O's Rx for:
Celebrating with more meaning (& less money)
Surviving family fatigue, party panic
Getting through the season without gaining an ounce

Make your HOLIDAYS HAPPIER!
strategies, solutions, fruitcake
HE SUFFERERS ARE PRIMARILY women, and there are ten to 30 million of them: They develop a snap, crackle, or pop in the jaw—and it isn't their cereal. They have a temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder. If any part of the TMJ system of muscles, tissues, ligaments, and bones dislocates or becomes inflamed, the disorder can result.

Experts aren't completely sure what causes the problem. It may be a chronic clenching or grinding of teeth, or trauma to the jaw from, say, a root canal (when you have to keep your mouth open wide for an extended period), or whiplash. Arthritis may play a part, yet for a significant number of people, TMJ disorders begin for no obvious reason.

Some of the symptoms—headache and ear pain, for example—can be mistaken for migraines or ear infections. Other symptoms include neck pain, a clicking or popping sound when you open or close your mouth, and jaws that catch or lock up. You can do a simple self-diagnosis by using the test on this page, suggested by James Fricton, DDS, a professor in the division of TMJ disorders and orofacial pain at the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry.

Most of the time sufferers can find relief by reducing the amount of wear and tear to the joint. Your dentist might suggest avoiding chewing gum and may prescribe a nighttime bite guard to minimize clenching and grinding. Some people find relief with muscle relaxation techniques, but for chronic sufferers, prescription drugs or even surgery (to repair or even replace the joint) may be recommended. —NAOMI BARR

A Home Test for TMJ

While opening your jaw slightly, place a finger over the joint in front of your ear, and then open wide until you can feel the joint move. If you feel the joint click or if it's tender when you press, you may have a temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder.

Mind over Matters Through Meditation

Setting aside as little as three minutes a day can help you stay cool when everyone around you is losing it.

FOR YEARS THE research results have been pouring in: Anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, and heart disease respond to meditation. The latest study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, shows that a practice that incorporates mindfulness meditation can boost attentiveness and improve mood while lowering stress in less than a week. After just five days of 20-minute sessions, students who meditated outscored their peers (who were practicing a form of guided relaxation) on tests of attention—and reported feeling less angry, anxious, and depressed. Plus, when put in a grueling academic testing situation, the newly minted meditators kept their cool while the others watched their stress levels soar.

"Relaxation is good, but it doesn't provide the physiological changes you see in mindfulness practice," says Daniel J. Siegel, MD, associate clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and author of The Mindful Brain.

Even better, [continued on page 156]
Can We Catch Ovarian Cancer Before It Kills?

OVARIAN CANCER IS EXTREMELY deadly: Of the roughly 22,000 women diagnosed annually, 55 percent die within five years. One big reason is that doctors typically don’t catch the cancer until it’s advanced. All of which explains the excitement surrounding a new blood test for the disease developed at the Yale School of Medicine.

In a study published in the journal Clinical Cancer Research, Yale researchers reported that ovarian tumors trigger the release of six distinct proteins into the blood. Their test—called OvaSure—appeared to be 99 percent accurate in detecting cancer in the women they screened. “We believe the test can spot new cancer cells growing inside the ovaries,” says Gil Mor, MD, lead author and associate professor of obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive sciences at Yale.

But the FDA has taken exception, noting that few of the women tested fell into high-risk categories: having a history of ovarian or breast cancer, a close relative with ovarian cancer or who was diagnosed with breast cancer before the age of 50, a positive test for BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutations, or a diagnosis of hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer.

The concern is that OvaSure could indicate cancer where there’s none, prompting invasive testing or unnecessary surgery. Until more research is completed, high-risk women should discuss options with a doctor. —NANCY GOTTESMAN

Women should watch for these ovarian cancer symptoms

- Twelve or more days a month of abdominal pain, swelling or bloating, or pelvic discomfort
- Urinary urgency
- Feeling full quickly
- Pain during intercourse; low back pain
- Persistent indigestion or unexplained changes in bowel habits
- Loss of appetite; unexplained weight loss or gain
- A persistent lack of energy