

WHILE most people wait for the new year to get their bodies (and minds) in shape, I always tend to reassess these at the end of the year, by which time I'm usually a frazzled mess, counting down the days until the December holidays. This year, I've proactively made an effort to slow down before the holidays, and here's how you can do the same, leading to a healthy, happy mind and body.

Energy Management:

Dr Ela Manga is an integrated medical practitioner who focuses on energy management and the effects of burn-out in today's fast-paced environment.

She uses modern medicine as a framework to dive deeper to the root cause of illness by drawing on safe and natural healing systems, and offers the emotional and physical tools to better understand energy placement.

Manga believes that the reason we burn out is because we operate and fuel "adrenalised energy". Our busy lifestyles, food choices and even certain forms of exercise cause us to stay locked in this adrenalised state, creating a feeling of being tired and wired, leading to us eventually burning out completely.

"The steps to prevent burn-out are quite simple once you become aware of them," says Manga. "The first step is awareness, stop and become aware of things like muscle tension, hunger signals, shallow breathing, sensations in your body and the nature of your thoughts. Slow down, listen and become aware of your body's subtle signals."

Next, create good health by making choices that are more conscious. By stopping, becoming aware and breathing, Manga says that we are able to make better choices that are more supportive of natural energy. We then move away from living on autopilot and being a hamster on a wheel, to taking charge of our lives and health.

When quizzed on what diets contribute to a healthy lifestyle, Manga stated that the most important thing is to eat breakfast, which sets the tone for a more productive day by kick-starting metabolism.

Eating breakfast also helps with sugar dips that result in those familiar afternoon sugar cravings.

Make sure that healthy snacks are available and accessible, and try to have one of these snacks during the afternoon to avoid overeating at dinner. To make the most of the holiday season, Manga believes that you should be conscious of not crashing.

This is known as the "let down effect", the immune system often dips at this time, as a result of the physiological changes that occur when we suddenly relax after a year of being adrenalised.

Instead of jumping into the business of the holiday season (we all know how stressful a rushed trip to the airport can be), make some space and time for complete relaxation and silence.

Use the time to reflect on the past year and set the intentions for the year ahead, and most importantly, ask the question, "am I living my life in alignment with what is most important to me?"

Manga's practice is at the Woodlands Centre for Conscious Living and Spa, on the banks of the Crocodile River in Muldersdrift. Visit: www.woodlandswellbeingsspa.com

Happiness through writing:



Above: One of the wellness rooms at the Woodlands Centre for Conscious Living and Spa, suitably positioned with nature views to add to the idea of calmness



Top: Dr Ela Manga
Above: Rooftop training



Keeping burn-out at bay

Finding a holistically balanced life by employing unique ways of staying physically and mentally fit.

Incidentally, I paid a visit to Woodlands for a slightly different reason, to attend a Write of Passage workshop, which is a creative writing journey that taps into the emotional impressions of the heart and soul. Guided by writing therapist and book coach, Natasha Mansour, the workshops are explored via monthly group writing circles.

Each writing session is themed to be fun, carefree, insightful and liberating, and ultimately crafted to accelerate the journey to personal happiness. Each person has their own story to tell, so every workshop is set to allow pieces of that person's life story to bounce off the page.

Writers are guided along an unpredictable voyage that can be daunting and exciting at the same time. The two-hour session I attended was called "write your way to fabulousity." Although the workshop appealed to me because I am a writer, no writing experience is required to partake. I thought the session was cleverly put together. Ahead of time, we were told to bring along a childhood photo of ourselves. Mine was from when I

HASMITA NAIR

Jozilicious



was 7, and I had to write a letter to my current self from my 7 year old self's perspective.

We don't often think about our childhood, when in reality, that period of time is the foundation for our adult selves, so it was good to reconnect with who I was as a child. We were then told to identify three of our worst physical and emotional traits, and then write the worst of these on a chalkboard-mine was "thunder thighs" and that was going to be my name for the rest of the workshop. I was instructed to write an "agony aunt" letter, explaining why these thunder thighs have been such a problem in my life.

All the letters were put into a box, each representing the various attendees' grievances, ranging



Antigravity yoga, an unlikely combination of aerial acrobatics and spiritual tranquillity at the luxurious Alice Lane Health Club

from potbelly to control freak. We all picked a random letter, and had to respond from the agony aunt's perspective. It was amazing to see how our problems seemed so insignificant and even unnoticeable to someone else. In addition to feeling positive and confident, realising that my thunder thighs weren't so bad after all, I ended the workshop remembering that even though writing is the oldest form of self-expression, one that has both spiritual and emotional benefits. Visit: www.writeofpassage.co.za

Get in shape:

If you can't imagine anything worse than rusty treadmills and the brushing of sweaty elbows with strangers in an overcrowded change room, then the brand new Alice Lane Health Club may just be the kick-start you need to get into a gym. The health club forms part of the global Virgin Active Classic Collection. Members get to make use of other Classic Collection clubs in London, Lisbon, Madrid, Milan, Sydney and Singapore.

The Alice Lane Health Club provides a choice of training areas, whether it's working out "under the stars" on the roof-top facility or indoors – the common denominator

– unprecedented luxury.

I love the idea of my gym exuding the same appeal as a five-star hotel; I was more than a little tickled by the fluffy white towels that were presented to me at reception, the glass-walled boardroom and lounge area plus the fact that there is a complimentary shoe-shine bar on offer. The change rooms are equally luxurious, with oversized showers, dressing tables (each with its own gh), and novel touches such as a machine that whizzes all the water out of your swimming costume.

My favourite class was the anti-gravity yoga – the unlikely combination of aerial acrobatics and spiritual tranquillity. A silk hammock is hung from the ceiling, which is used to suspend participants in various postures. Apparently, hanging upside down refreshes the body's systems, helps blood flow, and makes those seemingly impossible postures like the headstand, achievable.

A capped membership of 4 000 ensures exclusivity, which doesn't come cheap. Monthly membership costs are between R1 450 and R1 600, but special offers are available to Discovery Vitality and Momentum Multiply members. Visit: www.virginactive.co.za