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**December 2022**

## How to **ACE** the holiday season

Everything seems to get faster towards the end of the year, like a landslide accelerating down a hill. This anchoring and grounding technique will help you stay calm, balanced and energised into 2023.

The technique was developed by Dr Russ Harris and is called dropping anchor, or ACE. It is particularly useful when you feel overwhelmed or swept up in the end-of-year frenzy. You can remember how to do it by remembering three letters: A C E

### **A is for Acknowledging your thoughts and feelings.**

Observe what's going on in your head and your body. No need to judge it, just notice whatever you're thinking and feeling.

### **C is for Come back into your body**

Get out of your head and get into your body. Connect with your physical body by trying one of these:

- push your feet hard into the floor

- straighten up your spine
- press your fingertips together
- stretch your arms
- slowly breathe.

### **E is for Engage in what you're doing**

Sometimes we're so caught up in the frenzy of thoughts and feelings that we forget where we are. Notice your surroundings, and try this 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 trick. Find:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you are touching
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 taste in your mouth. ✕

## When everything feels too much: breathe

One of the most powerful techniques to feel more balanced and grounded is to simply notice your breath.

Take a moment now to try it.

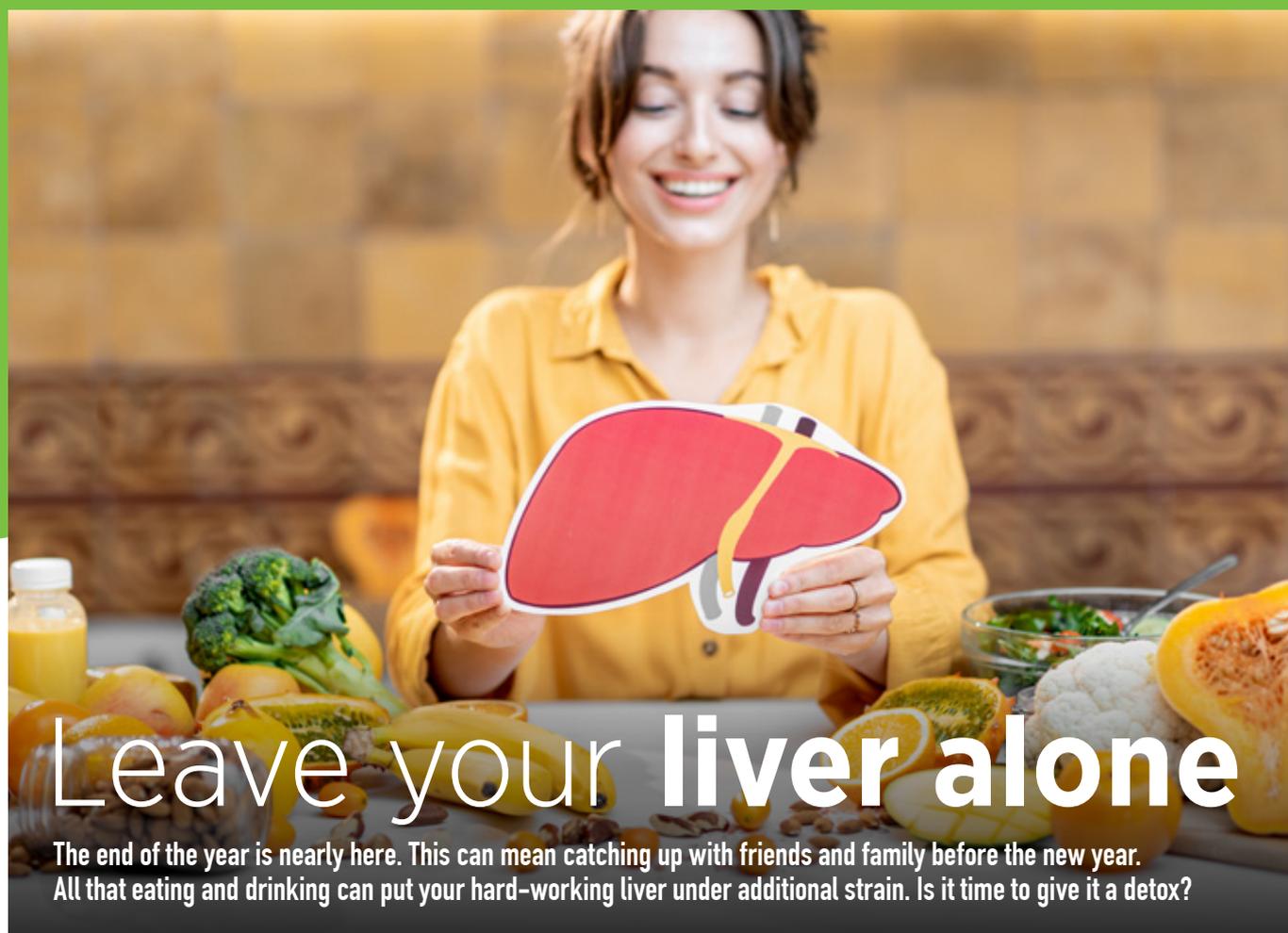
- Breathe in slowly through your nose.
- Notice the air as it flows in your nose and down to your lungs, see how your lungs and belly expand.
- Then notice the breath again as you exhale and your chest and belly go back down.
- Repeat.

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December 3 is International Day of People with Disabilities, a day to share the message of inclusion and diversity for people with a disability. More than a billion people worldwide are living with a disability. Read more about this annual event here: [idpwd.org](http://idpwd.org)



# Leave your liver alone

The end of the year is nearly here. This can mean catching up with friends and family before the new year. All that eating and drinking can put your hard-working liver under additional strain. Is it time to give it a detox?

It's easy to picture your heart and your brain. We know what they look like, where they are and what they do. But your liver? Not so easy.

Your liver is really good at its job. Weighing in at around 1.5 kilograms (3.3 pounds), it's your largest internal organ and processes almost everything you eat and drink. It even cleans your blood and helps with energy production and digestion. A healthy liver fights infection, makes and stores vitamins and minerals, assists in hormone production and gets rid of harmful toxins such as alcohol and some drugs.

## Can I cleanse and detox my liver?

Isn't there a way of saving our livers all that hard work of detoxing? What about those special detox smoothies, teas, powders and juices that promise to detox?

"The only thing these remove from your body is your money," says US liver specialist Dr Kaveh Hoda.

Dr Hoda explains that your liver does an extraordinary job of removing toxins from your body, and in cases where it's overloaded – whether by excess alcohol intake or a poison such as arsenic or lead – you'll need a medical detox intervention, not an over-the-counter preparation. Many of

these do little but put you on an unbalanced diet, which isn't good for your liver or the rest of your body.

Treat your liver well, and it's capable of repairing itself and even creating new healthy liver tissue. But if it stops working there is no detox that can save it and no machine that can do its job. Once it's failed, you'll need a liver transplant to survive.

## Alcohol and your liver

One of your liver's major roles is to get rid of any toxins that could threaten your health. Alcohol is one of these.

Your liver is the body's alcohol control station, says the Liver Foundation. But it can only process so much alcohol at any one time.

"In order to detoxify your body from the alcohol, your liver is putting itself in the firing line," says the Liver Foundation. "The liver is like the firefighter, going into a burning house to put out the fire."

The more alcohol you drink the more you are asking from your liver, putting it at greater risk of disease including fatty liver (where fat builds up in your liver and can cause inflammation) and cirrhosis. Cirrhosis is where the cells of the liver are gradually replaced by scar tissue, which seriously affects the function of your liver.

To save your liver from the unhealthy effects of alcohol, either avoid it, or stick to a safe level of drinking safe level of drinking (see below). ✕

## How to look after your liver

The Liver Foundation recommends the following:

- **Exercise regularly and eat a healthy diet.** Eat a diet high in plant foods and low in sugar and processed food. Poor nutrition, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle are among the most common causes of fatty liver disease.
- **Stick to alcohol guidelines.** Every country has different guidelines so be sure to check. In general, the less alcohol you have, the better it is for your health.
- **Get vaccinated.** Ensure you're vaccinated, including Hepatitis A and B and Covid19.

# 5 ways napping improves your life

Naps are often considered unnecessary but there are many benefits to getting in a little sleep during the day. Here are five reasons why a nap may be just what the doctor ordered.

**1. Naps may help you live longer.** Research shows a regular nap can lower your blood pressure and cut your chance of having heart attack in later life. One study found that a 20-minute nap resulted in an average drop in blood pressure of 5mm Hg – that’s about the same as a low dose of blood pressure medication.

**2. Naps help repair a sleep deficit.** Sleep scientists say for the best physical and mental health we should aim for between seven and nine hours’ sleep every day. Many of us don’t get anywhere near this, and a build-up of sleep loss over a few days can affect us physically, mentally and emotionally. Napping can help plug this gap.

**3. Naps improve mood, alertness and energy.** A wealth of research has found that even a short nap

can boost your energy and alertness. Other research suggests naps help improve emotional regulation and increase your ability to tolerate frustration.

**4. Naps improve our ability to learn and remember.** Neuroscientists at the National University of Singapore reported in the journal *Sleep* that brief dozes revive the hippocampus, an area of the brain responsible for forming new memories.

**5. Naps can lower your stress levels.** A short sleep during the day can help strengthen your ability to manage stress, says *Psychology Today*. Recent research shows that naps reduce stress and strengthen the immune system in people who are sleep deprived. ✕

## How and when to nap

The key to a good nap is all in the timing.

Australia’s Sleep Health Foundation recommends napping for 15-30 minutes. Any longer and you may wake up feeling groggy, a feeling called sleep inertia that can make it more difficult to do things well.

And according to sleep physiologist Dr Guy Meadows, author of *The Sleep Book: how to sleep well every night*, we should aim to nap after lunch. He says the sleepy feeling we have at this time “actually happens because you get a little dip in what we call the ‘alerting signals’, the waking signal that comes from your internal body clock that regulates your sleep and wake.”

But don’t nap too late in the day, warns Dr Matthew Walker, the founder-director of the Centre for Human Sleep Science at the University of California, Berkeley.

He recommends napping before 3pm. “If you nap too late in the day it’s a bit like snacking before main meal, it just takes the edge off your sleep hunger at night,” he said.

### But I have lots to do!

You may not feel the need to nap. And it’s not always convenient. A nap may be easier to fit in if you spend the day at home, not so much when you’re at work with colleagues around you.

Dr Meadows says finding a quiet spot just to rest with your eyes closed can do more good than you might realise. If you can head out into a park at lunchtime and close your eyes. “Seeing it as an opportunity to rest is really important. Even if you don’t fall asleep, you still get benefits.”

### Napping isn’t for everyone

If you experience insomnia you may have disrupted circadian rhythms and a daytime nap may make this worse. Ask your doctor for a referral to a sleep specialist for help treating insomnia.



# How to cope when Christmas isn't merry

It's like an unwritten rule: you have to be happy at Christmas. All the movies, all the ads, all the social media posts — they all say so.



But what if you're not? What if the holiday season is actually incredibly stressful or lonely for you? How do you cope? We've put together expert advice to help you get through the holiday season, even when things aren't perfect.

## Remember: you're not alone

You might feel like the only person in the world not enjoying yourself at this time, but the truth is, many, many other people struggle at this time of year too.

The statistics prove it.

- Relationships Australia says Christmas is considered to be one of the six most stressful life events, along with divorce, moving house and changing jobs.
- Lifeline Australia, the 24/7 crisis support line will receive around 4000 calls or texts every day over the Christmas season – it's by far their busiest time of year.
- Domestic and family violence incidences increase over Christmas, revealing the fault-lines and extra pressures people are facing on top of their day-to-day struggles.

- Requests for help from charitable organisations such as the also skyrocket around Christmas – not only for financial assistance but for emotional support too.

## Who isn't stressed at Christmas?!

Even when your life is generally OK, Christmas can still be incredibly stressful.

There's a huge lead-up. It seems everyone wants to "catch up before the end of the year", right when you're facing all your personal and work-related end-of-year deadlines.

If you have children, you'd be familiar with the relentless list of year-end celebrations, concerts and functions, all packed into December, just when everyone is worn out from a long year.

Then you've got the planning and decision-making. Who goes where for Christmas lunch, and what should you buy your mother-in-law?

And all that is before Christmas week even starts, with the complicated tensions of family.

Add in grief over a loved one who has

passed, or the extra stress of shared parenting and blended families, along with being thrown into contact with people you usually try to avoid, and you've got a recipe for a very difficult time.

So what do other people do to cope?

Here's some advice for common situations at Christmas:

### 1. Feeling overwhelmed

Advice for when you feel the pressure of everything you feel you're supposed to do for Christmas:

- **Be realistic**

The Anxiety Centre says, "Life isn't perfect. It's never going to be."

"...we have to be realistic with things not being perfect, including how the Christmas season plays out.

"Learning to accept the imperfections in life and rolling with them can reduce a significant amount of stress.

"Being realistic will allow you to enjoy "what is" rather than being disappointed or upset by what "should have been."



- **You're allowed to say no.**

"No" is one of the most powerful words you can say," says The Anxiety Centre.

"Saying "no" is not being selfish. You shouldn't feel guilty for saying "no." Saying "no" to something means you can say "yes" to something else.

- **2. Financial pressures**

Better Health Channel have excellent advice for managing money stress at Christmas:

One of their top tips is to set a budget and stick to it. Remember, there are no rules on how much you need to spend at Christmas. Don't compare yourself to everyone else on social media, or be swayed by those ads of people loving their expensive gifts.

Better Health suggests ways to give meaningful presents that don't cost money, such as a babysitting voucher where you offer to babysit for an evening, or offer to help out with a task that needs doing around the house or in the garden.

- **3. Separation or divorce**

All those images of happy couples and families can be devastating if you've recently had a breakup. It's even harder if children are involved.

Better Health Channel's top advice for dealing with Christmas after relationship breakdown is to allow yourself to feel your emotions. "If you prefer to put on a brave face for others, give yourself enough time alone to help deal with your feelings."

If you're also now navigating two separate households for family Christmas, consider staggering the Christmas celebrations so that the children can spend Christmas Day with one parent and Boxing Day with the other, as an example. You can then swap over the next year.

- **4. Loneliness**

According to the Red Cross, up to one third of people feel lonely over Christmas. If you're dreading Christmas because it makes the loneliness feel even worse, Health Direct has some expert advice:

- **Volunteer.** Why not lend a hand to a local shelter over Christmas? There are lots of charities who need help. You'll connect with people and feel good about making a positive contribution.
- **Attend community events.** Find out what's on locally and get involved. Whether it's Christmas carols or local markets, getting out and about can help relieve loneliness.
- **Make plans for Christmas Day.** Develop a plan in advance to avoid feeling depressed or stressed on the day. Perhaps make yourself a special breakfast, buy yourself a gift in advance so that you can enjoy on the day, attend a local church service, or take a stroll through the local park to give yourself a treat.

Remember, there's no law that says you have to do anything specific at Christmas. If necessary, log out of any social media so you're not facing endless streams of other people's happy snaps, and focus on what's meaningful for you. ✕

# No need for speed

**You're on a 10-kilometre journey. But you're in a hurry. So you increase your speed from 60 km an hour to 65 km an hour. This doubles your risk of crashing. And it saves you all of 75 seconds.**

Cars may be getting smarter and roads safer, but many of us still continue to drive dangerously.

Worldwide, every year the lives of approximately 1.3 million people are cut short as a result of a road traffic crash. And according to Jerome Carslake, Manager of the National Road Safety Partnership Program (NRSPP), the most common causes of road fatalities and car accidents causing serious harm are speed, fatigue, distraction (including mobile phones), and alcohol or drugs.

Jerome also says, "60-70 percent of the patients trauma surgeons treat have been involved in road accidents." Road crashes cost most countries about 3% of their GDP, which is huge - in comparison total health expenditure is usually about 10% of GDP.

## Why speed kills

Speed is the number one cause of vehicle accidents in many places. Speeding isn't just travelling above the designated speed limit. It's also driving too fast for the conditions - wet weather, curves, traffic or areas with lots of pedestrians.

No matter the cause of the crash, vehicle speed directly affects the force of the impact and resulting trauma. The faster you

drive, the greater the risk of serious injury or death, says the NSW Centre for Road Safety. This is because:

- You have less time to react to a hazard.
- The distance travelled before coming to a stop is greater. When travelling at 40 km/h it takes 27 metres to stop. This increases to 56 metres when travelling at 60 km/h.
- The speed upon impact is greater.

To stay safe, NSW Centre for Road Safety advises that you:

- Regularly check your speed to ensure you're travelling within the posted speed limit.

- Take note of the speed advisory signs. They help ensure you drive through that section of road safely.
- Keep at least a three second gap between you and the vehicle in front. If you're travelling at higher speeds, increase the distance to allow at least five seconds to allow you enough time to react and brake.
- In poor conditions (such as fog or wet weather) drive slower and leave a larger gap between you and the vehicle in front.
- Plan for plenty of travel time and rest breaks, so you don't feel the need to speed. ✘



## Ask an expert about ...

### Q What's the best choice of fluid when I'm exercising?

When you're exercising, sweating is the main way your body maintains optimal temperature, says Sports Dietitians Australia. The more you exercise and the higher the temperature around you, the more you will sweat.

You'll need to drink fluids during and after exercise to replace fluids lost in sweat and prevent dehydration.

When you're dehydrated, your exercise performance will suffer, the exercise will feel much harder, and the risk of heat stress increases. And you can't rely on thirst when you're exercising, as you've

usually lost significant fluid before you feel thirsty.

The choice of drink options can be confusing.

You can't go past plain water, which is all you'll need to replace fluid, especially in low intensity and short duration sports. But if you are involved in high intensity and endurance sports, a sports drink with added carbohydrate (often in the form of glucose, sucrose or fructose) and electrolytes will enhance your performance.

The carbohydrate in these drinks provides a muscle energy source as well as improving flavour.

Electrolytes such as sodium are lost in sweat and must be replaced during and after prolonged exercise. Sodium in a drink improves your fluid intake as it stimulates the thirst mechanism, promotes both carbohydrate and water uptake in the intestines, and reduces the volume of urine produced after exercise.

And a word of warning about alcohol. It's not a good choice immediately after exercise. It impairs vital recovery processes and may also reduce your ability to rehydrate effectively. ✘

## App of the month

### What's Up? app

The What's Up? app features a comprehensive diary that allows you to log daily moods and habits, along with a feelings tracker that asks you to rate your emotions on a scale from 1 to 10.

You can use it as an easy way to track your thoughts and feelings.

It also has a positive and negative habit tracker, where you can set goals to practice healthy habits like meditation, journaling, or exercising.

What's Up? also has a grounding game designed to help users return to the present when stress is taking over.

The app is available on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

# News Bites



## A two-minute walk can improve blood sugar

Hitting the couch after dinner may be tempting, but getting up and walking for just two minutes can be surprisingly good for your blood sugar levels, says a new paper.

Scientists already knew that going for a 15-minute walk after a meal could reduce blood sugar levels, helping to ward off Type 2 diabetes. But a meta-analysis of seven studies found that even a few minutes of walking after a meal were enough to significantly improve blood sugar levels.

Although light walking at any time is good for your health, a short walk within 60 to 90 minutes of eating a meal is especially useful in minimising blood sugar spikes, as that is when blood sugar levels tend to peak. ✕

## You have some control over your cancer risk

We've always known that our lifestyle plays a role in the risk of some cancers. What we now know is just how much a role it plays.

Research published in *The Lancet* shows us that half of global cancer deaths can be attributed to lifestyle factors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, a lack of physical activity and poor diet.

And far from being gloomy, you can view this news as positive, says Professor Simone Pettigrew, head of food policy at the George Institute for Global Health.

"People tend to think that cancer is a death sentence," Pettigrew told smh.com.au. "This is telling us we can actually reduce our risk substantially. This puts it back in our control.

"Smoking remains the top cancer risk factor, even though rates have dropped significantly, followed by alcohol use and high body mass index." ✕

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## Free recipe book from Heart Foundation

In response to rising grocery prices, the Australian Heart Foundation has released *The Budget Family Recipe Book* featuring cheap, easy and healthy versions of popular meals such as tacos, pizza, souvlaki and pasta.

The Heart Foundation is concerned that many people view less healthy food such as takeaway meals as a more affordable and convenient option, owing to rising grocery prices and low availability of some produce.

Each dish in the free book is jam-packed full of heart-healthy nutrients and flavour, without the high salt and saturated fat contents of many take-away food options.

Heart Foundation senior dietitian Jemma O'Hanlon said junk food and pre-prepared meals might appear cheaper, but often aren't.

"They cost more in two ways: first, to your hip pocket, and second to your heart health," she said.

"This is because processed meals are usually packed with sodium and saturated fats, which can raise your blood pressure and levels of bad cholesterol."

To download the free recipe book visit [campaigns.heartfoundation.org.au/budget-friendly-recipes/](https://campaigns.heartfoundation.org.au/budget-friendly-recipes/)

# 1 THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



## Set an alarm for bedtime

What's the best time to set your alarm for an energised and productive morning? The night before.

We've all done it. It gets towards bedtime and you slip in one more episode of that series...which rolls straight into the next episode and the next. Or you decide to just check one more email...which leads to fixing up that document....and before you know it, it's hours past bedtime.

You go to bed late, wired and wake up tired and grumpy.

Sleep experts recommend setting a pre-bedtime reminder alarm. You set it up to an hour before the time you need to go to bed, to give you screen-free time to wind-down and relax.

Psychologist, sleep expert and author of *The Women's Guide to Overcoming Insomnia*, Shelby Harris, says, "when we turn off screens and switch to more relaxing non-screen or non-electronic activities for the hour before bed, it helps the brain quiet down and fall asleep faster". It also helps your body and brain get into the habit of being calm and ready for sleep.

You can also set a reverse "snooze alarm". Just like you might set a second alarm in the morning in case you fall back asleep, you can set an alarm 15 minutes before bed as an extra reminder to stop what you're doing. ✕

## EAT SMARTER

### Turkey

If you only eat turkey at once or twice a year, reconsider! There's good reason to add it to your diet all year round.

We generally think of turkey as a good source of low fat protein (and it is - it has more protein per gram than chicken). Yet we forget that it's also high in all sorts of vitamins and minerals that can boost your health.

Turkey is high in selenium, which is great for your thyroid and immunity and as a powerful antioxidant can help fight free radicals. Free radicals cause cell damage and contribute to ageing and illness.

Plus, turkey gives you essential B vitamins including B3, B6 and B12, along with niacin and zinc.

You might have heard advice to eat turkey before bed because it makes you sleepy. It turns out that's not quite true. Turkey does contain tryptophan, which promotes a good sleep and a good mood by helping to produce serotonin and melatonin, but turkey isn't very high in tryptophan.

To put it in perspective, a tryptophan supplement to help with sleep usually contains 1-4 grams, whereas a serve of turkey only contains around 205 milligrams.

So go ahead and enjoy your turkey for its protein and vitamins, but don't blame it for making you sleepy! ✕



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