

STONE & IVY

M A G A Z I N E

WELLNESS, REIMAGINED WITH INTENTION AND GRACE.





EDITOR'S NOTE

There is something about spring that feels like an exhale.

After months of heavier skies and quieter days, the world begins to stir again. Light lingers a little longer in the evening. Windows open. Fresh air moves through our homes. The earth awakens slowly but surely, reminding us that renewal does not arrive all at once—it unfolds gently, one small beginning at a time.

This Spring Edition of Stone & Ivy is devoted to the art of spring cleaning, though not simply in the traditional sense. Rather, we explore what it means to clear space in the places that matter most—the mind, the body, and the spirit.

In the pages ahead, we focus on renewal through creativity, rediscovering the quiet joy of making, imagining, and exploring new ideas. We turn our attention toward physical and emotional wellness, honoring the ways movement, rest, and mindful care help restore balance after the darker months.

Spring also calls us outdoors. It reminds us that some of life's most meaningful moments happen beyond our walls—on long walks, beneath open skies, beside gardens just beginning to bloom. The natural world gently invites us back into rhythm with it, encouraging presence rather than urgency.

Above all, this Spring Edition is an invitation.

An invitation to let go of the weight of winter. To open windows both literal and figurative. To release the clutter that gathers not only in our homes but in our thoughts. To welcome new ideas, new energy, and new possibilities with curiosity rather than pressure.

With spring comes a return to simplicity. We are reminded that less often holds more meaning. That beauty lives in small moments—a garden beginning to bloom, a shared meal outdoors, a quiet morning with sunlight pouring through the kitchen window.

In this season of renewal, may we find ourselves drawn back to what matters most. To our roots. To nature. To creativity. To peace. And perhaps, most importantly, to the quiet joy of living well in the little things.

With gratitude,
Jen

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A FRESH START



Jen Timothy | Writer

There is a reason the idea of a fresh start feels so powerful. Even before we know what we want to change, the possibility of beginning again can feel like relief—a subtle but meaningful shift in how we hold ourselves and our lives.

Psychologically, these moments carry weight. Humans are naturally responsive to what are known as temporal landmarks—points in time that create a separation between who we were and who we are becoming. A new year, a birthday, the start of a season. These markers offer us a pause, a moment to step back and reconsider. They create space for reflection, but also for hope.

Spring, in particular, holds a unique kind of invitation. Unlike the sharp, often pressure-filled expectations of January, this season arrives with softness. Growth is visible, but it is not rushed. It unfolds gradually, without demand or spectacle, reminding us that change does not need to be dramatic to be meaningful.

There is also a quiet beauty in the idea of starting over. Not as a rejection of who we have been, but as an honoring of who we are becoming. Reinvention, in its truest form, is not about erasing the past. It is about allowing ourselves to evolve—to step into a new version of our lives with greater awareness and intention.

And yet, beginnings are not always comfortable.

There is often a period of uncertainty that accompanies change—a space where the familiar has been loosened, but the new has not yet fully taken shape. It can feel disorienting, even unsettling at times. But it is within this space that growth begins to take root. We are reminded, gently but truthfully, that we cannot always grow while remaining comfortable. Something must shift. Something must stretch.

Still, a fresh start does not need to be grand in order to be meaningful.

There is a common misconception that beginning again requires bold decisions, sweeping change, or immediate transformation. In reality, the most lasting change is often built on the smallest of shifts. A quieter morning. A more intentional routine. A single choice made differently than before. These moments may feel insignificant, but they create movement. And movement, over time, creates direction.

It is often in these small beginnings that something beautiful unfolds ---> A new habit becomes a steady rhythm, a different perspective becomes a softer way of thinking, a single step becomes a path.



These are the kinds of changes that last—not because they are dramatic, but because they are sustainable.

A fresh start, then, is not a demand placed upon us. It is an opportunity offered to us. One that can be approached with curiosity rather than pressure. With openness rather than expectation.

It is not about becoming someone entirely new. It is about returning to yourself with greater clarity. Carrying forward what feels true, while gently releasing what no longer fits.

We begin again not because we failed, but because growth asks us to. Because life evolves, and so do we.

And perhaps the most important part of beginning again is this: it does not need to be perfect to be meaningful.

It simply needs to be honest.





PRACTICING COMPASSION TOWARD YOURSELF

Jen Timothy | Writer

For many of us, compassion comes easily when it is directed outward. We know how to sit beside a friend in their pain, how to offer understanding without judgment, how to hold space without trying to fix what cannot be fixed.

Yet when we turn inward, the tone often changes. The voice becomes sharper, less forgiving. We expect more from ourselves while offering less in return.

Self-compassion is not about excusing behavior or avoiding responsibility. It is about changing the relationship we have with ourselves, particularly in moments of difficulty. It is the ability to meet ourselves with the same kindness we would offer someone we care deeply about.

This becomes especially important during seasons of transition. As spring arrives, there can be an unspoken expectation to feel renewed, energized, and ready to move forward. But growth does not always follow the calendar. Sometimes we are still carrying the weight of what came before, even as the world around us begins to lighten.

Practicing compassion in these moments means allowing that to be true. It means acknowledging that healing, progress, and change are not linear. That effort matters, even when results are not immediately visible.

This practice often begins with awareness—simply noticing how you speak to yourself. The quiet criticisms, the unrealistic expectations, the moments where you withhold kindness. And then, gently, choosing something different: a softer response, a more patient perspective, a willingness to rest without guilt.

Over time, this shift creates an internal environment that supports growth rather than resists it. It allows us to move forward not from a place of pressure, but from a place of care.

There is a quiet strength in this kind of gentleness. Not because it makes things easier, but because it makes them more sustainable.

You deserve the same compassion you offer so freely to others. And learning to extend it inward may be one of the most meaningful changes you can make.

GARDENING TIPS

THE GARDEN THAT GROWS ITSELF

LOW EFFORT, HIGH BEAUTY

PERENNIAL OVERHOUSES

- LAVENDER, drought tolerant
- SALVIA, long bloom
- PHLOX, classic cottage
- SHASTA DAISY, tough
- CONEFLOWER, pollinator hero
- HOSTA, shade friendly

WHY IT'S LOW EFFORT

- less over time
- MULCH KEEPS MOISTURE
- WEEDS BLOCKED
- RETURNING PLANT SPROUT
- PERENNIALS DO THE WORK

BACK ROW: TALL BACK LAYER

MIDDLE COLOR LAYER

LOW FRONT BORDER

PERENNIAL CYCLE
RETURNS YEAR AFTER YEAR

IT ONCE, ENJOY FOR YEARS

FAIRYTALE LOOK. BEGINNER EFFORT.

FLOWERING TREES THAT BEAUTIFY YOUR YARD

- Magnolia**
Large showy flowers in spring
- Crape Myrtle**
Summer blooms, peeling bark
- Eastern Redbud**
(*Cercis canadensis*)
Early spring pink blossoms
- Cherry Blossom**
(*Prunus spp.*)
Iconic spring flowering
- Golden Rain Tree**
(*Koelreuteria paniculata*)
Yellow summer flowers
- Dogwood**
(*Cornus florida*)
Spring bracts and fall interest

25 Genius Gardening Hacks

Simple Tips for a Thriving Garden

- Eggshell Seed Starters**
Plant directly in soil—no transplant shock!
- Coffee Grounds**
Add to soil for acid-loving plants like tomatoes & roses, slow, steady water
- DIY Drip Watering**
Use bottles for slow, steady water
- Banana Peels**
Boost potassium—great for tomatoes & peppers
- Cardboard Weed Blocker**
Smother weeds naturally
- Epsom Salt Boost**
Mix 1 tsp/gal for greener plants
- Milk Jug Mini Greenhouse**
Protect seedlings from frost
- Toilet Paper Tubes**
Perfect seed starter pots
- Compost Faster**
Keep moist & turn often
- Vinegar Weed Spray**
1 part vinegar + 1 part water
- Clay Pot Feet**
Improve drainage
- Baking Soda**
Sprinkle to sweeten tomatoes
- Mulch with Leaves**
Free & nutrient-rich
- Old Sheets**
Frost protection
- Companion Plants**
Basil + tomatoes, Marigolds deter pests
- Rainwater Collection**
Save water naturally
- Coffee Filter Pots**
Great for seedlings
- Spoon Trick**
Prevent soil crusting
- Peroxide for Roots**
1 tsp / cup water = root boost
- Vertical Gardening**
Grow up, save space!
- Gravel Drainage**
Prevent root rot
- Coffee Grounds**
- Hand Water Seeds**
Use a spray bottle or gentle shower
- Label with Stones**
No more lost rows!

12 HERBS YOU PLANT ONCE & HARVEST FOREVER

(Perennial Herbs That Return Stronger Every Year)

- CHIVES
- OREGANO
- THYME
- MINT
- ROSEMARY
- SAGE
- LEMON BALM
- FRENCH TARRAGON
- LOVAGE
- CHAMOMILE ROMAN
- FENNEL
- SORREL

Plant once, harvest for years.
They thrive through neglect and winter.



THE MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF SPENDING TIME IN NATURE

A SPRING REAWAKENING

Jen Timothy | Writer

There is a particular moment in early spring when the world begins to feel different again. It is not always dramatic or immediate, but it is unmistakable. The light shifts—lingering a little longer in the evening. The air softens. Trees that once felt bare begin to show the faintest signs of life. And something within us, often without conscious awareness, begins to respond.

After months of winter's stillness, of shorter days and quieter routines, spring offers a kind of reawakening—not just for the natural world, but for our internal landscape as well. The connection between nature and mental health is not a modern discovery; it is something deeply rooted in who we are. Yet, in the pace and structure of daily life, it is a connection we often overlook.

Spending time in nature does not simply provide a pleasant escape—it actively supports the mind in ways that are both subtle and profound. The nervous system, which is constantly scanning for cues of safety or stress, responds almost immediately to natural environments. The sounds are softer, the movement more organic, the light less harsh. These elements signal to the body that it is safe to relax, allowing us to shift out of a state of tension and into one of restoration.

This is why even a short walk outdoors can feel different from time spent inside. The mind, which may have felt crowded or overstimulated, begins to quiet. Thoughts become less urgent. The body softens. There is a sense—however brief—of being grounded again.

Spring amplifies this effect. It is a season defined by movement and renewal. Budding trees, returning birds, the gradual reappearance of color—these changes offer more than visual beauty. They provide a sense of forward motion, a reminder that growth is occurring, even when it feels slow or imperceptible.

For those navigating stress, anxiety, or emotional fatigue, this matters. Nature offers something that is often difficult to access elsewhere: a break from constant input. Indoors, we are surrounded by screens, notifications, responsibilities that demand attention. Outdoors, especially in quieter spaces, there is less to process. The mind is not required to keep up in the same way. It is allowed to settle.

This settling is not passive; it is restorative. It creates space for clarity, for reflection, and for emotional regulation. Over time, even small, consistent moments spent in nature can contribute to a greater sense of balance. Not because life becomes easier, but because we are better supported in how we experience it.

There is also something deeply human about witnessing the rhythms of the natural world. Spring does not rush its arrival. It unfolds gradually, without expectation or pressure. Growth happens in its own time. This can serve as a quiet counterbalance to the urgency we often place on ourselves—to improve quickly, to move forward without pause, to always be progressing.

In nature, there is no such demand. There is only process. And in witnessing that process, we are often reminded that our own growth can be approached with the same patience.



The beauty of this relationship is that it does not require anything elaborate or time-consuming. It does not require travel or planning. It can begin in simple ways—stepping outside in the morning light, taking a walk through a familiar neighborhood, sitting quietly in a park, or even opening a window and allowing fresh air to move through your space.

These moments may feel small, but their impact is cumulative. They create pauses in the day where the mind can rest, where the body can recalibrate, where we can return—if only briefly—to a sense of steadiness.

Spring invites us into these moments more easily than any other season. It draws us outward, gently encouraging us to reconnect—not just with the world around us, but with ourselves.

In a time when so much of life asks us to move quickly, to respond immediately, and to remain constantly engaged, nature offers something different. It offers slowness. It offers presence. It offers a quiet reminder that we are part of something larger, something steady, something that continues to renew itself without force.

And perhaps that is where its greatest benefit lies. Not in changing us, but in reminding us how to return to ourselves.





WHEN SPRING FEELS TIGHT

Understanding the “coiled spring” effect in men’s mental health

Jen Timothy | Writer

Spring is often described as a season of renewal—longer days, warmer air, a natural invitation to step back into life with energy and ease. There is an expectation, both spoken and unspoken, that as the world brightens, so should we. And for many, that is true. But not always.

For some men, the arrival of spring brings something more complicated—a sense of restlessness that is difficult to name. A tension that sits just beneath the surface. An irritability that feels out of place in a season so closely tied to lightness and growth. This experience is sometimes referred to as the “coiled spring” effect,” a state of heightened internal pressure that can emerge during early spring, often without clear cause. It is not widely talked about, but it is real.

At its core, this experience is influenced by rapid environmental changes. As winter gives way to spring, the body is asked to adjust quickly. The increase in daylight alone can significantly disrupt the body’s internal clock. What once felt steady begins to shift, and in that transition, the nervous system can become overstimulated. Instead of feeling energized, the body may feel “wired”—alert, restless, unable to fully settle.

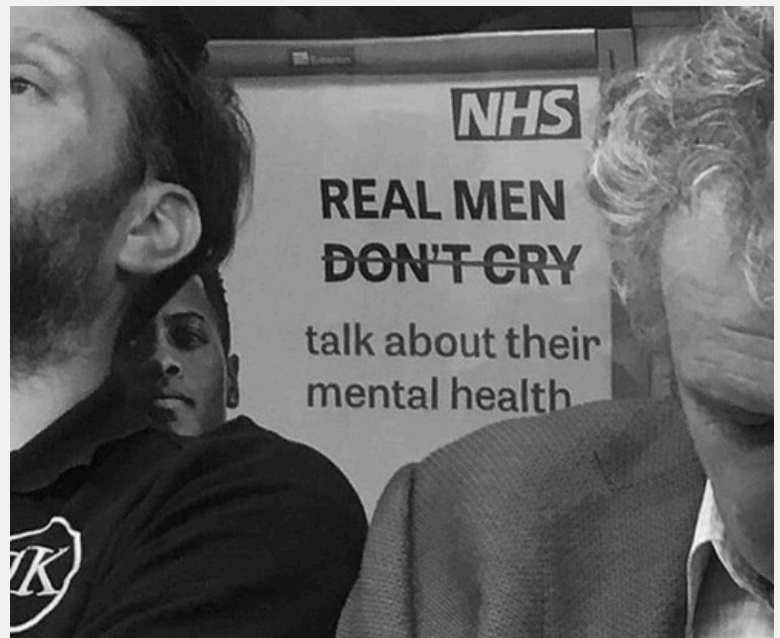
There are also deeper biological processes at play. As psychiatrist Dr. John Sharp has noted, early spring often brings an increase in serotonin turnover along with a rise in overall metabolic activity. While serotonin is commonly associated with mood regulation, these rapid changes can feel disorganizing rather than stabilizing. The result can be a subtle but persistent sense of agitation—an internal hum that is difficult to quiet.

Hormones, too, are part of this equation. While testosterone levels tend to peak during the winter months, the seasonal transition into spring can create a period of imbalance. Cortisol, the body’s primary stress hormone, may increase in response to environmental and physiological shifts, contributing to heightened anxiety, irritability, and emotional reactivity.

Even the physical body plays a role. Spring allergies, often dismissed as a minor seasonal inconvenience, can have a more significant effect than we realize. When the immune system responds to allergens, it releases inflammatory chemicals known as cytokines. These can influence brain function and mood regulation, contributing to fatigue, brain fog, and a lowered emotional threshold. Taken together, these factors can create a perfect storm—one where the body feels activated, but not at ease.

Emotionally, this can show up in ways that are often misunderstood. There may be a growing sense that something needs to change, even if nothing is clearly wrong. Restlessness can turn into impulsivity. Decisions may feel more urgent than they truly are. There can be a temptation to disrupt—to leave a job, to pull away from a relationship, to make a sudden shift simply to relieve the tension.

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of this experience is the contrast between what is felt internally and what is expected externally. Spring carries with it a cultural narrative of happiness—of renewal, of positivity, of forward movement. When that narrative does not match internal reality, it can lead to a sense of isolation. A belief that something is wrong. A quiet guilt for not feeling the way one “should.” But this experience does not mean something is wrong. It means something is shifting. And like all transitions, it asks for awareness rather than resistance.



Managing the “coiled spring” effect is less about eliminating the feeling and more about creating stability within it. Routine becomes especially important during this time. Maintaining a consistent sleep and wake schedule can help regulate the body’s internal rhythms, even as daylight changes. Grounding practices—simple, repeatable moments in the day—can offer a sense of steadiness when everything else feels in flux.

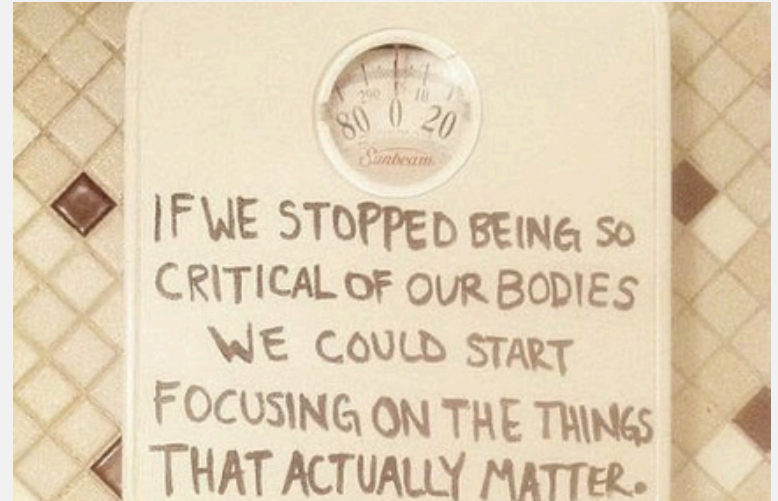
Spending time outdoors can be helpful, but it does not need to be forced or performative. There is no requirement to suddenly become more social or more active simply because the season has changed. Gentle exposure—walking, sitting in natural light, allowing the body to adjust gradually—can be far more supportive than abrupt shifts in pace.

Physical movement also plays a role. Not as a demand for intensity, but as a way of releasing built-up tension. Walking, stretching, or even quiet forms of exercise can help the body process what it is holding.

To recognize that restlessness, irritability, and emotional discomfort in spring are not failures of mindset, but natural responses to change. To understand that not every season of growth feels light or easy. And to allow space for that reality without judgment.

Spring is not only a season of blooming. It is also a season of adjustment. And sometimes, before things soften, they tighten. Like a coiled spring.

EXACTLY AS YOU ARE



Jen Timothy | Writer

There is a subtle shift that begins in spring—one that is not only felt in the air, but in the messaging that surrounds us. As the days grow longer and warmer, a familiar narrative begins to surface. It arrives in headlines, in advertisements, in curated images that quietly suggest it is time to prepare, to refine, to become something more acceptable for the months ahead.

*Summer is coming.
Get ready.
Be better.*

Often, this message is framed as “health.” As motivation. As encouragement to take care of ourselves. But somewhere along the way, the meaning becomes blurred. What does it actually mean to be healthy? And more importantly—who gets to define that?

For many, this seasonal shift brings not excitement, but pressure. A quiet comparison that grows louder with each image, each expectation, each suggestion that there is a correct way to exist in a body during the summer months. The concept of the “bikini body,” though widely challenged, still lingers in subtle and pervasive ways. It suggests that our bodies must be earned, altered, or perfected before they can be seen.

But the truth is far simpler, and far more human than that. A body is not a project. It is not something to be reshaped in order to be worthy of presence, joy, or sunlight. It is not something that must meet a standard before it is allowed to take up space in the world.

Spring, in its truest form, offers us a different invitation entirely. It is not asking us to change who we are—it is asking us to notice what already exists. The way the body carries us through each day. The quiet resilience it holds. The ways it adapts, heals, and continues, often without acknowledgment. Like the seasons, our bodies are meant to change.

They respond to time, to experience, to stress, to rest, to nourishment, to movement, to life itself. There is no single version of a body that is correct or permanent. There is only the body you are in—today, in this moment—deserving of care, respect, and kindness.

Self-care, then, is not about preparing your body for visibility. It is about supporting your body in a way that feels sustainable and honest. It is nourishment that is not rooted in restriction. Movement that is not driven by punishment. Rest that is not earned, but allowed. It is choosing to listen inward rather than constantly looking outward for direction.

This becomes especially important during a season that can feel heightened for so many. For those who have a history with eating disorders, body dysmorphia, or disordered patterns of thought, the transition into spring and summer can carry an added layer of complexity. The external pressure to conform, paired with internal narratives that may already feel fragile, can create a space where recovery feels more challenging.

And for those who love someone navigating that experience, awareness matters deeply. The words we use. The comments we make—about ourselves or others. The casual conversations about dieting, weight, or appearance.

These things, often unintentional, can carry weight. This time of year asks for a different kind of mindfulness. A gentleness in how we speak. A willingness to shift the focus away from appearance and toward wellbeing in its fullest sense. Because health is not one-dimensional. It is not measured solely by how a body looks, but by how a person feels within it. It is emotional. Mental. Physical. It is the ability to move through life with a sense of stability, of self-trust, of connection. And that looks different for everyone.

To embrace self-love in this season is not to ignore the noise completely, but to choose, again and again, not to internalize it. To recognize that much of what is presented to us—through media, through influencers, through curated images—is not reality. It is selective, filtered, constructed. You do not need to reshape yourself to belong in the summer. You already do.

There is space for all of us here—in all forms, in all stages, in all versions of ourselves. The beach, the sun, the warmth of longer days—these are not reserved for a specific kind of body. They are experiences meant to be lived, not earned.

Perhaps this spring, instead of asking how we can change ourselves to meet the season, we can ask something different.

What would it feel like to meet ourselves with acceptance?

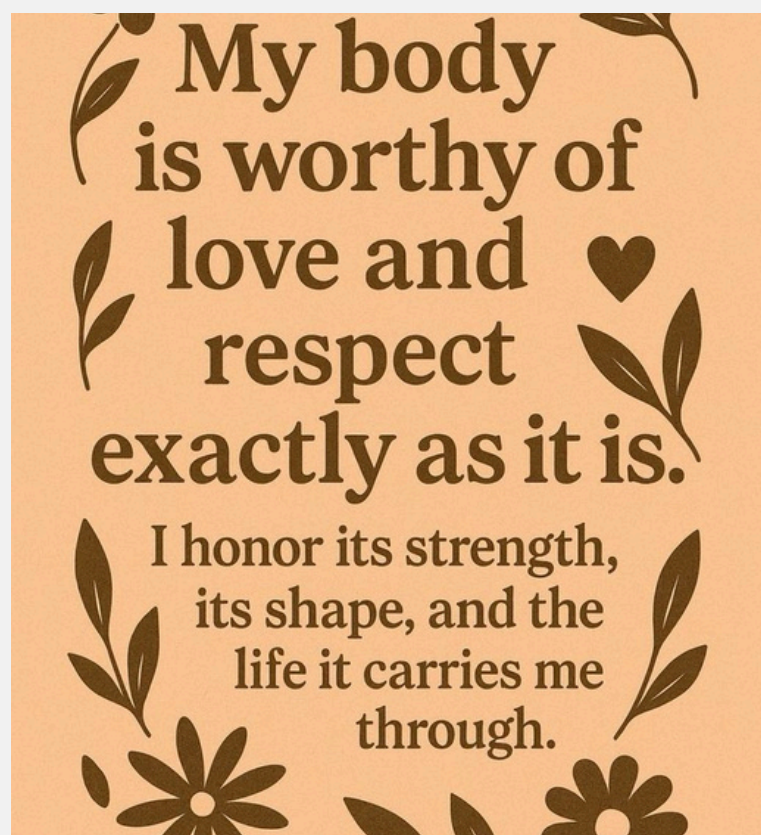
What would it look like to care for our bodies without trying to control them?

What would it mean to step into summer not as a version of who we think we should be—but as who we already are?

There is a quiet kind of freedom in that. And in that space, something far more meaningful than perfection begins to take shape—something rooted in authenticity, in compassion, and in the understanding that we were never meant to fit into a single definition of enough.

We were meant to live. Exactly as we are.

You are beautiful, just as you are right now.



FROM THE THERAPIST'S CHAIR

Reflections on renewal, wellbeing, and the quiet work of becoming



John Poli, LMHC | Contributing Writer

How can someone approach starting over without putting too much pressure on themselves?

For many people, the idea of “starting over” may sound like an overwhelming burden – the idea that this time must “work,” or that you need to prove something to yourself or others. That pressure can easily turn a new beginning into something rigid and exhausting. For those with anxiety issues, this added pressure can even increase these feelings of anxiety. A more sustainable approach begins by softening that expectation.

Think of starting over more as a process or journey of exploration. You’re not required to have a perfect plan. It’s okay to be in a phase where things feel uncertain or unfinished. In fact, that’s usually where the most honest growth happens.

It can help to shift or reframe your self-talk. Instead of asking, “How do I get this right?” try asking, “What feels manageable today?” Narrowing your focus to smaller, doable steps reduces the possibility of feeling overwhelmed. I repeatedly tell clients that real change often occurs with “baby steps.” Progress that feels almost too small to matter is often exactly what creates momentum.

Also, notice if you’re holding yourself to standards you wouldn’t expect from someone else in your position. Many people restart under difficult circumstances, and it’s reasonable that your pace might reflect that. Remember, we are all human. We are striving for progress, not perfection.

There’s also value in leaving room for missteps. Starting over doesn’t mean avoiding mistakes. It means relating to them differently. Instead of seeing them as signs you’ve failed again, you might experiment with viewing them as new information - feedback about what is working and what isn’t.

Finally, it is important to try grounding yourself in something stable – whether that’s a daily routine, a supportive relationship, or even a simple habit like stepping outside each morning. This will often provide a sense of stability while other parts of your life are shifting.

What would you say to someone who feels stuck but is afraid to change?

Oftentimes when a person recognizes that something isn't working for them, there is another part of them that is trying to keep safe by avoiding change. It ends up feeling like they are being pulled in two different directions. That tension isn't a flaw; it's actually a very human form of self-protection. When something is familiar, even if it's uncomfortable, your mind can interpret it as safer than the unknown.

Rather than trying to force yourself out of that fear, it can be more helpful to get curious about it. What does the "fear" in you believe might happen if you changed something? Often, underneath that fear are very real concerns ... loss, failure, instability, even judgment. It is important to acknowledge these thoughts and feelings instead of pushing them aside. By doing this, you will likely feel less overwhelmed.

At the same time, it can be useful to explore the cost of staying exactly where you are. Not as a way to pressure yourself, but to bring clarity. Ask yourself, "Where have my decisions actually led me?" Sometimes "stuck" is a signal that something in you is ready for movement, even if another part isn't ready to leap.



Change doesn't have to be all-or-nothing. You might think of it as slowly adjusting a dial rather than flipping a switch. Small, low-risk experiments such as trying something new for a short time or changing one habit slightly can begin to show you that you can handle more than your fear predicts.

And it's okay if you are not completely ready. People often imagine they need confidence before they act, but more often, confidence grows *after* you take a step, not before. The same exact thing can be said about motivation. People often want to wait until they feel motivated to make a change or start something new. Again, motivation usually grows after you begin, not before. Your fear doesn't have to disappear for you to move. You just need to be able to carry some of that fear alongside you.

Stone & Ivy's contributing writer, **John Poli**, has 20+ years of experience working with adults of all ages experiencing minor or major concerns/changes in their lives. John also has extensive experience working with both individuals with a substance use disorder and individuals who have been impacted by a family member or loved one with a substance use disorder. www.helloalma.com/providers/john-poli

A GARDEN PARTY, GENTLY GATHERED



Jen Timothy | Writer

There is something quietly magical about gathering outdoors in the spring.

Not in a way that feels overly styled or meticulously planned, but in a way that feels natural—like the day simply unfolded into something shared. A table beneath open sky, the hum of conversation carried by a soft breeze, sunlight filtering through trees as if it, too, were part of the celebration. A garden party, at its heart, is less about hosting perfectly and more about creating a space where people can arrive as they are and linger a little longer than expected.

It begins, as most meaningful things do, with intention rather than excess.

The setting does not need to be grand. A backyard, a quiet patch of grass, a long table or even layered picnic blankets can become the foundation. What matters is the feeling—light, airy, and welcoming. Think soft pastels and natural textures. Linen tablecloths that move with the breeze, mismatched plates and glassware that feel collected over time, and small vases filled with wildflowers or freshly cut stems placed gently throughout the table. Nothing too arranged. Nothing too perfect. Just enough to feel thoughtful.

As the light begins to soften later in the day, a few simple touches can transform the space. Mason jars filled with delicate fairy lights placed along the table or scattered throughout the yard create a warm, ambient glow. Candles—tapered or tea lights—can be added sparingly, flickering just enough to invite a sense of calm. The goal is not to impress, but to create an atmosphere that feels lived in and quietly beautiful.

The menu follows the same philosophy.

A garden party lends itself to food that is meant to be shared—uncomplicated, seasonal, and visually inviting. A well-crafted charcuterie board becomes a centerpiece in itself, layered with soft cheeses, cured meats, fresh fruit, nuts, and a drizzle of honey. Alongside it, a variety of tea sandwiches—cucumber with herbed cream cheese, smoked salmon, egg salad with a touch of dill—offer something light yet satisfying.

Spring salads bring brightness to the table. A simple combination of ripe peaches and creamy burrata, finished with a balsamic glaze, feels indulgent without being heavy. A fresh fruit salad, composed of whatever is in season, adds color and ease. Nothing needs to be overly structured. The beauty is in the variety, the abundance, and the way everything invites guests to graze rather than sit formally.

To make the gathering feel even more relaxed and communal, guests can be invited to contribute in their own way. A picnic basket filled with something they love—a small tapas dish, a homemade dessert, a bottle of wine or sparkling water—adds to the sense that this is not one person hosting, but many people creating something together. It removes pressure and replaces it with participation.

Beyond the table, there is room for play.

A few simple outdoor games can bring a lighthearted energy to the afternoon. Croquet set up quietly on the lawn. Bocce ball played without strict rules. A deck of cards passed between friends. Even something as simple as a blanket laid out for lounging invites connection in a way that feels effortless. These moments are not about competition, but about presence—about laughter that arrives without effort.



And tucked somewhere within it all, a small detail that often becomes the most memorable—a Polaroid camera. Left on the table or passed between guests, it invites spontaneous moments to be captured. Not posed or perfected, but real. Someone mid-laugh. A quiet conversation. A hand reaching for a glass. These small snapshots become keepsakes, tangible pieces of a day that might otherwise pass too quickly.

A garden party does not ask for perfection. It does not require a strict timeline or a polished plan. In fact, the beauty of it lies in its looseness—in the way conversations stretch, in the way guests move between standing and sitting, eating and wandering, talking and simply being.

It is a reminder that hosting does not have to feel like performance. It can feel like presence. And perhaps that is what makes it so enchanting. Not the setting. Not the food. Not even the details. But the feeling that, for a few hours, everything came together exactly as it needed to—without trying too hard to be anything more.

THE ART OF THE BOARD

There is something quietly luxurious about a well-made charcuterie board.

Not because it is extravagant, but because it invites a different way of gathering—one that is unhurried, communal, and rooted in the simple pleasure of sharing food. It encourages guests to linger, to reach, to taste without formality. In the setting of a spring garden party, it becomes more than just a dish; it becomes a centerpiece of connection, of color, of thoughtful abundance.

Creating a charcuterie board is not about perfection. It is about balance. Texture. Ease. It is about allowing ingredients to come together in a way that feels both intentional and effortless.

The process begins with anchoring the board—placing the larger elements that will quietly shape everything around them. Small bowls filled with olives, dips, or soft spreads, along with jars of honey or preserves, are best placed toward the center. These pieces naturally draw the eye and create structure, acting as gentle boundaries that allow the rest of the board to take form around them.

From there, the cheeses find their place. Rather than clustering them too closely together, they are spaced thoughtfully across the board, slightly closer to the edges so they remain easily accessible. A mix of shapes—a wedge, a round, a soft rectangle—creates visual interest without effort. It is this quiet variation that gives the board its sense of movement and balance.

Meats follow, nestled near the cheeses in a way that feels intuitive rather than exact. Instead of laying them flat, they are gently folded, pinched, or gathered into soft mounds. This simple detail adds dimension and texture, allowing the board to feel layered and inviting rather than static. It is a small shift, but one that transforms the presentation entirely.

Crackers and breads are then tucked into open spaces, often in small clusters or curved lines that guide the eye across the board. A classic water cracker works beautifully here—subtle, versatile, and easy to pair. The goal is accessibility, ensuring that no matter where a guest stands, there is something within reach.



As the foundation takes shape, color begins to emerge. Larger fruits—clusters of grapes, halved pears, figs—are placed with care, adding both height and softness. They break up the richness of the cheeses and meats, offering a sense of freshness that feels especially fitting for spring. These elements are not just decorative; they bring balance in both flavor and form.

Then come the smaller details—the fillers that bring everything together. A handful of nuts here, a scattering of berries there, perhaps dried apricots or delicate citrus slices. These ingredients find their way into the remaining spaces, gently filling gaps and creating a sense of abundance without excess. There is something deeply satisfying about this stage, where the board begins to feel whole.

And finally, the finishing touches. A sprig of rosemary tucked between cheeses. A few delicate flowers placed without symmetry. A small tea light glowing softly nearby. These elements are optional, but they are often what elevate the board from something beautiful to something memorable. They soften the edges, bringing a sense of warmth and quiet intention.

In the end, a charcuterie board is less about what is placed and more about how it is experienced.

It invites guests to gather without structure. To reach for what calls to them. To share, to taste, to connect. It mirrors the spirit of a spring garden party itself—light, thoughtful, and just a bit whimsical.

And perhaps that is where its beauty lies.

SPRING VIBES

There is a certain kind of music that belongs to spring. Not because it was written for the season, but because it carries the same feeling—of light returning, of something stirring beneath the surface, of movement that doesn't rush but unfolds naturally. It's the sound of open windows, of slow mornings, of drives with nowhere urgent to be.

Spring is not only a season of renewal—it is a season of reintroduction. To the outdoors, to longer days, to ourselves. This playlist is meant to accompany that return. To play in the background of everyday moments—the drive to nowhere in particular, the first picnic of the season, the quiet cleaning of a space made lighter.



1. The Beatles - *Here Comes the Sun*
2. Fleetwood Mac - *Gypsy*
3. Journey - *Only the Young*
4. Creedence Clearwater - *Have You Ever Seen the Rain*
5. A Fine Frenzy - *Come On, Come Out*
6. Prince - *Take Me with U*
7. Lenny Kravitz - *It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over*
8. Roxy Music - *More Than This*
9. Toad the Wet Sprocket - *I Will Not Take These Things for Granted*
10. Israel Kamakawiwo'ole - *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*
11. Tom Petty - *Wildflowers*
12. Tears for Fears - *Everybody Wants to Rule the World*
13. Father John Misty - *Real Love Baby*
14. GoldFord - *Orange Blossoms*
15. The Cranberries - *Linger*
16. Leon Bridges - *Beyond*
17. Amos Lee - *Windows are Rolled Down*
18. Sons of the East - *What I Do*
19. Otis Reading - *Sittin' On the Dock of the Bay*
20. Christopher Cross - *Sailing*
21. Marvin Gaye - *Mercy Mercy Me*
22. Natalie Cole - *This Will Be*
23. The Five Stairsteps - *O-o-h Child*
24. America, George Martin - *Ventura Highway*
25. U2 - *Where the Streets Have No Name*
26. Rusted Root - *Send Me on My Way*
27. General Public - *Tenderness*
28. Blondie - *Dreaming*
29. The Police - *Wrapped Around Your Finger*
30. The Marshall Tucker Band - *Can't You See*
31. The Monroes - *What Do All the People Know?*
32. TOTO - *Africa*
33. Stone Temple Pilots - *Plush*
34. 38 Special - *Caught Up in You*
35. Paul Simon - *Me & Julio Down by the Schoolyard*
36. David Bowie - *Golden Years*
37. R.E.M. - *Orange Crush*
38. Hollow Coves - *Letting Go*
39. Leif Vollebekk - *Long Blue Light*
40. Foy Vance - *She Burns*
41. Ann Peebles - *I Can't Stand the Rain*
42. The Pogues - *Tuesday Morning*
43. The Doobie Brothers - *What a Fool Believes*

This mix can be found & saved on Spotify: Spring Vibes by JTimothy

SPRING BUCKET LIST

A sweet collection of outdoor wanderings, cozy indoor moments, and intentional social gatherings —inviting you to experience spring with presence, curiosity, and ease.



Outdoor Activities

1. Take a sunny spring hike on a nearby trail.
2. Go strawberry picking at a local farm.
3. Take a bike ride to see spring flowers.
4. Attend an outdoor concert, art festival, carnival, or garden show.
5. Go for a drive with the windows down on a warm afternoon.
6. Take a weekend road trip to a nearby town.
7. Go on a spring photography walk to capture blooming trees and wildflowers.
8. Attend a baseball game or outdoor sporting event.
9. Pack a book and enjoy a reading picnic outdoors.
10. Plan a camping trip and fall asleep to the sounds of nature.
11. Fly kites.
12. Book a hot air balloon ride.
13. Enjoy a day on the water: canoe, boat, kayak, paddleboard.
14. Visit a farmer's market.
15. Help build a community garden.

Indoor Activities

1. Do a spring clean.
2. Bake a carrot cake.
3. Organize your wardrobe.
4. Do a spring-themed puzzle.
5. Write a letter or postcard to that far away friend or family member.
6. Plan a relaxing spring home spa evening with spring scents.
7. Go screen-free for an evening.
8. Watch nostalgic movies on a rainy day.
9. Create a recipe book.
10. Make a dinner from scratch.
11. Sort through family photos and organize.
12. Plan a trip.
13. Invite a friend over.
14. Visit a local museum.
15. Read a book.
16. Host a game night.

Spring Social Events & Food

1. Have brunch at an outdoor café.
2. Visit a flea market and search for vintage finds.
3. Host a garden party with friends.
4. Go wine or cheese tasting.
5. Pour yourself a spring cocktail/mocktail and enjoy happy hour on a sunny outdoor patio.
6. Play pickleball outdoors.
7. Support a local bakery and try a seasonal pastry.
8. Take a cooking class featuring spring flavors.
9. Cook a fresh spring meal and enjoy it near a sunny window.
10. Bake a spring dessert using strawberries, rhubarb, or lemon.
11. Take a pottery class with friends.
12. Attend a self-wellness day with friends: yoga, spa, sound bath.
13. Have a bonfire meet-up at the beach.
14. See a comedy show.
15. Watch a sunset.





For the Ones Who Mother

A quiet honoring

There are certain days that carry more than celebration. Mother's Day is one of them.

It arrives wrapped in flowers and soft light, in handwritten cards and quiet gestures of gratitude. It is a day meant to honor the women who have nurtured, guided, protected, and loved in ways both seen and unseen. The ones who held us, taught us, steadied us, and, in so many cases, shaped the very foundation of who we are.

To the mothers—those in the midst of raising, those who have raised, and those who carry the title in ways both traditional and deeply personal—this day is for you. For the long days and longer nights. For the invisible labor. For the countless moments of care that rarely ask to be recognized. Your presence, your patience, your unwavering devotion—it all matters more than words can fully hold.

But this day is not singular in its experience. For some, it carries a quiet ache. A longing for a mother who is no longer here. A tenderness that surfaces in the absence of a voice once familiar, a presence once steady. For others, it may hold the weight of what was never there at all—the absence of a maternal relationship, for reasons often complex and deeply personal. These experiences, too, deserve acknowledgment. They are part of the landscape of this day, and they are worthy of space, of gentleness, of care.

And then there are those who have stepped into the role of “mother” without ever being named as such. The grandmothers, aunts, sisters, friends, mentors—those who chose to love, to guide, to show up in ways that embody what motherhood truly is. Their hearts, expansive and generous, remind us that nurturing is not defined by title alone, but by action, by presence, by love given freely.

Motherhood, in all its forms, is not one story. It is many. It is layered, complex, beautiful, and, at times, bittersweet.

This Mother's Day, may we hold space for all of it.

And perhaps, in keeping with the spirit of this season, we can approach this day with the same softness spring invites of us—less expectation, more presence. Less perfection, more truth.

To the ones who mother, in every sense of the word—thank you.
Your love lives in more places than you may ever fully see.



From All of Us at Stone & Ivy

As spring unfolds, we are gently reminded that beginnings do not have to be loud to be meaningful. They arrive in small ways—in the return of light, in the quiet shift of air through an open window, in the subtle feeling that something within us is ready to soften, to grow, to begin again. This season does not ask for perfection or transformation. It simply invites us to notice, to be present, and to move forward with intention.

As you step into these longer days, we hope you carry a sense of mindfulness—not only for yourself, but for those around you. That you offer yourself the same compassion you extend to others, and that you meet both with patience, understanding, and care. There is strength in gentleness, and there is healing in allowing space for all that we carry.

We hope you discover moments of joy tucked into the ordinary. The warmth of sunlight on your skin. The comfort of a shared meal. The ease of laughter that comes without effort. These are the moments that shape a season—not the grand ones, but the small, meaningful ones we choose to notice.

Above all, we hope you remain rooted in the present. Not rushing ahead, not lingering too long in what has passed, but allowing yourself to be here, in this moment, just as it is. There is so much to be found in simply paying attention.

And in that awareness, may there also be gratitude. For what is. For what was. For what is still becoming.

From all of us at Stone & Ivy, we wish you a season of gentle beginnings, quiet joy, and a renewed sense of connection—to yourself, to others, and to the world around you.

