



CareLines

2025 March–April Newsletter

Spring Cleaning for Caregivers

An update from Tia Drumm, Caregiver Programs Coordinator

For some, spring cleaning can seem like a daunting task while for others, it can be a joy. Don't stress yourself with spring cleaning this year—check out this small list of things you can do to declutter not only your house, but your mind as well:

1. Take a deep breath. Concentrate on the breath as it comes in and out of your body. Let it calm you and return your focus to what you want to get done today.
2. Mind racing? Write it down, and get it out! Then, if you are in the mind to, number those items in order of importance and start getting them done. Focus only on what you can do right now.
3. Organize! This can have a calming effect on some of us and allows us to slow down a bit. Clear bins are a great way to organize while being able to see what you have and where—you can always add labels, too.
4. Instead of multi-tasking, focus on a single task. Don't worry about the next thing before you're done with the task you are working on now.
5. Celebrate small wins! For each task you complete, take a moment to reward yourself with a treat of some kind.

Make sure that you aren't wearing yourself too thin and you are checking in with yourself this season.

It's okay to not clean the entire house—it's okay to clean it in sections, and it's okay if you are unable to clean more than once a week. Remember, this is renewal for *you*, so it can mean whatever *you* want it to mean.

Don't get so caught up in spring cleaning that you forget how beautiful spring is! Stop and smell the flowers, and treat yourself to some self-care.

You can find a Spring Renewal & Blossoming Care Bingo game on page 5 of this newsletter with some easy ideas for self-care this season.

For Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, and Madison counties, contact Tia Drumm at (765) 759-1121 ext. 101 or tdrumm@lifestreaminc.org.

For Fayette, Franklin, Rush, Union, and Wayne counties, contact Chelsey Krofta at (765) 759-1121 ext. 281 or ckrofta@lifestreaminc.org.

STEP in
LIFESTREAM CAREGIVER PROGRAMS

Decluttering the Mind: A Guide for Caregivers ✓

An update from Rachel Gray, Care Coach

Caregiving for individuals with dementia can be a demanding and emotionally exhausting experience. The constant need to provide support and the unpredictability of the condition can leave caregivers feeling overwhelmed. One important but often overlooked aspect of caregiving is mental well-being. In order to sustain the energy and patience needed for this challenging role, caregivers must find ways to declutter their minds and focus on self-care.

To begin, caregivers should recognize the importance of setting boundaries. It's easy to feel responsible for every aspect of the care, but taking a step back and acknowledging that not everything is within your control can lighten the mental load. Setting realistic expectations and asking for help when necessary can relieve unnecessary pressure.

Mindfulness practices such as deep breathing, meditation, or simply taking short breaks throughout the day can help caregivers center themselves. Even a few moments of quiet reflection can reduce anxiety and foster a sense of calm. Additionally, organizing daily tasks can provide a sense of control, which often feels elusive when caring for someone with dementia. By making lists, prioritizing essential tasks, and creating a routine, caregivers can manage the chaos and make decisions with a clearer mind.

By decluttering the mind through mindfulness, realistic expectations, and self-care, caregivers can recharge and maintain the energy needed to provide the best care for those with dementia.

Cozy Corner ✓

An update from Kelly Smith, Dementia Outreach Specialist

Spring is the perfect time to refresh your home and garden—but did you know that gardening can also boost your brain health? Spending time outdoors, digging in the soil, and growing your own food isn't just good for your mood; it also supports memory, focus, and overall cognitive function. Plus, certain plants are packed with nutrients that fuel your brain. Let's explore the benefits of gardening and what to plant this spring to nourish your mind and body:

Leafy Greens: These greens are rich in folate and vitamin K, which help slow cognitive decline.

• *Grow Tip: Plant in early spring; they do well in garden beds or containers.*

Blueberries: Often called “brain berries,” they're loaded with antioxidants that improve memory.

• *Grow Tip: Blueberries need acidic soil and full sun but are worth the effort for their long-term benefits.*

Broccoli: High in vitamin K and choline, broccoli supports brain development and function.

• *Grow Tip: Plant in early spring in raised beds or large pots.*

Rosemary: This fragrant herb improves memory and alertness. Even just smelling it can enhance focus!

• *Grow Tip: Rosemary loves full sun and well-drained soil. It thrives in both pots and garden beds.*

Beets: Beets are rich in nitrates, which improve blood flow to the brain, boosting cognitive function.

• *Grow Tip: Plant in loose soil for easy harvesting.*

Walnuts: If you have space, consider planting a walnut tree! Walnuts are packed with brain-boosting omega-3s.

• *Grow Tip: They take time to mature, but they're an investment in long-term health.*

This spring, let your garden do more than just brighten your home—let it nourish your mind, too! Add fragrant herbs, colorful flowers, and a cozy spot to relax. Whether you have a backyard or a few pots on your patio, growing these plants can support your brain health while bringing joy to your daily routine.

Creating Sensory Gardens

An update from Melissa Roseborough, Care Coach

In recent years, sensory gardens have emerged as valuable therapeutic tools in healthcare environments. These thoughtfully designed outdoor spaces aim to engage the senses and provide a restorative environment for individuals, particularly those with dementia or children with special educational needs, such as autism. By incorporating elements like color, texture, fragrance, and sound, sensory gardens offer a multi-sensory experience that promotes comfort, grounding, and the potential to trigger memories and sensory connections. But, what exactly is a sensory garden? A sensory garden is an outdoor space specifically designed to stimulate various senses, encouraging interaction with the environment. For individuals with dementia, these gardens can evoke memories and provide a calming atmosphere.

Here are some key considerations to take into account when creating a sensory garden:

- *What senses do you want to stimulate?*
- *How much space do you have?*
- *What climate do you live in?*

Each sense can be activated with carefully chosen plants and elements. Here are some tips on how to engage each sense effectively:

- **Sight:** Bright-colored flowers, varied leaf patterns, and climbing plants provide visual interest. For added variety, consider plants with unique bark textures that can captivate the eye.
- **Smell:** Aromatic plants like oregano, rosemary, and thyme evoke memories of cooking, while fragrant flowers such as honeysuckle, roses, gardenias, and peonies can remind individuals of familiar scents, such as perfume or a loved one's fragrance.
- **Sound:** Ornamental grasses and plants that rustle in the wind create natural sounds. Additional elements like wind chimes, bird feeders, or water features can further enhance the auditory experience.
- **Touch:** To engage the sense of touch, choose plants with varied textures. Soft and fuzzy plants like lamb's ear contrast with spiky or rough-textured plants, encouraging tactile exploration.
- **Taste:** Edible plants like herbs, fruits, vegetables, and flowers such as pansies provide a sensory experience for the taste buds. However, it's essential to avoid mixing toxic plants with edible ones to ensure safety.

LifeStream Services in partnership with Cope Environmental Center: A Sensory Garden and Workshops coming soon! Be on the lookout for additional information.



Spring Nutrition for Caregivers ✓

An update from Kellie Magoon, Care Coach

Spring is in the air, and while many of us spring clean our living space, we should consider spring cleaning our diet as well. We have all heard about the dangers of consuming an abundance of our calories from processed foods, but how exactly can we reduce our consumption of these foods? Here are some simple strategies to reframe our thinking about processed foods and how to reduce intake of them.

Processed foods are any food items that have been canned, cooked, frozen, pasteurized, or packaged. Many highly processed foods are loaded with salt, sugar, additives, and preservatives, which can harm your health. These now make up the bulk of foods on supermarket shelves, accounting for 58% of our calories and 89% of the added sugar in our diets.

So, how can we make small actionable steps toward a more fresh, whole food approach to eating? Try some of these strategies to begin transitioning away from consuming overly processed foods:

- Read labels—when you're shopping, be sure to read the labels of your favorite foods and avoid foods with partially hydrogenated oils, trans-fat, and added sugar.
- Trade your sugary breakfast cereal for a bowl of oatmeal with fresh or frozen fruit, or eggs.
- Reduce sugar-sweetened beverages. Gradually try to decrease the amount of soda or sweetened tea you drink, replacing them with water.
- Replacing highly palatable snacks like chips with healthier options like fresh fruit, mixed nuts, veggies and hummus, or even home-popped popcorn are great alternatives.
- It's much easier to limit your intake of highly processed foods when you don't have any on hand. Try to avoid grocery shopping when you are tired and hungry—this will give you more clarity on the choices you make for the week.

Change is hard, so start small and celebrate every win you have. Remember, setbacks are going to happen so don't get down on yourself if you slip up and indulge in the drive-thru or a much-loved treat. Every day is a new opportunity to build on the successes of previous days or to have a fresh start. We are all human and life can be stressful and demanding, so keeping a journal of daily successes can serve as a much-needed reminder of the positive choices we make to improve our health and quality of life.



Visit lifestreaminc.org/stepin for a complete list of caregiver support resources

Spring Renewal & Blossoming Care: Self Care Bingo

Spring is a great time to focus on small, achievable activities that contribute to self-care all with a touch of renewal for the spring season! Use this Bingo card as a visible reminder to care for yourself while caregiving. No pressure—just self-care as you see fit. The main goal is to support your well-being in a fun and renewed way. Feel free to adjust any of these for personal preference or circumstances. Start with an activity per day or aim for more if you are feeling extra energized. Each time you complete a task, mark it off. Once a full row is complete or the entire card, reward yourself with something special to you, like a warm cup of tea or watching your favorite movie.

You can also submit your completed card by emailing stepin@lifestreaminc.org for a small gift to be mailed. (*Submissions for gift must be returned no later than April 4, 2025.*)

B	L	O	O	M
Call a friend or someone that supports you	Take a moment to reflect on personal achievements	Dance or move for 3 minutes to your favorite song	Stretch or go for a walk-in nature	Cook a healthy meal to enjoy
Write down 3 things you are grateful for	Watch a funny video or show that makes you laugh	Organize one small caregiving task of choice	Sit in silence and savor a moment of peace	Spend time with a pet or animal while outside
Treat yourself to a nourishing fresh snack with color for variety	Create a calming environment with lights, music, etc. in your house or a fresh oasis outside	Enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, mindfully	Get outside with nature or spend time near sunshine and plants	Write down your intentions for the week
Take a moment to rest in a comfy spot	Read for 15 minutes or enjoy spring gardening	Listen to your favorite song or music	Put on your favorite outfit, just for yourself. Add in spring colors.	Do something creative (Draw, color, doodle)

Name: _____



1701 Pilgrim Blvd.
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STEP In Caregiver Kits

LifeStream is pleased to offer Caregiver Kits at various community partner locations. The goal of these kits is to help caregivers get connected with resources to help maintain a good quality of life, as well as increase interaction between the caregiver and person with care needs.

Caregiver kits have different themes, and are geared toward individuals living with Dementia, Parkinson's, and in kinship care and their caregiver. These kits consist of topic-specific books and resources for the caregiver, as well as activities for the caregiver and person they care for to enjoy together.

Caregivers will be given a keepsake packet of resources and handouts to keep upon returning the kit, courtesy of LifeStream Services. For a complete list of community sites where you can check out a Caregiver Kit, visit www.lifestreaminc.org/stepin.

