

## A Summer's Ease

By Buffy Owens

If you woke up this morning, looked out your window, and got that warm fuzzy feeling inside – you are not alone. That sound you heard was a collective sigh of all of who realized that, yes, summer is here! The flowers are blooming, the birds are singing and a sense of ease and vitality fills the air. So why not join the party? Below are five simple lifestyle changes that will breathe new life into your body and your mind.

**Exercise your mind.** Allow time each day to grow your mental muscle by doing mental exercises such as crossword puzzles, brainteasers, learning something new, reading a book or writing your own autobiography. Share your genius with others by taking a class, joining a book club or visiting a local museum with a friend.

**Move your body.** Give yourself the gift of movement each day! Even something as wonderful as a daily walk can increase your life expectancy and lower your risk of Alzheimer disease. Take time to explore your movement cravings. Take a dance class or check out the local strength and exercise classes designed specifically for your age and movement needs. These classes often contain a variety of movements that are novel and challenge both your body and your mind.

**Eat more often.** Shifting your eating plan to include five small meals a day will help prevent drops in blood glucose levels. Since glucose is the main energy source for the brain you are more likely to have an alert and attentive mind. For more food for thought try adding Omega-3 fatty oils to your diet along with a balanced diet.

**Relax and release.** Taking 10-20 minutes each day to do relaxation exercises such as Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) can actually lower your level of stress, relieve insomnia and preserve your memory. To do PMR simply find a quiet place where you can give your full attention to your body. Sitting, standing or lying down, begin at your feet and gradually work your way up the body ending with your face. Slowly contract one muscle group as you inhale (for example your feet) for five to ten seconds. Then exhale and release the tension in that muscle group. Try to focus on the sensations you feel as the muscle group relaxes. Then allow yourself 20 seconds to relax before you move on to the next muscle group (for example your lower legs).

**Take a nap.** A brief 20-30 minute nap has been shown to have several benefits ranging from decreased blood pressure to memory consolidation of newly learned tasks. Plus wake up feeling refreshed and recharged, ready to enjoy a nice spring day!

*As always, please check with your doctor before beginning any new diet or movement regimen.*

*...find yourself in motion*