

# Senior Living



# Overcome the Winter Blues

If you live in a region that experiences brutal winters, you likely have found yourself in a sour mood at times. The change in moods is normal and known as SAD, or seasonal affective disorder.

The National Institutes of Health has funded research to learn more about the disease for nearly three decades.

What they found may open your eyes and help discover what's behind your seasonal blues.

- Those suffering from SAD often lose interest in activities they usually enjoy, leading to a gloomy outlook and an increase in irritability.

- SAD is diagnosed in women four times more often than men.

- About 1% of the population in Florida suffer from SAD, whereas, about 10 percent experience it in the northernmost area of the United States, in Alaska.

Now that cooler weather is fading and spring is welcoming warmer temperatures, shake the winter blues and become the best version of yourself.

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

Allow sunlight and warmth into your home by updating window draperies. Invest in



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white sheer fabric coverings to let the light inside. Consider rearranging your furniture, so incoming brightness is easily viewable in high-traffic areas.

Another idea is to update the color of your walls. If you have wood paneling or dark-colored drywall, hire a painting crew to re-coat it in a

soft white color that fits your current interior design.

## STAY ACTIVE

Once the weather is warmer, take your exercise routine outdoors. Consider going on a hike at a public park or jog around the neighborhood.

The experts at Help Guide International state physical

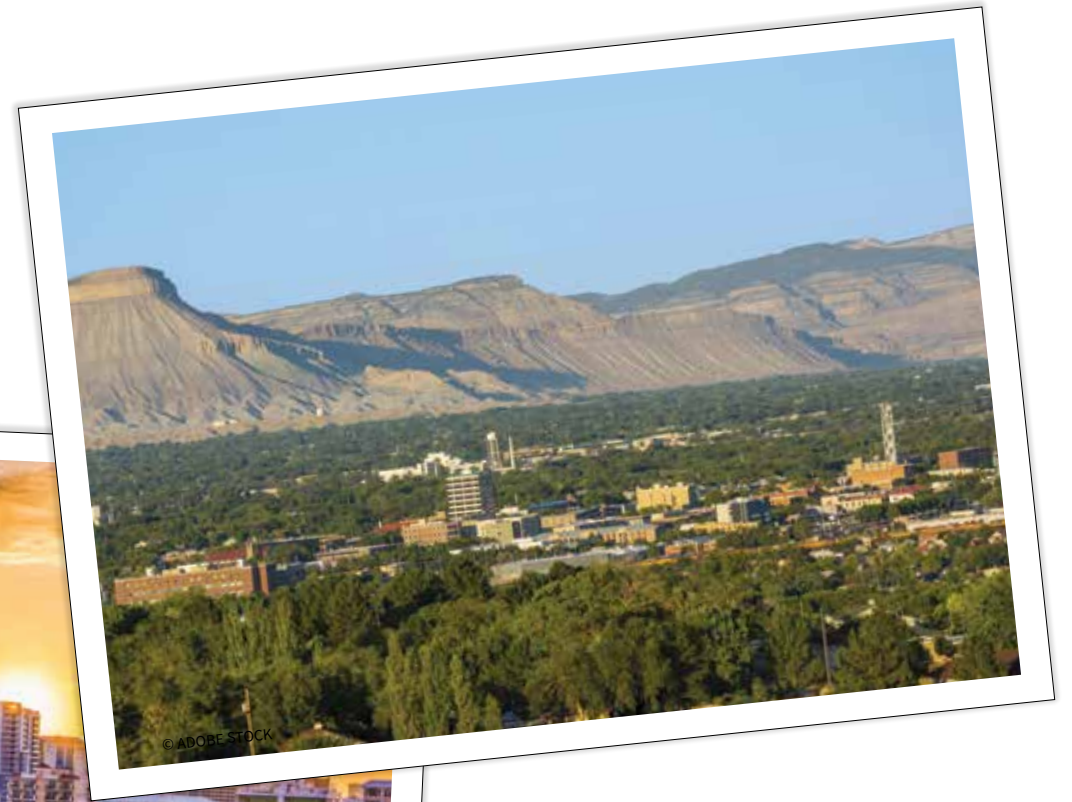
activity can improve mental health in seniors by improving sleep and releasing mood-enhancing endorphins. The result often reduces feelings of sadness, depression and anxiety.

## SOCIALIZE

During the winter, it's likely that you spent a lot of time

indoors and missed out on important socializing activities. Consider spring temperatures as an opportunity to get outside and visit with your friends and peers to boost your mood.

Visit coffee shops, partake in team sports or volunteer at a charity event like a 5K or community cleanup.



# Find a Retirement Destination

If 2020 is the year that you open the door to an adventure in retirement, the ideal destination is waiting.

Have you considered where you want to live during your new journey? Consider one of the most attractive retirement regions, as suggested by the American Association of Retired Persons.

## **ASHEVILLE, N.C.**

Find your paradise in this beautiful town set in the serene Blue Ridge

Mountains. If you're an architect enthusiast, you will be stunned by intricate views of early 20th-century designs. The region is also an outstanding option for those retreating from winter weather as it typically hosts comfortable temperatures throughout the year.

When searching for entertainment, Asheville is home to numerous art facilities and niche museums celebrating pinball machines, science centers and the historic Biltmore Estate.

## **GRAND JUNCTION, COLO.**

This relatively small town in

Colorado is an excellent retreat for those who want to avoid the busy urban lifestyle in Denver. Grand Junction has a population of just over 58,000 and rests between two popular locations in the state. Residents enjoy the incredible views of the Colorado National Monument to their west and the Grand Mesa just to the east.

With over 300 lakes and 3.5 million acres of public land, there is always something new to see when visiting the Grand Mesa. This location is also a mecca for golf, wineries, hiking, fishing and skiing. It's an excellent area for active seniors seeking a place to spend their retirement.

## **SARASOTA, FLA.**

Sarasota is home to one of the best beaches in the United States. Siesta Beach landed the number two spot on the TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards in 2018. People find relaxation surrounding the crystal-clear water, white sand and incredible social setting.

If the water isn't enough, residents also enjoy vast miles of hiking trails, campgrounds and dozens of public or private golf courses. For indoor entertainment, the area is home to its own opera house, ballet company, symphony and numerous theaters in the downtown region.

# Analyze your Home For Safety

While embracing your senior years, it's imperative to ensure your home is safe both inside and out.

Assess your property and repair or install components to enhance your safety.

If you plan to hire a contractor to repair failing elements or install new, helpful items, it's crucial to do your research. Ask your peers for references regarding services they have used and check reviews to ensure you choose a reputable company.

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging urges senior citizens to be cautious of home improvement scams. Here are a few factors the organization recommends to protect yourself from contractors with fraudulent intentions.

- Obtain quotes from several vendors to identify price gouging.
- Avoid paying in cash, as methods like checks or credit cards help keep a record of payment.
- Ensure that a repair person is properly licensed per state requirements.

Once you choose a reliable contractor, consider boosting safety measures in these areas of your home.

## LIMIT FALL RISK

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four senior citizens falls each year.



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Annually, a fall results in more than 2.8 million injuries that must be treated in the emergency room. In 2015, fall injuries racked up \$50 billion in costs, and are expected to increase to \$67.7 billion by 2020.

Limit your risks of this happening to you by ensuring your home is free of obstructions.

Ensure walkways are clear in hallways, sidewalks and rooms you frequent. It's also beneficial to install grab bars near the bathtub and toilet.

## INCREASE VISIBILITY

Another way to increase safety in the home is to improve visibility. Consider installing motion-sensor light-

ing outside and as interior night lights to ensure your rooms are well-lit during nighttime hours. Talk to an expert about upgrading light fixtures to LED. You may be eligible for tax rebates from energy-conserving agencies.

## FIRE HAZARDS

Older adults account for 40

percent of all fire deaths, according to the United States Fire Administration.

The organization recommends you install smoke detectors on every level of the home and outside every sleeping area. Today, you can find smart devices that connect to ensure all alarms activate once smoke is detected.

# Get a Wellness Check

Annual wellness examinations are necessary at any age, but for senior citizens, they are even more essential.

A recent study by the John A. Hart Foundation found that only 7% of older adults received seven recommended services. If you have been avoiding the doctor, make this the year to commit to your health.

Check out these standard screenings that the American Association of Retired Persons suggests are especially important for seniors.

- Women should begin testing for bone density at 65; men, at age 70.

- Mammograms should be performed until at least 75 years old before discussing further testing with your doctor.

- Colon cancer screenings are generally recommended until the age of 75, when, if no issues persist, they may be discontinued.

Find out about other benefits seniors gain from participating in wellness examinations.

## EARLY DISCOVERY

Annual screenings are an efficient way to discover diseases and illnesses before they can spread or worsen. Simple assessments like blood tests and physicals can reveal potential issues so a



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practitioner can strategize how to alleviate the problem.

Finding out about illnesses before they become significant is not only lifesaving but can cause less strain on your budget. Preventative health measures will sometimes alleviate the need for expensive treatments that are required after diseases become challenging to manage.

## REVIEW YOUR PRESCRIPTION PLAN

When dealing with chronic health problems or long-term conditions, you likely rely on medication to stabilize your illnesses. During a wellness exam, be honest with your doctor about any concerns you have about the prescriptions, especially adverse reactions.

In some cases, medications don't always agree with each other and may require a replacement or a different dosage.

## VACCINE SCHEDULE

The United States Department of Health and Human Services urges adults 65 and older to commit to a vaccine schedule. As we age,

our immune systems become weaker in defending against diseases. It's essential to remain up to date on these vaccines to enhance your body's defense.

- **Influenza inactivated:** annual flu vaccine.

- **Tdap or Td:** defends against tetanus.

- **Zoster recombinant:** prevents shingles.

# Living with Limited Mobility

According to a recent United States Census Bureau report, nearly 40% of people ages 65 and older have at least one disability. Of the 15.7 million who live impaired, over two-thirds say they have difficulty walking or climbing.

Living with limited mobility is not only associated with physical challenges. The Public Library of Science suggests physical disabilities are linked to depressive systems. Evidence shows that disabled people are at least three times more likely to experience depression.

If you are someone who struggles with getting around, try one of these exciting activities to boost your overall happiness.

## JOIN A BOOK CLUB

Gather your peers in a social setting and choose books to read and discuss. The Open Education Database states that reading can improve brain function and add benefits to our minds. Joining or starting a book club can create mental exercises in a social setting.

Participation is an excellent way to meet new people in similar situations and build



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lifelong friendships. If you can't find a local book club, a good place to begin organizing a meetup is reaching out to a public library in the neighborhood. Ask if they would be willing to advertise your vision to their clients and perhaps even allow you to host the meetings using their facility.

## WATER AEROBICS

Don't let limited mobility inhibit you from receiving the health benefits of exercise. Water aerobics can be a challenging workout that keeps your body in shape and improves flexibility and cardiovascular health, while improving your strength.

Of course, before beginning

a new routine, it's imperative to ask your doctor if this type of activity can benefit you or disrupt a current ailment. With the green light from your doctor, reach out to local pools or gyms to find out how to sign up for a class.

## GET TO KNOW NATURE

While a disability may make

hiking rigorous trails impossible, there are still many ways to enjoy the outdoors in wholesome ways. For instance, you can take up birdwatching by traveling to public parks or even in your backyard.

Watch the wildlife in your area and research how to entice them onto your land with their favorite foods.

# Adopt a Pet

As seniors become lonely or bored after retirement or their children move away, pets can help overcome their unhappiness, according to American Humane.

Animal companions are shown to provide affection, company and a sense of responsibility that keeps our minds active. Welcoming a pet into your home can be a joyous occasion when done correctly.

Before rushing to a local shelter to bring home your new furry friend, it's essential to consider several factors to avoid developing regret.

## CHOOSING AN ANIMAL

Cats and dogs are common household pets throughout America but can result in two completely different experiences. When deciding which animal is right to welcome into your family, consider how the two vary when they're young.

Puppies are generally full of energy and require constant attention to ensure they are comfortable, housebroken and respecting their surroundings. If you face limited mobility, chasing a small dog around your home may lead you to second guess your decision.

On the contrary, kittens tend to require less maintenance regarding grooming and potty training. They are also content with staying indoors, so pet owners avoid making multiple trips outside each day.

## FINDING A SENIOR PET

While raising a puppy or kitten can be a rewarding experience, it can be difficult to find the energy to train them properly. For many seniors, adopting an older pet who has already been disciplined can be a more comfortable experience.

Reach out to your local shelter to find well-behaved companions that are in search of a new forever home

## CONSIDER THE EXPENSES

Pets can't survive on your love alone. Before committing to adopting an animal, consider if your finances are in line with the increased costs you will experience.

When adopting a puppy, kitten or senior pet, they will likely rely on a specific food to ensure their optimal health. It's important to visit a veterinarian's office to discover any medical issues that may become aggravated when eating the wrong diet.

You will also want to plan for vaccines and wellness exams for your new companion. Depending on their age, breed and current health condition, visits to the vet can be constant. Make sure you have room in your budget to protect your pet during regular checkups and medical emergencies.





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# Prevent Memory Loss

While we can't slow down the aging process, there are ways to protect one of our body's most valuable assets — the memory.

The National Center for Biotechnology Information reports that about 40% of people ages 65 and older in the United States have age-associated memory impairment.

For a perspective on why it's important to address memory loss issues as soon as they are noticed, the organization shows startling statistics about the people who are suffering.

Of the 40% with memory impairment:

- One percent will progress into dementia each year.
- Ten percent are diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment.
- Nearly 15 percent will develop Alzheimer's disease annually.

In addition to a strategy set forth by your doctor, use these tips from the Harvard Medical School to help preserve and improve your memory as you age.

## ACTIVE LEARNING

Task your mind by performing mental exercises by participating in new hobbies, learning different languages and reading books of differing genres. While at work, volunteer for projects or roles that involve skills you aren't entirely familiar with.

Keep your brain active by partaking

in challenging activities that enable you to learn new abilities.

## PROTECT OVERALL HEALTH

It will be difficult to improve your memory if your body is suffering from untreated diseases or illnesses. Many issues associated with aging can have detrimental effects on your cognitive ability like:

- **Diabetes:** Surges in blood sugar have been shown to harm memory by reducing blood supply to the brain;
- **Blood pressure:** Memory lapses are commonly caused by the reduced blood supply to the brain; and
- **Depression:** Cognitive problems are a common symptom of depression.

## MEMORY COURSES

Under the supervision of a medical

expert, partake in memory-improvement courses. A good practice is to avoid classes that focus on computer or concentration games, as real-life situations can be dramatically different.

Talk to your doctor about finding a course that enhances your ability to manage everyday challenges.

## DON'T OVERDO IT

When using repetition as a mental exercise, it's essential to space out your lessons over time. If you try to rush and cram memory practices into a short period, it's common for the brain to have difficulty studying.

Harvard suggests that research shows spaced rehearsal improves recall in both healthy people and those who struggle with cognitive problems.