

Partners in Care

By Lisa M. Petsche

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Get Busy, Get Happy

Many Ways to Transition into Spring

Many people look forward to the mild temperatures and increased daylight of spring, which positively affect their mood and allow new opportunities for enjoyment, especially outdoors. It can take some time, though, to transition out of “cocooning” mode after the long, confining winter.

Read on for some ideas to help you, and the person you care for, ease into spring and make the most of it.

- Treat yourself and your loved one to new sleepwear, a lightweight robe or a pair of slippers. Just be sure any footwear offers good support and has a non-skid sole.
- Put away the flannel sheets and bring out the crisp, cotton bedding.
- Order take-out food for a change of cuisine. Try something different, such as Mexican or Thai food, for example.
- Purchase something seasonal to enjoy – for example, wind chimes or solar garden accents. Shop by mail order if it’s hard to get out to the mall.
- Air out your home by opening some windows for a while on a dry, breezy day.

Refresh the Decor

Decorating to reflect the season can help put you in a lighter frame of mind. Here’s how to do it:

- Accessorize indoors with soft colors. Room accents can take the form of cushion covers, tablecloths, place mats or a mantel scarf, for instance. For color inspiration, think pastels and traditional Easter decorating. Don’t overlook white, which gives a crisp, fresh look. For patterns, try florals or gingham checks.
- Put away the vanilla and cinnamon candles and pick up some fruity or flowery scents. Caution: always place candles where they can’t be knocked over and extinguish them before going out or going to bed.
- Buy fresh flowers once a week until your garden starts to bloom.
 - Buy a new outdoor mat for your front entrance, a decorative windsock for the yard or seasonal suncatchers for windows.
 - Clean door glass and any windows that are easy to reach, to let in as much light as possible and enhance the view. Hire a window cleaner to tackle the rest.



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Keep Busy

- Accomplishment brings satisfaction and a sense of renewal. This is a perfect time to try new things or tackle long-postponed projects, before the dog days of summer arrive. Involve your relative as appropriate.

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- Try some new recipes - lighter dishes to replace rib-sticking winter favorites.
- Peruse gardening magazines and catalogs and plan this year's garden.
- Tidy up the garden and the rest of your property, collecting stray branches, leaves and other debris.
- Get a bird feeder and seed, a pair of binoculars and a bird watching guide.
- Do some de-cluttering around your home; kitchen drawers, closets, spare rooms and attics are typical hot spots. Donate unused items to a local charity. Freeing up space can contribute to feelings of psychological lightness.
- Rearrange the furniture in one or more rooms. Or start planning a room redecoration or renovation project.
- Make a renewed effort to look after your health, including exercising regularly – good for both your physical and mental well-being. Try getting outdoors for a couple of short (five to ten minutes each) walks per day. If it's hard to get out, invest in a stationary bike or treadmill.

Ideas for Activities

- Go for a stroll around the neighborhood or at a nearby park. Don't forget a hat, sunglasses and sunblock.
- Go to the local farmers' market and marvel at the offerings. Pick up some novel fruits and vegetables, as well as favorite meat, cheeses and baked goods.
- Take a drive and crack open the windows to get some fresh air.
- Invite friends over for afternoon coffee and dessert or an evening of games and socializing.

Make Special Plans

Breaking out of routines can be energizing. Here are some ideas:

- Plan an outing to a restaurant or a cultural or sporting event. Just ensure in advance that the facilities are accessible. If your relative uses a wheelchair, investigate accessible taxi options or register them with the local accessible transportation service.
- Plan a party if you enjoy entertaining. Consider a whimsical theme and enlist help from friends.
- Start planning a summer vacation or, better yet, a mini getaway for the near future – perhaps a weekend stay at a resort or country inn. Even if your relative relies on a wheelchair to get around, travel may still be possible with some research and planning to ensure their needs are met during every stage of the trip. If it's not possible for them to accompany you or you feel the need for a break from caregiving, look into respite care options.