

TOUCHED BY ANGELS WINTER/SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER



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Why Do Seniors Reflect More Deeply in January Than Any Other Month?

January feels different for older adults. (<https://miraclemedicalcare.com>) The pace slows, the house is quieter. The calendar opens up. After the activity of the holidays, many seniors find themselves with more time to notice how they truly feel. After years of working closely with seniors in their homes and daily routines, I have learned that January is not just the start of a new year. It is a moment of honest reflection. This is when seniors think less about goals and more about quality of life. During the holidays, seniors are often surrounded by family, visitors, and noise. January brings stillness. That stillness creates space to reflect on energy levels, comfort, and independence. Many seniors begin asking themselves questions they pushed aside before- Am I moving as easily as I used to, do I feel safe doing everyday tasks, is my home supporting me or challenging me? These questions are not dramatic. They are gentle realizations that surface when life slows down. January

does not carry pressure. There are no big celebrations or expectations. Seniors are not trying to keep up or impress anyone. This honesty makes January a powerful month for awareness. I have seen seniors acknowledge small challenges they ignored all year. A little stiffness in the morning; a hesitation when standing. A sense of fatigue that feels different than before. These moments do not create panic. They create understanding. Aging is not just physical. It is emotional. January brings a mix of reflection and vulnerability. Seniors may feel grateful for the past year while also feeling unsure about what lies ahead. This emotional awareness affects confidence. When seniors feel emotionally supported, they are more willing to stay active, engaged, and independent. When they feel dismissed or rushed, they withdraw. Trust becomes especially important during this time. Cold weather changes how bodies move. Joints feel stiffer. Balance feels less reliable. Energy levels dip. In January, seniors become more aware of how movement feels inside their home. Walking across a cold floor. Reaching for items. Navigating tight spaces. This awareness often leads to cautious movement. Not because seniors are incapable, but because they want to feel safe. Supporting safe movement during winter is not about pushing strength. It is about restoring confidence.

Home Becomes the Center of Everything

January keeps seniors indoors more than any other time of year. Home becomes the place where comfort, safety, and independence either work together or fall apart. This is when small details matter-Clear pathways, good lighting, supportive seating, easy access to daily necessities. When the home supports the body, seniors feel more confident and calmer. When it does not, anxiety increases. In January, seniors respond best to gentle support, not pressure. They want to feel heard. They want explanations that respect their experience. They want solutions that fit their life, not force change. Whether it is care support, mobility assistance, or home improvements, seniors build trust with people who move at their pace. Trust in January is built through patience.

Why Small Adjustments Matter More Than Big Changes

January is not the month for drastic transformations. It is the month for small, meaningful adjustments-A safer way to move through the home, a routine that feels manageable, support that feels present but not overwhelming. These small changes reduce stress and protect independence over time. Families often notice subtle shifts during January visits or calls. Seniors may mention being tired more often. They may avoid certain activities. This is not a sign of decline. It is a sign of awareness. January gives families a chance to listen without urgency.

A Different Kind of New Year Resolution

For seniors, January resolutions are rarely about ambition. They are about comfort, stability, and peace of mind. Living well becomes more important than doing more. Supporting seniors in January means honoring that shift. January invites seniors to reflect honestly on how they are living, moving, and feeling. It is a quiet month, but it holds powerful insight. When seniors feel safe, supported, and respected during this time, trust grows naturally. And trust is what allows aging to feel less like something to manage and more like something to live through with confidence.

JANUARY REFLECTIONS

NATIONAL HOBBY MONTH

Celebrate activities that bring joy, purpose, and mental engagement, like crafting, puzzles, or gardening. For free games such as Mahjongg, Daily Crossword, Solitaire Cards, Jigsaw Puzzles, etc. See (<https://games.aarp.org>). Studies show that playing daily crossword or jigsaw puzzles engage memory and promote mental acuity.

ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS MONTH

It is crucial to raise awareness and support for dementia, as highlighted by Hope for Dementia. See (<https://dementiasociety.org>) This may surprise you, but it summarizes the impact Dementia may have on our families: We believe that more than 9 million Americans live with some form of Dementia today. However, remarkably, even as the ability to make an accurate diagnosis has improved, historically, upwards of 30% of those who received a basic Alzheimer-type Dementia diagnosis (usually in the primary care office/clinic and typically relying on self-reported/observed symptoms and/or family, but without advanced biomarker testing having been done) were thought not to have Alzheimer's disease –

yes, they may have developed Dementia, but likely from a different underlying disease/cause.* This points to the need for early screening to be done, more advanced testing to be offered, and starts with an awareness that there are [many, many causes of Dementia beyond Alzheimer's](#). There are several examples of early signs of brain trouble-drop in personal hygiene (someone who was always neat starts to look messy, wear dirty clothes, have body odor, or stop bathing. The brain's part that plans and organizes has trouble. The Alzheimer's Association lists "decreased or poor judgement" as one of its ten key

warning signs. This is also tied to apathy or a loss of motivation that is common in dementia.

This year, slow down.

The greatest advice I've heard for 2026 is this:

Be present. Savor the laughter, the quiet moments, and the beauty in your everyday life. You never know how much time you or the people around you have left, so make every second count. Live boldly, love deeply, and enjoy the gift of NOW.

When someone develops chronic constipation, they often start using laxatives. A 2023 study in the

journal "Neurology" followed over 18,000 people for 10 years. Results reported clearly that people who used laxatives most days of the week had a **51% higher risk of developing any type of dementia**. It does not prove that laxatives cause dementia, but it points to a possible reason. Scientists think that laxative use might mess with healthy bacteria in your gut. A key part of this brain-gut axis connects to why gut problems such as bowel movements show up before memory problems do. Dementia symptoms do not appear all at once; they develop over many years. Early indicators (potentially years to a decade)-chronic constipation, regular laxative use, new urinary urgency/frequency, decline in personal hygiene, forgetting grooming steps, resistance to bathing, forgetting bathroom location, difficulty in toileting mechanics, functional incontinence, mistaking objects for a toilet, hiding soiled clothing, frequent/total incontinence.

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

January encourages people to reflect on their lives, celebrate the positive parts of life, honor the memories of loved ones, and make plans to live to the fullest. The month provides an opportunity to appreciate life's moments and the people you meet through various activities involving gratitude and personal growth. (<https://betterhealth.com>) **Keep a gratitude journal.** Studies suggest that a gratitude journal can [improve mental health](#) and sleep quality. You can choose between a physical journal or a digital platform like an app or a Word document. Stay consistent and set aside time each day or week to list what you are grateful for. Starting and ending each day with five things you are grateful for helps shift your attitude to positive. **Start an exercise routine.** Experts state that incorporating a brisk [30-minute walk](#) five times a week into your routine can improve cardiovascular health and support a healthy body, better mobility and balance. Some people may prefer low-impact forms of exercise, such as yoga and tai chi, while others may enjoy other activities like lunges, sit-ups, and free virtual yoga classes. Web sites such as (<https://local.aarp.org>yoga>classes>) and (<https://doyogawithme.com>) may be helpful for learning yoga safely. **Learn healthy eating habits.** Incorporate various fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins into your daily meals. Other activities to help celebrate each day with joy-**spend some time outdoors** and take a **walk in nature**; **volunteer** and give back to your community; **host a gathering** to bring family, friends and loved ones together; **write letters to loved ones** to strengthen bonds; **take a class or workshop to learn a new skill** and connect with others who share similar interests; **start a creative project** in art, music, or writing; **learn about diverse cultures** around the world.



FEBRUARY REFLECTIONS

NATIONAL SENIOR INDEPENDENCE MONTH

National Senior Independence Month is a month-long observance of seniors and the resources that help them live full, active, and engaged lives. Most older adults want to age in place, remaining in their homes as long as possible. Sadly, a recent poll revealed that 40% of older adults were not aware of the community resources available to make this a reality. **Support a Local Senior Center-** Local senior centers are lifelines for many older adults. They provide social enrichment, fitness classes, entertainment, and hot meals — all resources that help people successfully age in place. Many rely on donor support to provide these programs, so consider donating to support their work. **Volunteer Your Time With a Senior-Serving Organization-** Other community organizations also support seniors aging in place. Some build ramps for accessibility or install grab bars for increased safety. Others offer drop-in visits to provide a vital human connection. Volunteering with one of these groups is a great way to support local seniors and enrich your own life at the same time. Local Resources: **Grey Bears** (<https://greybears.org>) **Grey Bears** improves the health and well-being of seniors and our community through food and meal delivery, volunteerism, resource conservation and reuse. **831-479-1055.**

*Happy Heart's Month!
Indulge your sweet tooth
in some love notes...*



Ingredients

- 2 refrigerated pie crusts
- Flour for rolling out dough
- 1/2 cup strawberry jam
- Egg wash
- 1/4 cup Granulated sugar, for sprinkling



PHOTO: RACHEL VANNI; FOOD STYLING: FRANCESCA ZANI

Directions

Step 1

Preheat oven to 375°. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. On a lightly floured surface, roll out 1 pie crust. Using a paring knife, cut out long diamond shapes, about 4" on each side. Transfer diamonds to baking sheet. Reroll extra dough to make more diamonds. (You should have enough dough to make about 6.)

Step 2

Fill the center of each diamond with a very small dollop of strawberry filling. Fold the corners of the longer side into the center, then fold the remaining corner to meet in the center so that the dough looks like an open envelope. Press down lightly on dough to seal. Use a small heart cookie cutter to stamp out remaining dough into hearts, and place a heart in the center of each

Step 3

Freeze for at least 30 minutes.

Step 4

Brush envelopes with egg wash and sprinkle with sugar. Bake until envelopes are golden, about 15 minutes.



PHOTO: RACHEL VANNI; FOOD STYLING: FRANCESCA ZANI



MARCH REFLECTIONS

For seniors, March is primarily recognized as Senior Nutrition Month and the time for the national March for Meals campaign, which raises awareness about senior hunger and isolation. It also has practical implications regarding the Social Security payment schedule and general health and wellness activities.

Senior Nutrition Month: This annual observance, funded by the Older Americans Act, highlights how nutrition services help older adults maintain their independence and well-being.

March for Meals: This national campaign, celebrated by local programs across the U.S., commemorates the 1972 signing of the law that established a national nutrition program for seniors. It's a grassroots movement to raise awareness about food insecurity and malnutrition, recruit volunteers to deliver meals and perform safety checks, and secure support for funding needed to meet the rising demand for services like Meals on Wheels.

Social Security Payments: The month of March includes specific dates for the distribution of Social Security benefits, with payment dates depending on the recipient's birth date. For those who began receiving benefits before 1997 or who receive both Social Security and SSI, payment dates differ from the standard schedule. The [Social Security Administration \(SSA\) website](#) provides payment calendars.

Community Activities: Senior living communities and local organizations often host special activities in March related to St. Patrick's Day, the beginning of spring, or National Craft Month, providing opportunities for social engagement.

CREATIVE SPRING ART FUN

Coffee Filter Sun Flowers

Coffee Filter Sunflowers is an art program that is inexpensive and can bring some color to your life. For this activity, you will need coffee filters, crayons, scissors, glue, and green construction paper or cardstock.

Instructions:

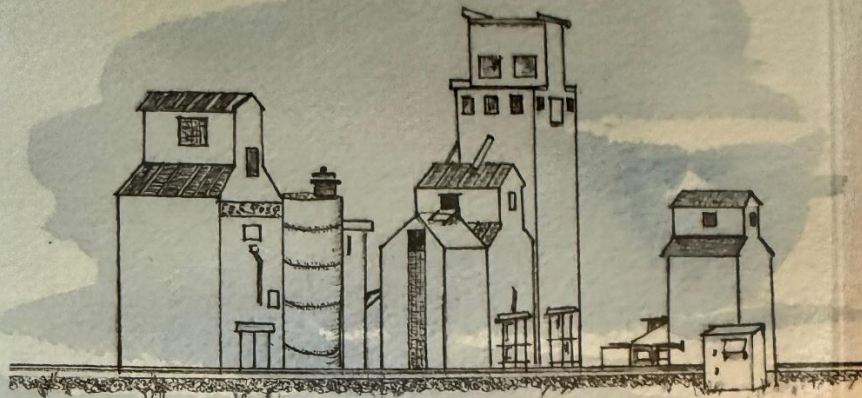
- Take a few coffee filters to color with crayons (the filters are not suitable for painting).
- Place 3 or 4 of the colored filters on top of each other and fold them in half, then in quarters.
- Cut the circular end of the filters to form the shape of petals. To make this step easier, you can print out a template of a flower and place it on top of the filters as a guide. Glue the center of each flower onto the next, leaving the petals free. You can cut stems out of cardstock and glue those to the flowers as well.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A recommended book to read for anyone that has a loved one dealing with Alzheimer's or Dementia is "Losing Johanna" by author Zella Smoak. Her experiences as a nurse working as a director and manager of several Alzheimer's units inspired her writing of this book.



FICTION / General



When You Lose Who You Are... What's Left?

Johanna Moss is looking forward to the next stage of her life: after a successful career as an attorney, she decides to move back to her childhood home in Montana, where she will blend the memories of her past with the reality of the woman she's become. But Johanna doesn't know that she is being stalked by a thief that will steal from her the one gift she values most. This gripping, gorgeous novel tells the story of her descent into Alzheimer's Dementia, as experienced by those who love her, and also from Johanna's own uniquely illuminating point of view. *Losing Johanna* is exuberant, funny, tragic, and ultimately redemptive. Readers will be inspired by Johanna's bravery, her humor, and above all, the profound humanity of her journey through time and memory.



Zella (Jacobson) Smoak was born and raised in Montana. She is a registered nurse and a California licensed attorney. She has been director and manager of several Alzheimer's care units and has worked extensively with families of Alzheimer's patients. She also has broad experience as an attorney which was her second profession. She has published numerous professional articles and has taught nursing and law at a college level, as well as being a keynote speaker at national conventions and workshops. Zella currently lives in Penn Valley, California.

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