



# 3, 2, 1 wind' down!

**T**here's always a busy build-up to Christmas and New Year's Eve – it's go-go-go, and then all of a sudden, poof! The excitement and celebrations are over.

Whether it was a fun and stress-free or anxiety-inducing and draining month, it's important to recentre yourself to ensure you don't burn out. Here's how...

## SKIP THE STRESS

As we can all attest, Christmas in particular is a hectic time – the

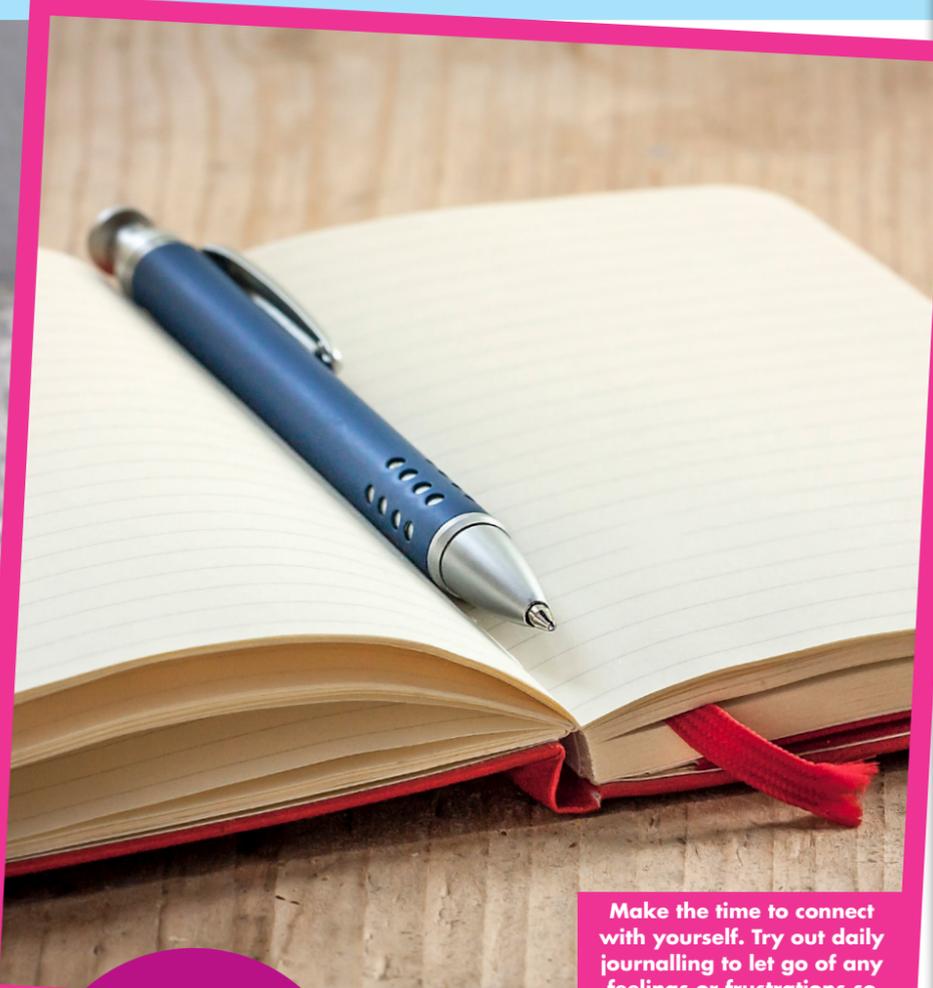
planning, execution and the aftermath.

"Christmas is emotionally stressful, but the stress also has an impact on your brain and body – when stressed, your sympathetic nervous system switches on, your heart races, your blood pressure shoots up, stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline fill your body," explains neuropsychologist and author of *How To Break Up With Friends* (Impact Press, \$24.99), Hannah Korrel.

"To truly turn this stress response off, and turn on your parasympathetic

calming system, you must show your body it's OK to relax in a language your body understands. This means making the time and space to lay down, close your eyes and breathe deeply. Even if your mind continues to race with 'this isn't working' thoughts, you are physically allowing your body the space to be still, receive deeper oxygenation and recover on a cellular level – so make the time, even if it's only two minutes!"

Simply having a frank conversation with yourself also helps.



## HOW TO TRULY RELAX AFTER THE FESTIVE SEASON

Make the time to connect with yourself. Try out daily journaling to let go of any feelings or frustrations so they don't bottle up.

## BE REALISTIC

You've no doubt already heard about the benefits of meditation and mindfulness practices, but don't worry if they seem overwhelming or you can't commit a heap of time to getting into them right now.

"Let's be real, not all of us have the time or motivation to 'get zen,'" says Hannah.

"Another amazing way to reconnect is to journal – journalling increases the interconnectedness between your left brain (language/analytical side) and your right brain (non-verbal/emotional side). By writing out your emotions, not only do you process them, but you are literally growing the connections between these two hemispheres! So make your 'time out' feel special, and you are more likely to do it! This may mean getting yourself a beautiful nightie, doing up your bedroom with a gorgeous new bedspread, buying yourself the luxury chocolate – do whatever you can to make your 'time out' appealing to you so you actually do it!"

## GOAL MAINTENANCE

A new year means those New Year's Resolutions and goals start to get set. But it's important not to put

## AN EYE OUT for others

"The best thing is being present and listening in the first instance, rather than trying to tell someone to calm down or leap in to fix stuff," says Mark, when it comes to helping a loved one wind down post-Christmas. "People want to be heard and supported, not directed or fixed. Maybe recognise better questions you can ask to help steer or lead them to fresh perspectives, tell them they've got this and simply ask if they want help or input."



pressure on yourself to achieve them in a certain time frame.

"[It's easy to feel like] we need to achieve the goal right now, or thinking we can achieve the goal easily, all at once, in a single bite, or simply that we're not doing enough," says Mark. "Remember, ultimately, the definition of progression means moving gradually – not rapidly!"

And Hannah seconds that, encouraging us all to avoid those all-or-nothing mentalities.

"It's very common for people to set unrealistically high standards for themselves and, when they fall short, feel so discouraged they give up on their goal completely," she says. "It's OK to meet your goal some of the time. Going to the gym once a week is far better than telling yourself you must go seven days a week and falling in a heap when you inevitably can't live up to that expectation. Small incremental steps are still valid, even if they feel too small to count – nothing is too small when it comes to your goals."