repeat 4 - 5 times.

You will feel more relaxed and energized. Ready to finish that last minute holiday shopping, wrapping, or whatever!

Have a safe and happy holiday!  
Be Healthy, Get Fit, Stay Strong!

***Margie Connolly,***  
***Certified Personal Trainer***  
***Wellness Coach***  
***[www.mypersonalfitness.biz](http://www.mypersonalfitness.biz)***