



DISCOVER YOUR PATH

TO *Wellness*

Three-part series from Solstice Senior Living

STEP 3

One Reflection at a Time



WHAT IS WELLNESS?

To achieve true wellness, we must make a conscious effort to improve on each aspect of wellness – both physical and mental, that combine to create a holistically well life. While aspects like your mental and physical health are important on their own, together they accomplish something even greater for your wellness.

Starting a wellness journey is a perfect time to reflect on what is important to you. Where do your values lie? What gives you purpose? What helps you live a more engaged and meaningful life? Once you understand this, you can improve your wellness one reflection at a time.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

While working on their spiritual health is beneficial for everyone, there's serious evidence that caring for the human spirit can boost wellness among seniors.

Here are some of the benefits of spiritual health:

- **Preventing feelings of loneliness and depression**

Practicing a faith or other spiritual activity like meditation offers several ways to minimize feelings of loneliness and depression. Spirituality often offers people hope, a willingness to try new things and take risks, a more positive outlook, and the ability to see obstacles as positive challenges.

- **Inspiring hope and positivity**

Two foundational elements of spirituality are hope and positivity. Hope is the ability to look forward with the knowledge that better times are ahead. It improves our mental health as well as our ability to cope with stressors. Having hope increases our ability to think positively, which can have numerous health benefits, including a lower risk of heart attack.

- **Boosting your immune system's response**

Practicing spirituality has long been thought to improve health, but certain spiritual practices are now even proven to benefit your immune system. This is known as mind-body medicine and includes physical methods, like yoga and tai chi, as well as meditation in its many forms. Each is helpful with calming and relieving stress, which can negatively impact immunity and keep you from living a healthier life.

- **Lowering your blood pressure and reducing anxiety**

The relationship between hypertension and anxiety is complicated, since neither is always the cause of the other; but both can contribute to the other. Studies have shown that those involved in religious activity had significantly lower blood pressure and were at subsequently lower risk for heart disease and stroke.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION

While you may not realize it, plenty of activities from your everyday routine offer opportunities for reflection. There are several ways to consciously find more time to reflect, but it can be even easier than adding something to your routine. Listening to music or working in your garden can quickly become moments when you tune life's distractions out and take time for yourself.

- Meditation – Perhaps the best-known way to reflect is through meditation. This simple practice helps us focus our minds, let go of outside distractions and enter a quieter, less stressful state.
- Affirmations – Simply saying something does not make it so; but affirmations can begin to encourage positive thoughts, feelings and emotions. Simply repeating phrases out loud, affirmations help us focus on the positive and train our brains to embrace the affirmation as fact.

“ My mom has been at Solstice at Joliet for nearly three years. She moved there with my dad and stayed after he passed away as she enjoys the good friends and activities! She is thriving!! ”

RESIDENT FAMILY MEMBER, SOLSTICE SENIOR LIVING AT JOLIET

- Spirituality – Spirituality focuses on the human spirit or soul. Spiritual reflections can help establish beliefs, faith and meaning in life and even guide you in the direction of being a better person.
- Religion, faith and prayer – For many, spirituality and religion are inextricably linked with faith and prayer. Combined, they offer a spiritual connection to a higher power. But different religions also offer new ways to look at life, so reflecting on different belief systems can be very enlightening and helpful in anyone’s spiritual journey.
- Music – Few aspects of life offer the therapeutic qualities that music can. It transports us to good times, improves our mood, and can even compel us to get up and dance. But there’s more! Music works as therapy because it helps us better understand ourselves, which in turn empowers us to reflect and learn just by listening.



- Art appreciation – Art appreciation offers a whole world of possibilities for reflection. People can engage with art in a multitude of ways, like watching a ballet, listening to a poetry reading, attending an art show or admiring a museum sculpture. Art is so diverse and so implicitly unique that we can only gain from its existence.
- Arts and crafts – While appreciating art can be therapeutic, hands-on arts and crafts can offer a different array of tasks that increase focus and offer a chance for reflection. Arts and crafts eliminates stress and anxiety, improves focus and expresses emotions to the point that it is used as therapy.
- Socialization and maintaining strong relationships – Social interactions and relationships are huge assets in the quest for spiritual well-being. Our friends and families help us define ourselves, live fulfilling and longer lives, and have better mental health.
- Exercise – Exercise is another way to reflect because it allows us to concentrate on right now and feel our bodies strengthen. There are more ways in which exercise benefits us, including maintaining a healthy weight, controlling blood pressure, getting better sleep and many more. Yoga and tai chi are two forms of physical and mental exercise that offer ways to meditate in motion to boost your mood, energy and overall well-being.
- Reminiscing – Our ability to reminisce provides a wonderful way to reflect and relive good times. It also allows us to share family stories, build relationships and create that feeling of nostalgia that is so uniquely human.
- Nature and gardening – Spending time in nature, whether in a park or in your garden, offers an opportunity to be calm, reflect and reap plenty more health benefits.

STRESS - THE SILENT ENEMY OF WELLNESS

Stress is the body's response to mental, physical or emotional strain, and it comes in many forms. While all stress isn't harmful and it's natural to feel stressed at times, chronic stress elicits a range of unhealthy symptoms like sleep loss, anxiety, headaches and muscle tension.

- **Ways of Managing Stress**

- Rest and sleep – Sleep is essential to managing stress and staying healthy, so it's important to set and maintain a healthy sleep routine.
- Having a daily routine – Keeping a daily routine can help manage stress because it provides a level of control over your life. Make sure you don't forget to include time for healthy habits like meditation, exercise, nutritious meals and fun!

- **De-stressing Techniques**

There are plenty of ways to de-stress and control your stress, and these are simple activities that already help improve your well-being in other ways. Meditation and socialization help adults de-stress, but there are other easy things you can do on your own time.

- Deep breathing – Perhaps the simplest of all stress-relieving techniques is deep breathing, which is why it's a common suggestion to take a deep breath when feeling stressed or anxious. In fact, we often do it automatically in response to stressors. Deep breathing has many benefits, including helping us relax, energizing cells and even lowering blood pressure.



- Focus on a hobby – Take your mind off life's stressors by focusing on an activity you are passionate about. Doing something that you enjoy, are already good at or simply want to learn can be a gratifying stress buster and improve your wellness overall.

- Foods to beat stress – Eating a well-balanced diet is another way to manage stress, but there are some foods that really pack a punch. These fresh foods include vitamin B-rich almonds, broccoli with more stress-fighting vitamin C than oranges, and winter squash, a great source of omega-3 fatty acids that protect against the effects of long-term stress.

Taking the time to reflect manages stress, focuses your mind on positive thoughts and fills your life with more joy. Making simple changes like staying on a schedule, practicing meditation or deep breathing, eating the right foods, and getting the sleep you need can make a world of difference when stress becomes a problem.

RESOURCES

- Psychology Today, 4 Powerful Ways Spirituality Can Ease Anxiety and Depression
- The Daily Meditation, Why Is Hope Important In Life? You Will Be Amazed!
- Johns Hopkins, The Power of Positive Thinking
- Cleveland Clinic, How Mindfulness Training Can Boost Your Immune System
- Calm Clinic, The Scary Link between Hypertension and Anxiety
- Meditation DNA, Meditation For Concentration – 4 Best Meditations To Improve Concentration And Memory
- AARP, Ready to Give Meditation a Try?
- Berkley Well-Being Institute, Daily Affirmations: Definition, Benefits, & 102 Examples to Improve Your Life
- Institute of Reflection, Faith and Religions
- MusicWorx, The Musicality of Self-Reflection
- The Art Bay, 10 Reasons Why Art Appreciation is Important
- LonerWolf, 15 Art Therapy Ideas to Banish Anxiety and Channel Your Emotions
- Medical News Today, What are the health benefits of being social?
- National Institute of Health, Real-Life Benefits of Exercise and Physical Activity
- Psychology Today, Why Nostalgia? The Amazing Power of Reminiscing
- National Parks Service, Nature Makes You...
- AARP, Tai Chi and Yoga
- Gaia, 5 Warning Signs of Chronic Stress You Can't Afford to Ignore
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Tips for Better Sleep
- Verywell Mind, The Importance of Maintaining Structure and Routine During Stressful Times
- Well+Good, This 5-Minute Meditation Will Stress-Proof Your Mind
- Positive Psychology, The Power of Deep Breathing: 7 Techniques and Exercises
- Odyssey, 24 Hobbies to Help Relieve Stress
- Mayo Clinic, Social support: Tap this tool to beat stress
- AARP, 10 Foods to Help Relieve Stress

“When I made the decision to move into a senior living community, I was living with my daughter, and I wanted to be with people my age. When I saw this community and talked with the people, I just felt this was the place for me.”

**SHARRON C.,
SOLSTICE SENIOR LIVING RESIDENT**