



# SURVIVING the 12 Days of Christmas

## acupressure points for relieving holiday stress

by Michael Gaeta MS, LAc

**L**ooking for a cheap and easy way to cope with holiday stress that is guaranteed not to leave you with a hangover or added inches to your waistline? Then read on.

Developed in Asia some 5,000 years ago, Acupressure is a type of bodywork therapy that involves pressing or massaging specific points on the body using a finger, knuckle, or the palm of your hand to stimulate the body's natural healing abilities. It is an effective and widely used practice for reducing stress, relieving pain and promoting overall good health.

Although frequently administered by qualified practitioners (see aobta.org), Acupressure can easily be practiced on oneself. It is safe, effective, requires minimal time and best of all, is 'Free'. It is the perfect tool to add to your arsenal of current coping skills this holiday season. It quite literally allows you to take your health back into your own hands.

Try these simple acupressure points when tackling the 12 days of Christmas and you just might find that you are able to get through the holidays with a little less stress, pain and fatigue and a little more peace, love and dare I say it, joy. Each point should be massaged with gentle but firm pressure for one to five minutes until symptoms begin to subside. Points will typically be tender to the touch, so when you hit a spot that is a little sore, you know you are in the right place.

This content is not meant to diagnose or treat any medical condition, or replace the advice of a physician. Do not use acupressure on broken bones, open cuts, bruises, burns or growths. If you are pregnant, consult a qualified practitioner before treating yourself with acupressure.

### *On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas my true love gave to me ...*

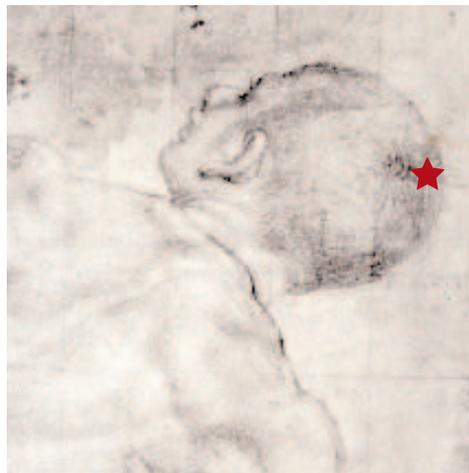
#### 12 SHOPPERS SHOPPING

Shopping malls can be a nightmare even on a good day. But when it feels like every other person on the face of the planet is packed inside that mall with you, it's just that much worse. To relieve the pain and pressure of tension headaches, use your thumbs to massage this point at the back of your head.



#### 11 DEBTS A-GROWING

Because the credit card companies are not likely to start accepting anxiety in exchange for payment, getting stressed out over your bills will not make even the smallest dent in your balance. To help calm anxiety and clear your mind, massage this point at the top of your head.



### 10 DAYS A-TRAVELING

Murphy' Law tells us that when traveling during the holidays we will have to contend with *at least* one of the following at the worst possible moment: departure delays, misplaced luggage, overbooked flights or lost reservations. When it happens, and you begin to feel the anger start to wash over you and your stomach begins to churn, massage this point on the palm of your hand.



### 8 DRIVERS DRIVING

Without fail, every licensed driver on the road will forget how to drive at some point during the holidays. When you find yourself stuck in traffic, heart racing, wanting to scream something unkind to the inept driver in front of you, massage this point on your wrist.



### 6 CHILDREN SCREAMING

Whether they are yours or someone else's, we all have our limit when comes to screaming children. At school pageants, in stores, in restaurants and movie theatres, they just can't be avoided. And it is just not considered good manners to go running from the room when the screeching noise gets on your very last nerve. As an alternative to making a quick get-away as you can feel your blood pressure rising, massage this point on your shoulder.



### 9 NOSES RUNNING

It's winter. It's cold season. It's the sniffles. To help relieve uncomfortable sinus congestion, massage this point on the side of the nose.



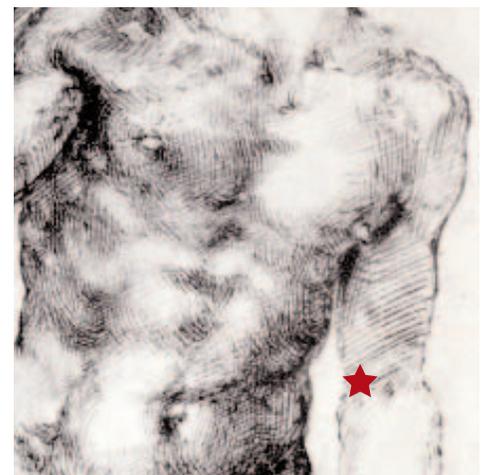
### 7 GUESTS ARRIVING

No matter how much you love the idea of having the whole family together under one roof for the holidays, inevitably the loss of personal space accompanied by having exponentially more dishes to wash at every meal, will catch up with you. When you can feel your patience growing thin and you are tempted to toss the whole lot of them out into the cold, bring your stress level back into check by massaging this point on your forearm.



### 5 SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

To help calm the spirit and quiet the mind when the sleep you so desperately want and need eludes you, massage this point on your inner arm.



#### 4 NUTTY KIN

Ah, the extended family. Trying to find a way to successfully merge two families with two different sets of holiday traditions can put even the best host and hostess to the test. Especially, when after all of your planning and extra effort to make sure everyone's traditions are included you can hear someone whisper under their breath "that's not the way we *used* to do it". Before you say something you might regret, take a moment to ground yourself and calm your spirit by massaging this point on your ear.



#### 3 WILD NIGHTS

So many parties, so little time. With commitments to your family, your friends and your co-workers, it may seem like you are constantly rushing from one fun filled event to another. After a while, all of the running around is enough to make anyone a little nuts. When you are feeling frazzled and overwhelmed with a schedule that even Superman would have a hard time sticking to, massage this point between your eyes.



#### 2 CHRISTMAS TREES

Beautiful Christmas trees, a blanket of snow on the ground, a pile of presents all wrapped to perfection. It's all lovely to look at, but hauling trees, shoveling snow and schlepping boxes is a great way to wind up with an aching back. To strengthen the lumbar region and relieve muscle tension, massage this point on your lower back.



#### AND A SHARP PAIN IN MY TUMMY

You did it last year and you will do it again this year. There is just something about the holidays that entices us all to eat just a little bit more than our stomachs can handle. However, when you find yourself muttering "I can't believe I ate the whole thing", like the little old man from the Alka-Seltzer commercials, try massaging this point on your lower leg to restore balance back to that hard working stomach of yours.



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Hands from "The Book of a Hundred Hands" by George B. Bridgman, Dover Books

Italian Renaissance Drawings from the Musee du Louve, Paris: Roman, Tuscan and Emilian Schools 1500-1575