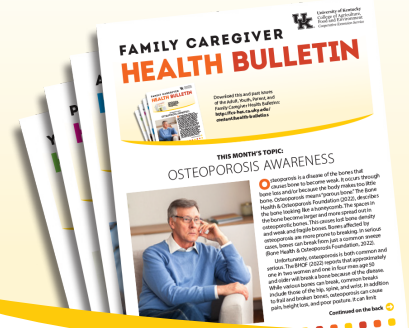


FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN

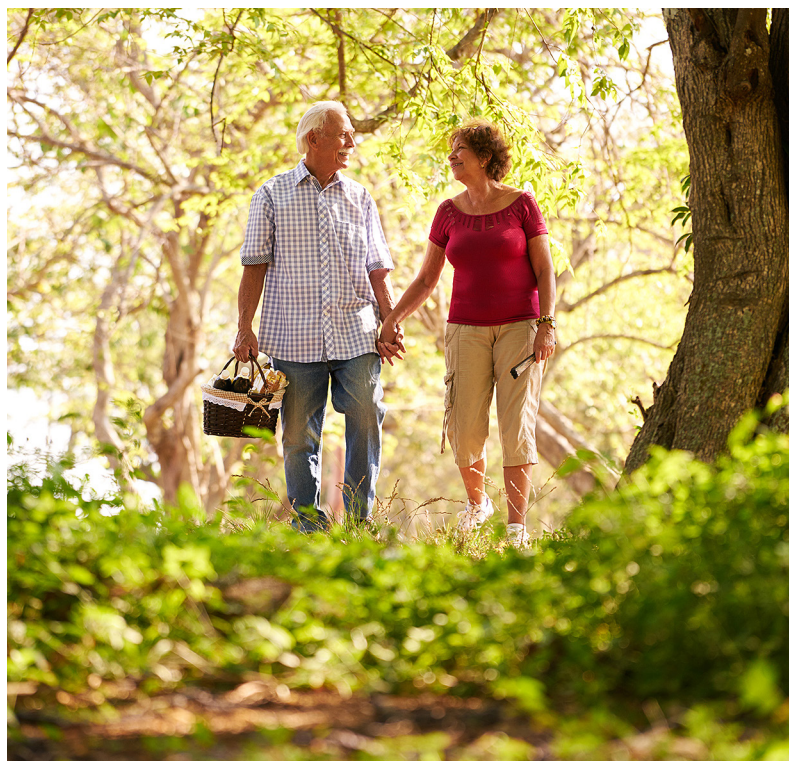


JUNE 2024

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

STEP INTO NATURE FOR SELF-CARE



Most caregivers are aware that self-care is important. Yet, many caregivers struggle to find or make time for it. Did you know that exposure to the outdoors can reduce feelings of stress and anxiety in as few as five minutes? We often take nature for granted, but stepping into nature has the power to heal. If you do not have time to walk in the woods, garden, or take a weekend camping trip, just spending time outside can be restorative and invigorating — even if it is in the backyard or standing under a tree in a parking lot at work. Purposeful time spent in nature helps direct your mind to the present and helps you feel alive. Stepping into nature on a regular basis may help prevent the negative effects of stress. When you properly manage stress, you are better able to lower the risks of chronic disease, illness, and mortality.

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One of the best things about a prescription for nature is that it is free! This makes putting down your electronics to soak in the June sun easy, affordable, and accessible.

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According to the Mayo Clinic (2024), some of the mental health benefits of nature include:

- Improves mood
- Lowers anxiety
- Alleviates stress
- Improves cognition and memory
- Builds resiliency
- Promotes self-care
- Helps manage emotions
- Improves sleep quality
- Enhances creativity
- Reduces irritability
- Clears the mind

You can also incorporate the benefits of nature and sensory activity into your caregiving role. According to Dr. Elizabeth Rhodes from the University of Kentucky Sanders-Brown Center on

Aging, stimulating the sensory system can help engage the brain and support brain health. In the spring, walking or sitting in the sun can help your loved one feel more alert during the day and sleep better at night. Improve their mood

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." —John Muir

by taking a drive with the windows down or by sitting outside. Embrace the spring and feed ducks at a local pond, get dirty in the garden, or skip rocks at a nearby pond.

If your loved one is unable to step into nature, make it a goal to bring the outside inside through open windows and a fresh cross-breeze, plants, animals, and seasonal natural materials, like arranging local wildflowers or cooking with vegetables from the garden. Soak their feet in a



tub with cool water and blow bubbles outside. Build a birdhouse together or ask your loved one to watch if they are unable to be hands-on. An enriching environment and hands-on exposure can help heal, stimulate, and create joy.

One of the best things about a prescription for nature is that it is free! This makes putting down your electronics to soak in the June sun easy, affordable, and accessible. June in Kentucky means getting outside. The spring weather brings fresh rain, warmer temperatures, flowers, and an abundance of plant and animal life. In June, listen to the birds, feel the cool Bluegrass on your bare feet, sense the breeze on your face, and look for fireflies.

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FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN

Written by: Amy F. Kostelic,
Associate Extension Professor,
Adult Development and Aging
Edited by: Alyssa Simms
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images:
Adobe Stock

