



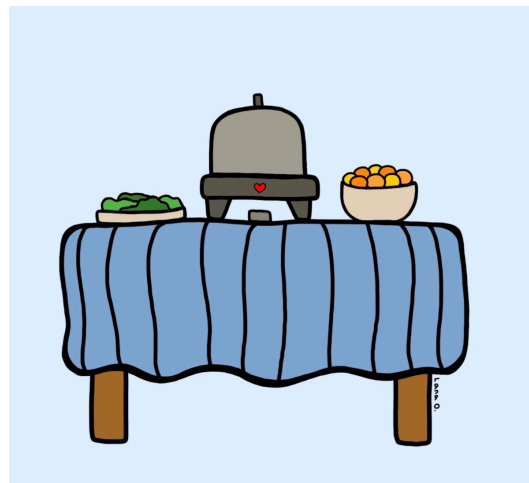
**MICHIGAN MEDICINE**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**MICHIGAN ALZHEIMER'S  
DISEASE CENTER**

**JUNE 2020**

## 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.



“Every criticism, judgment, diagnosis, and expression of anger  
is the tragic expression of an unmet need.”  
~ Marshall Rosenberg

“We may experience the paralysis of not knowing what to do. This is our biological system in action. It is normal and there is nothing wrong. In fact, you might say something is right if we are experiencing this fear, this anger, this numbness, this heartbreak.”  
~Larry Ward

With my closest, long-time girlfriends, we have often shared how we can always be there for one another when one of us falls apart because we can count on never falling apart at the same time. Right now, while coping with the impact of COVID and the appalling contagion of racism in our nation, we feel a collective sense of outrage and grief. Wellbeing is strained for everyone. While a sense of certainty and timing may be lost in this time of darkness, the paradox is not. The well intended formula of one complex issue at a time, one person at a time *as equal to* the full support from the friend-family group is not realistic right now, in truth, it may never have been. As Dr. Larry Ward, senior dharma teacher at Plum Village urges us in his article, [How to practice when the fires of grief are burning?](#), we must stay in touch with our humanity, and we must not become fragmented or lose our wellbeing or ourselves. We are all pulling our emotional resources together to sustain health and sustenance right now. Like a buffet, we are rationing what we can without losing the energy necessary to continue forth with our health intact. While it may not be the best metaphor for the practice of self-care, as it can certainly conjure some visceral parallels.

*Checking in with yourself, how is your buffet doing?*

Is it healthy? Is it clean? Does it have variety? Is anything running low? Is there a long line waiting, perhaps impatiently, behind you or maybe someone taking or needing a portion from your plate? Is anything stale? Do you feel protective of your plate? Are there items you savor? Or things you consume just to feel full? And so on....

It can get complicated rather quickly, because it is. As caregivers, you are carrying, filling, cleaning and maintaining your plate while attending to the plate of another. Server, chef, and consumer, your shift may never feel like it ends. The emotional gymnastics required for a typical day of caregiving is astonishing, forcing leaps between states of perception to navigate the ever changing landscape of emotional life with agility and responsiveness.

The caregivers I have been in communication with over the past three months have all experienced, in one way or another, suffering. All have been touched by loss, sacrifice, compromise, denial, dismay, resistance, anger & agitation. They have also been touched by friendship, connection, beauty, creativity, awe, surprise & love. Their stories and experiences have provided much needed nourishment, reassurance, comfort and perspective for other caregivers and also, for the people in their lives who are learning to take a cue from their hard won and sage experience. Most of us are not prepared for this kind of resilience. Subsequently, we are learning on the fly and adapting what we *do* know and have found to be reliable as sources of comfort, stamina, and strength.

To take a nod from caregivers, we must improvise and use what we have to make a meal and be of service to others. It is no small feat to remain flexible and responsive even in the best of times. And, to take a cue from the art of improv, our *Yes, and ...* can quickly turn into a hard, *No, but...* which rarely ends well. Though it is often right here, in the midst of our struggle, where we encounter our unmet needs. When we are not attuned to our needs, our dexterity for handling difficult moments suffers, unable to ration wisely, leaving us feeling depleted, empty, and compromised.

Buffet aside, the need for reliable, renewable and nurturing self-care has never been more important. The daily challenge becomes reckoning with some of the hardest feelings, thoughts and experiences while trying to maintain our health. While there are no easy answers, we can recognize how willpower can only get us so far before we snap. Some days, either by plan or surrender, we must simply rest to recalibrate and attend to our needs as a priority, feeding our courage, compassion and connection to be better able to lead sane, flexible, reliable and positively oriented lives.

When falling apart isn't an option, we can always fall toward our own heart with self-compassion. When falling toward our own heart is painful, we can remember we are not alone; suffering is shared and felt by all caregivers and beings. We can then practice compassion for all suffering knowing peace begins in our own heart.

In gratitude,

—Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW



## Catching Your Breath

Please register [online](#), or call 734-615-8293 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.

Monday, June 8 at 10:00 - 11:30am

**Registration required by Friday, June 5. We will send you the virtual call details upon registration.**

[Register here](#)

## Call for Caregiver Stories

For caregivers who knew about social isolation long before COVID-19



and are helping their family & friends through this crisis

Lana O.

The COVID-19 quarantine has brought about a unique set of circumstances for everyone. But caregivers may already feel comfort in knowing that they've developed resiliency for social isolation before. You may be feeling especially isolated during this time, using your mindfulness and resiliency skills to a greater extent than normal. Or, you may be feeling like a resource to your family and friends, helping them through this unfamiliar environment.

Either way, **we know that your role in quarantine is a unique one, and we'd love to hear from you.** Do you have a story during your time in quarantine that has been particularly joyful or challenging with your partner? Have you developed a particular routine or management style that serves you well? Are you doing specific activities that bring you and/or your partner joy? **Any story that has resonated with you from quarantine - we'd love to hear about!**

Please send Erin Fox, Center Communications Specialist, an email at [eefox@med.umich.edu](mailto:eefox@med.umich.edu) with your story and a photo or two. We hope to bring your caregiver experience to light (with your permission of course! You can certainly share your story with us, without wanting it to be made public). If you have questions about this, before sharing your story, please also contact Erin. We hope to hear from you!

Submit your story

## Soothing word of the month

### *Hypnagogic*

Adjective: Of, relating to, or occurring in the period of drowsiness immediately preceding sleep. Also spelled *hypnagogic*, is of 19th century vintage. It's from French, which got it from Greek: *hypn-* means "sleep," and *-agōgos* means "inducing, leading." (Merriam-Webster)

## Have a Seat. *Practicing alone, together.*

with Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW



Thursdays, 12:00 - 12:30PM  
Virtually via Zoom

We are happy to announce our new weekly Have a Seat mindfulness meditation program taking place Thursdays at noon. To participate in this program, all you need is a computer to join via the web link or a phone to listen to the guided meditation. More information is available on our website [here](#). **Would you like to receive weekly reminders for the program? If so, subscribe below.**

Subscribe to receive weekly reminders

## New & Upcoming Center Programs

"Alzheimer's Disease: Current & Future Drug Treatments"  
community lecture



June 30, 4:00 - 5:00PM

Neurology Clinical Trials lead, Dr. Judy Heidebrink will present. Registration is required [here](#). The virtual link will be sent to all registrants the week of the event.



## Follow us on Instagram

Please join us on Instagram for content specific to our Wellness Initiative. You can find us [here](#) or at [@umichalzheimers](#).



## COVID-19 Resources

Remember, we have a page of COVID-19 resources available on our website [here](#). We hope they are helpful to you during this time.

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