Monthly Wellness Update

The Wellness Initiative is a program of the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center at the University of Michigan. This initiative supports family caregivers of adults living with memory loss through providing innovative wellness programs emphasizing stress resilience to ensure continued health and well-being on the caregiving journey.

Whether it pleases us or not, each moment is a gift. No matter how unpleasant the wrapping, inside is something wonderful that life wants to give us. If we let it pass without opening it, we have missed something priceless.

— Polly Berrien Berends, Coming to Life

We have a bear in our front window now. Last week, I began to notice teddy bears & stuffed animals in the windows around my neighborhood on daily strolls. This naturally made me smile with curiosity as I wondered what was going on?! I discovered the reason through our Nextdoor network. Some kind soul organized a scavenger hunt for children, an idea which was inspired by a preschool and is either influenced by or sparking additional kindnesses around Ann Arbor and beyond -- just for the sake of sweetness, connection, and fun. A sanity break for exhausted parents at home with children to enjoy as they live each day balancing the demands of life as best they can, while playing safely.

This is helpful for the rest of us, too. This reminder to keep our chins up and look around. We are all playing it safe right now, but I wonder…. What are the ways we are still safely playing?

In times of distress, it's hard to imagine play. The feeling of playfulness may even seem trite at times or utterly inaccessible. Most of us need help & reminders to return to the place within us that remains open to delight, even slightly, like a crack of sunshine through a slat in a dark room. The confines of our own minds may feel dominated by dim & doom some days, a normal response to the relentless onslaught of bad news, each day a new sadness like a droning dirge in the background of our present situation.

And then, something unusual grabs our attention. What has grabbed your delight? For most of us, we are nearing four weeks of shelter in place. What has grabbed your delight? Even momentarily?
This week I stepped around elaborate and sweet sidewalk chalk drawings, home drawn signs thanking health care workers, whimsical yard displays, holiday lights restrung on porches, painted rocks with words of encouragement, windows with colorful drawings spelling out messages of hope, gardens filled with daffodils and entire yards illuminated with a sea of blue squill. And of course, many, many teddy bears. As I sat with this, my personal list of delights broadened and it was so encouraging to read. I hope you will do this for yourself, take note and really allow your heart to settle and be enriched in these moments.

This is another invaluable lesson I have learned from family caregivers over the years: Through pain, loss, and the piercing persistence of change and uncertainty, there remains an impenetrable kindness available to us, in both the giving and the receiving.

The human spirit persists and I wonder how we will revisit this time, how we will each narrate these moments in our lives, as families and as a culture. Today, the sun is shining and the air is warm and enlivened by a night of storms. We continue to live our lives under distress and each day, we learn something new about ourselves. On a good day, we can see beauty, we can share kindness and we can feel connection.

**Beauty, kindness, and connection:** Combine these fierce qualities with childlike curiosity and they are the wind in the sails of our rafts. Together, we rebuild and care for our rafts of resilience in and through this turbulent time.

Curious to see more news of the kindesses? From the balconies of Brookynites cheering on hospital workers at shift change to neighbors finding innovative and creative ways to lift spirits and look out for one another, you can Google search for "Kindness during COVID-19" and discover more stories of inspiration, particularly on a day when you are feeling despondent and need a reminder.

For now, a few questions for your consideration:

*In the midst of sadness, what has moved your spirit and reminded you to play or behold something beautiful?*

*What have been some of the unexpected gifts of carepartnering during this time?*

*How have your skills as a carepartner shaped your ability to cope with this pandemic?*

*How do you sense you are being shaped by this experience?*

*What kindness do you appreciate the most right now?*

Like the title of the old western film, *The Good, The Bad & the Ugly*, we shall forge ahead.

**Because of you, the caregivers, I know we can do this. I know we will be OK.**

In gratitude,

—Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW

---

**Upcoming Programs**

Please register online, or call 734-936-8803 to reserve your place.

**VIRTUAL: Catching Your Breath**

A monthly well-being and mindfulness program for family caregivers of adults living with memory loss. The program varies each month and newcomers are always welcome.

April 13 at 10:00 - 11:30am

**Registration required by Friday, April 10. We will send you the virtual call details upon registration.**
Resources for you during COVID-19

In order to assist in keeping you well during this uncertain time, our Wellness Initiative Lead, Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW has compiled a page of resources on our website here. We hope it will serve helpful to you during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Resource Highlight

The Penn Memory Center compiled a collection of helpful ideas specifically for dementia family caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Isolation, increased stress, and changes in daily routine can generate challenges for you and your loved one with dementia. This article offers guidelines for managing daily care at home and coping with anxiety during this difficult time.

Click here to access the resource

Full list of resources available here

Soothing Word of the Month

Glisk

The sunlight glimpsed through a break in the clouds; a brief glow of warmth; a sudden flash of hope in the heart (Scottish).