

FESTIVE FRENZY CAN TAKE ITS TOLL UNLESS YOU TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

by Anne Dempsey

Lainey Ennis experienced burnout in the late 90's characterised by repeated chest infections, fatigue, weight gain, anxiety, depression and insomnia. 'I totally blew it. Prior to that I took my life, health and enormous energy levels for granted, I could stay up late, sometimes eat badly with no negative consequences. Now my world fell apart, and it took three years of dietary changes, rest, exercise, yoga, meditation before I slowly, but surely began to feel stronger, fitter and more peaceful within myself. Since then I'm sensitive to the warning signs of becoming over-stressed, and take action, including giving myself little treats, right away".

With this experience under her belt, Ennis, a yoga teacher, aromatherapist, counsellor and music teacher is in a good position to help others stand back and take stock.

Her Christmas Reflections workshop on December 18th offers people help to withstand any festive overload. The day includes a series of body and breathing exercises and guided meditations, which, she says, are to both calm and energise with a bit of fun and gift exchange thrown in. "Looking around in December, I see a lot of people feeling quite down and dispirited. This time before the winter solstice is meant to be a time for darkness and quiet, the closing of a chapter before the new year. "But along comes Christmas, forcing us to be social when we might need to be quiet, even a little melancholic, so this can be a pressure as well as a joy. Then there's putting families together where there may be negative dynamics. Some people find this scary and react by drinking too much and with general excess in an effort to cope".

She has a strong sense of place in creating atmosphere, so workshop participants will enter an Aladdin's cave, glowing with candles, with music, soft silks and fabrics in warm colours, the scent of essential oils to provide calm and balance, plus cushions, blankets and comfortable corners to rest in and relax. "The impetus and focus of the workshop is that we take time out to really slowly observe our feelings as we go through a gentle stretching. You don't need any knowledge of yoga, these are normal body movements which I break down to reach every area of the body," says Ennis.

"Through breathing exercises I pay special attention to the points where energy may be blocked, and have designed an approach to help the energy flow. At the end people often say their sore back feels better and the pain in the hips is now gone".

The body work is interspersed with quieter times of guided meditation in which feelings may emerge that need to be addressed.

"People find that their own answers come up internally, as they get in touch with a quite, authentic part of themselves. There may be tears but I don't try to fix that, let it be what it is," she says.

Each person is asked to bring a wrapped gift costing no more than €5 which goes into the centre for a lucky dip.

"This is my sixth workshop year and the feedback I get is positive. People say they left feeling much better than when they came in, a feeling that can last and take them through Christmas.

"It has been asked could you indulge yourself with a day like this when you're meant to be busy? I would ask instead can you give yourself permission to have such a day? Sometimes the thing we most need is the last thing we give to ourselves"