



# Staying in Touch®

## Happy New Year!

The past two years have been life changing for us all. As we begin this new year still facing uncertain times, we should all focus on how we can steer our lives onto a positive path.

This month's featured article offers some advice on how to make that happen. Be sure to find your personal reasons for making these positive changes and keep them in mind as you take action.

Excerpted from the website [minthilltimes.com](http://minthilltimes.com), an article by a massage therapist in North Carolina nicely sums up how massage can support your overall health:

*What does massage do to control stress? Massage has been proven to calm the nerves, increase endorphins, and give you a chance to relax in a safe and trusting environment. Massage reduces cortisol (the stress hormone), reduces heart rate (relaxes the body), and in some studies lowered blood pressure.*

*The conclusion is, even a single massage can affect your overall mental and physical well being. Even if it's temporary, that's a win for your body and mind. This season make time for yourself. ...*

Take care of yourself; see you soon at your next appointment!

## The Best Ways to Renew Body and Mind

by Ashley Abramson and Sally Wadyka

You know that you should probably get more exercise and sleep. You know that it's important to eat less sugar and rein in your binge-watching.

But it has been a challenging and in some ways catastrophic year and a half. So you're probably in a rut—almost everyone is—and don't know how to get your mojo back.

Quit blaming yourself, behavior scientist BJ Fogg, PhD, says in his 2020 book "Tiny Habits." And don't waste time searching for one magic product that will make everything better. Instead, "take your aspirations and break them down into tiny behaviors." The truth is, small adjustments and actions can add up.

**Calm Your Mind:** Feeling worried and nervous is a reasonable response to uncertain circumstances. In an October *Consumer Reports* survey of 2,036 people, 42 percent of Americans said they're experiencing more anxiety than they did before the pandemic.

Untended, chronic stress can lead to digestive issues and headaches, and is linked to a higher risk of anxiety, depression, and heart disease. So if your normal coping mechanisms aren't cutting it and you're looking for practical new ways to ease your unease, consider the following de-stressors.

**Green Your Space:** It's not surprising that sales of houseplants are absolutely booming right now. The greenery can keep indoor air cleaner, and seeing and nurturing it can help you feel more tranquil and more connected to nature.

**Treat Yourself to a Massage:** Massage is a research-backed method for soothing aches, pain, and stiffness—and can help reduce muscle soreness after exercise.

**Try Nasal Breathing:** When we're nervous, we tend to take quick, shallow breaths—often only through our mouth (like a panting dog).

But that simply increases the anxious feelings. Nasal breathing, or breathing in through your nose instead of your mouth, makes it much easier to take long, calming breaths because it brings a lot more oxygen into the body.

"Shallow breaths cause us to hold in CO<sub>2</sub>, which depletes energy stores and triggers the brain into thinking something's wrong," says Kate Truitt, PhD, a clinical psychologist. "Oxygen essentially sends a message to the brain that we're okay."

**Bonus:** Breathing this way warms the air you take in, which helps your lungs make better use of oxygen and relaxes you even more.

Inhale slowly through your nose, then exhale even more slowly through your mouth.



(See **Renew Body and Mind ...** on back page)

## Renew Body and Mind ...

(Cont. from front page)

Doing this even three to four times, which takes less than a minute, should help calm you.

**Chill Out With a Slow Beat:** Hearing favorite tunes can boost your mood, reduce anxiety and blood pressure, and even slow a rapid heart rate.

For maximum calm and cool, choose music with a slow beat. Research shows that songs with a tempo of 60 beats per minute ... create an alpha wave brain state.

**Move in New Ways:** Switching up your regular fitness practice is a powerful way to get more out of exercise. "Variety isn't only good for the body, but also for your mental state," explains exercise physiologist Kyle Kercher.

**Ditch the Bad Habits and Create Better Ones:** Making and breaking habits isn't just a matter of willpower. Indeed, tested strategies can short-circuit negative patterns and move you toward the positive.

**Use Heat to Melt Away Pain:** Saunas have been found to ease muscle, joint, and back pain, promote relaxation, and reduce the risks of high

blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. Mayo Clinic research suggests that the health effects are similar to moderate- or high-intensity physical activity.

**Eat Smarter:** To reset your eating habits, experts suggest thinking about the kinds of foods you want to add to your diet, instead of those you feel like you should ditch. "By focusing mental energy on ways to include more whole, plant-based foods, there's no wasted time or effort fixating on what is 'wrong' or what needs to be cut out," says Rachel Cheatham, PhD, adjunct assistant professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in Boston.

## Get More Protein From Plants:

Studies have linked plant-based diets with a lower risk of heart disease. Here's why: Whole plant foods offer plenty of heart-healthy fiber and nutrients, but eating them also probably means consuming less red and processed meat.

**Tuck Into Healthy Fats:** Highly processed carbohydrates raise insulin levels more than other foods. Try replacing processed, carb-laden foods such as white bread and sugary drinks with more nutritious and more satisfying options, such as avocados, nuts, and oils.

Source: [consumerreports.org](http://consumerreports.org)

**Valentine's Day is right around the corner. Make that special someone's day with a massage gift certificate! Call to order ...**



***Happy is the person who knows what to remember of the past, what to enjoy in the present, and what to plan for in the future.***

**—Arnold H. Glasow**

*The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.*