

# Lash back at relaxation

**By Robert McGuire**  
*Staff Writer*

A friend visiting me for the holidays wrote in advance to say how much she is looking forward to the visit, but the real purpose of her card was hidden in the note: "I hope the agenda includes a nice relaxing afternoon of yoga."

This is her way of saying I'm too wound up and that she hopes I won't be a pain in the tucks the whole time she's here — racing down Lincoln Memorial Drive, gesturing wildly at the lake and the art museum, shouting at people who drive slow in the fast lane.

She's the kind who's always telling me I need to relax more.

I say this whole relaxation thing needs a closer look. When did relaxation become one of the higher achievements in life? What makes relaxation right and tension wrong?

I like to relax as much as the

next person, but who can relax with all this lecturing going on? When you really start to look at it, there is a constant quiet pressure in this society to take it easy.

Listen to this lite hits FM station. Use this worry-free long-distance plan. Buy this bottle of bubble bath. Take time to smell the roses.

And people work very hard to relax. I know people who work a month of Sundays to get a Friday off.

People complain about commercialism and the pressure to buy stuff around the holidays. Maybe the problem is that we can't enjoy the holidays like we used to because the relaxation imperative has ruined it all?

You know my favorite holiday memories from the good 'ol days? The ones where my family really worked up a boil. Threats to disown each other, to run away forever, to give that Etch-A-Sketch to some kid

who appreciates it more.

You can't get good family stories like that out of people who are relaxed.

This shopping season, like everybody else, we got a forest of mail-order catalogs. I didn't mind getting a pitch from REI, L.L. Bean and J. Crew. None of them made me tense except the one from some place called "The Back Store."

It was filled with vibrating things to lie down on and expensive hardwood things to have smiling people in leotards roll across your body.

My wife kept pointing to things in the catalog and saying, "You should get this. This is what you need."

I politely reminded her that what I really want for Christmas is tickets to some very noisy concerts coming up, but I must not have said it politely enough.

"Relax!" she answered. "It was

just a suggestion."

My wife's idea of a good vacation is to go to a hotel room with a VCR and spend the days watching yoga tapes and sitting on the stuff she bought from "The Back Store."

My idea of a good vacation is to go to some strange city I've never been to and attempt to see and do every curious thing in that city without ever paying for parking or cab fare.

Feeling a little pressured this holiday season? If you ask me, we're looking at the wrong culprit. We're too worried about relaxing. I say it's time to shout out, "Get off my back with all this relaxation."

I say it's time for a relaxation backlash.

*When he's not in a frenzy of other activities, Robert McGuire covers Shorewood community and schools and the village of Bayside for the Herald.*