

NEW ZEN YOU

From mindfulness to yoga, we look at how to bring holiday Zen back home with you...

After a week or two of relaxing under the shade of swaying palms, waking up when it suits rather than at the command of a shrill alarm clock and no stressful commute, it's little wonder that when the time comes to return home, we're partial to a touch of the post-holiday blues.

It's not quite an NHS-diagnosed syndrome, but settling back into everyday life is hard, so how can we combat the post-holiday slump?

"We always want a different reality than the one we have now, in this moment," explains Being Mindful coach Tessa Watt, who runs mindfulness courses in south London. "We look forward to holidays and while we're away we are often naturally more mindful: we relax, we enjoy the moment."

Bestselling author and mental health coach Anna Williamson agrees, saying that "the added bonus of the vitamin D from the sunshine helps lift our mood too." The post-vacation blues may seem unavoidable, but this doesn't mean it can't be bearable; mindfulness is a commonly practised technique to help us step out of our habitual patterns and appreciate the regular activities of daily life. The term's excessive use over the past few years has turned it into something of a buzzword, but it's no millennial fad, with the NHS backing the technique as one that helps alleviate stress, depression and anxiety by controlling an overcrowded mind and managing thoughts.

To approach the technique ourselves, Tessa advises to make room for breathing space: "Stop for a few moments to notice how you're feeling and bring awareness to your breath. We can do this often throughout the day as a way of pausing and recharging."



Anna Williamson is also an advocate of mindfulness: "Learning how to breathe and taking your focus to the 'here and now' can be highly effective. And it's really easy to have a go," she says. "Start by finding somewhere quiet to sit. Close your eyes and take a few slow and deep breaths, focus on your body and breathing. If your mind wanders that's ok, just gently bring it back to focus on your breathing and the present moment."

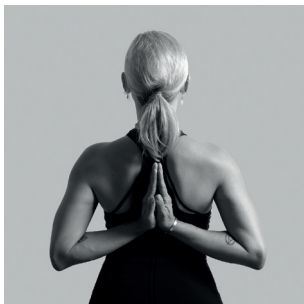
Tessa also advises for those starting from scratch, think about getting a mindfulness book or downloading an app. It may initially seem odd to strive for a state of Zen by way of technology, but one app that links the two is Buddhify, which helps to de-stress and improve mental wellbeing by encouraging you to spend time each day listening to simple and soothing tracks.

"Buddhify provides a range of accessible and creative ways to engage with authentic mindfulness practices – wherever, whenever and whoever you are," says founder Rohan Gunatillake.

If you'd rather pass on the app, try a yoga class, which incorporates both exercise and mindfulness. Elizabeth Oakley, head of Vibes at London's MoreYoga studios says: "Physical activity stimulates the release of chemicals in the brain which helps to regulate our moods and motivate us, so yoga can give us that boost we need after a holiday."

"Stress can cause us to breathe in a rapid, shallow way, which can lead to feeling anxious. Yoga teaches us to breathe more effectively by using the whole capacity of our lungs, which when practiced regularly can help to attain a calmer natural internal state," she adds. "Yoga also provides the space to pay attention to your own thoughts and the opportunity to notice what's happening with your physical and emotional body."

Elizabeth advises those who are keen to take up mindfulness but don't know where to begin, to start small: "Try a five-minute guided meditation and slowly start to fit it around your life. The more you practice, the more habitual it will become." [Tessa Watt](#)



Overmatter