

PREPARE NOW

to Transform Your Life in 2012!

By Madeline Ebelini, MATP, RYT and Deborah Lee, PhD, RN
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As the holidays near, it's easy to become wrapped up in our "to do" list and forget about our health and well-being. Would you like to give your loved ones a healthy, happy, and totally present "you" in 2012? What gifts would such a transformed "you" have to offer? Lifestyle change is a process. It occurs in stages. First we recognize and come to terms with the need to change. Then, we arrange the conditions and circumstances we need to support us in our change process. We'll need to educate ourselves, ask some serious questions, and explore what options are best for us. We may need to adjust priorities and schedules to accommodate the change process. Once we've prepared a supportive environment for our change process, we act. It takes preparation and planning! We plan our vacations, retirement and finances, often with the help of experts, but what about planning for a life of optimal health and well-being?

Making lifestyle changes is notoriously difficult! If it were easy, we'd have done it by now! But the difficulty of change has biological and psycho-emotional reasons. One reason is the phenomenon known as *Homeostasis*. This is a quality of the body/mind which resists change - all change - in order to maintain the status quo. Although an important asset for survival, homeostasis operates even if our status quo isn't very good. Habitual unhealthy patterns can be viewed as "wired circuitry" in our brains. But current brain research shows the brain is designed to change based on our ongoing experience. This capacity is called *Neuroplasticity*, and it should be strong motivation for all of us to engage in the process of setting our transformation in motion! But we'll need to invest an amount of discipline and consistency in the early stages of our change process - sufficient to overcome homeostasis- which may require engaging outside resources. This sustained effort is worth it! It's building new neural pathways in the brain - pathways representing your new healthy habits. With sustained effort and consistency in your new ways of living, these new neural pathways will continue to be strengthened and reinforced - your new homeostasis!

However, equally important in the transformation process is often an exploration of subconscious reasons why you've not made the changes you know you need to make. Habitual behavior patterns (those neural pathways) frequently emerge in response to ongoing stressors or past traumatic events. We may not even be aware of how our subconscious mind retains old, painful emotions. We don't like to feel these unpleasant emotions and may engage in coping behaviors - like smoking, overeating, or other unhealthy habits - to temporarily soothe the pain they bring. These coping behaviors may provide temporary comfort. But the long-term impact on the body and our lives can be serious.

Research shows us what it takes to make lasting, healthy change. Because these changes are difficult, and take time to develop, consider engaging a partner who's in your corner and will support you as you do what it takes to actualize your long-term life vision. An *Integrative Health Coach*, and a regular *Mindfulness Practice*, can be the perfect platform from which to make your vision a reality. Your Integrative Health Coach, and your own personal mindfulness practice, can help you clarify your most important values and priorities (your motivators) and help you cope with stress better, so that your unhealthy coping behaviors eventually fall away.

Integrative health coaching is about looking at your whole life- everything that makes you who you are - including your personal and professional development, relationships, communication, physical environment, and spirituality. Integrative health coaches work with you to develop a plan and set goals that are important to you. Your coach provides structure, support, motivation, information and accountability necessary to make your transformation a sustainable reality.

At the core of who you are is mindful awareness; being present and aware in each moment of your life, as it unfolds. The health and emotional benefits of a regular mindfulness practice are vast, as the exploding volume of medical and scientific research demonstrates. Cultivating mindful awareness, through learning and maintaining a regular mindfulness practice, builds a sense of calm and ease in your life and goes hand-in-hand with making and sustaining lifestyle change. Your regular practice might be a gentle and therapeutic *yoga* sequence, or a period of *sitting* practice focusing on the breath. You might like *walking meditation*, or the practice of mentally scanning your body noticing how each part feels (known as a *body scan*). You'll learn all of these practices in a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course.

Enroll in the next MBSR course which runs Jan. 2nd through March 6th, at www.IntegrativeMindfulness.net or call (239) 390-1113.

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Madeline Ebelini, founder of Integrative Mindfulness in Bonita Springs, holds a Master of Arts degree in Transpersonal Psychology (MATP), and is a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT). She completed professional training in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) with senior faculty at the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, including Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn. Integrative Mindfulness offers the 8-week MBSR course throughout the year, and free monthly introductory talks. The next free introductory talks will be Tues., Dec. 6th at 1PM and 7PM. The next MBSR course will begin Jan. 2, 2012. Register at www.IntegrativeMindfulness.net. Madeline also leads a free live guided mindfulness practice online each Thursday morning at 8AM at www.emindful.com/mindfulnesspractice.html. Integrative Mindfulness is a complimentary resource for conventional healthcare and wellness.

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Deborah Lee, PhD, RN is an Integrative Health Coach and President of Better Choices Health Coaching based in Naples. She received her training at Duke Integrative Medicine's Integrative Health Coach Professional Training Program where she is currently working towards certification as an Integrative Health Coach. She brings 30 years of professional and personal experience to her integrative health coaching practice. After working as a hospital and home care nurse, researcher, university professor, public health professional and health care administrator in the U.S. and Canada, she decided to return to the root of why she became a nurse; to help people feel better and stay healthy. Deborah can be reached at Deborah.Lee@BetterChoicesHealthCoaching.com