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The holidays are a time when we've added new obligations to our already busy lives, with a deadline that everyone else is also trying to meet. We can become so focused on what we need to get done, that we don't notice the stress we're adding to our bodies and the toll it's taking. The stress hormones cause a decrease in one's immunity, making us more likely to get sick during this time. By making a commitment to ourselves during this time we can help to ameliorate the effects of stress.

The first thing to do is to commit to breathing. When we're stressed, we don't notice that we have constricted, rapid, shallow breathing. Commit to taking one deep breath, in through the nose and deep into the abdomen at least once each hour. Breathing deeply helps calm the physical stress response. Though one deep breath per hour is powerful in that it shows us when we're not breathing deeply.

Likewise, add doing 5 minutes each day of stretching or yoga. When we're stressed, we tend to hold tension in our muscles- the shoulders and neck, especially. Everyone has the time for 5 minutes of stretching. Though the time may seem short, it leads to a greater awareness of the tension we're holding, reminding us to release it. Also commit to exercise. Exercise decreases stress and anxiety and elevates the mood. And no time isn't an excuse. If you're Christmas shopping, park as far away as possible. Take stairs everywhere. Commit to getting more movement than you normally would. Committing to doing these few steps will allow you to notice your stress and relax. By the time New year's comes around you're well on your way to a healthier practice.