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Articles by Consy Malasoma

Reducing Stress

It has been a couple of months since I have written my column and we are now in the period close to the Chinese New Year. Whenever a new year begins on January 1st it seems the most appropriate time to take stock of who we are, how we are and where we are going. I am a strong supporter of goal setting and working at manifesting ones goals. It is filled with energy, forward movement and change, usually for the best. Here are a few tips to keep in mind to reduce stress and to make this year the best it can be. On February 17th is the Chinese New Year of the Fire Pig.

- **Turn off your cell phone for 1hour day.** Don't listen to the news.
- **Create rituals for yourself.** Rituals help ground us, especially when we feel out of control. It could be as simple as going for a morning exercise or an evening bubble bath.
- **Call a friend and let off steam.** Friends are one of the great joys in life. You can share your feelings, cry when you need to, laugh and have fun with a friend. And there is growing scientific evidence that meaningful involvement with others reduces stress.
- **Get your priorities straight.** Think about what's really important – family, friends, good health – and make them the focus of your attention. Put unnecessary distractions at the very bottom of your to-do list. This will help keep things from getting out of control.
- **Reconnect with nature.** Take a walk in the park. Fill your life with flowers. There is a peace, a connectedness, a sense of peace and balance we get through nature that is vital to our emotional and mental health.
- **Improve your lifestyle habits.** Regular physical activity and a healthy diet can improve weight, energy levels, self-confidence and overall health.
- **Breathe deeply.** Inhale through your nose. Pull the air all the way down, deep into the lungs. Hold the breathe for a count of six. Exhale slowly through the mouth to the count of six. Do this for several minutes every day. Meditate.
- **Smile. Have a good belly laugh.** Watch funny movies, read funny stories, or have your friends over for a fun get together and laughter. Laughter seems to boost your immune system and helps to prevent flu and cold germs by raising your resistance.
- **Do one thing at a time.** One of the best ways to cope with feelings of being overwhelmed is to pick one urgent task and finish it. Once you accomplish that task, choose the next and so on. The positive feeling of “checking off” tasks is very satisfying and will motivate you to keep going.