



MICHIGAN MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**MICHIGAN ALZHEIMER'S
DISEASE CENTER**

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.

FEBRUARY 2021

Monthly Wellness Update



Your hindrances are the ingredients
in the kitchen of your liberation.

—Dr. Larry Ward, *The Lotus Institute*

We don't like to think much about our hindrances, though Dr. Ward's assertion is certainly on the nose in the way it succinctly acknowledges the power of self-awareness. If our hindrances provide the ingredients in the kitchen of our liberations, what exactly are we cooking up everyday in our own care? How about right now? Off the top of your head, list *two* ways you have been hard on yourself since the beginning of the year.

Go!

Ok, please stop.

Was it a stretch?

For most of us, it's not. It's relatively easy, and if there are more criticisms rushing into your awareness right now, please pause right there.

Now is a good time to feel a full breath and especially, the calming release of an exhale (repeat as needed). And, to counter the potential deluge of self-judgments, how about at least *two* ways you have really showed up for yourself over the past month.

Savor these things.
Linger as long as you wish.
Breathe

It's been a hard enough year this month already, hasn't it? It's really only been one month, though January felt much longer with some significant, devastating, and scary firsts to add to our collective experience and perhaps some of your very own as well. There has been plenty of time to pocket more than one self-criticism given all the relentless attunements we've had to make in our personal realities. So whether the feeling of judgement is fleeting or clingy, or part of a pattern or a brand-new and fresh perceived personal folly, *you are not alone*. Most of us are quick to beat ourselves up when something goes awry, when we don't feel we are living up to expectations (whose?) or doing things the way they **should** be done (says who?). April Kaiserlian, a therapist and mindfulness colleague, calls this the Itty-Bitty-Shitty-Committee, and it makes me smile every time. I soften a bit when I hear it, mostly because it's disarming and inclusive; we understand how this is a shared phenomenon. We *all* have an Itty-Bitty... an IBSC. There is something gratifying and empowering about addressing our inner bullies straight on (a little saltiness doesn't hurt either). So whether you want to borrow this phrase, the IBSC, or have one of your own, I hope you will have a word with your committee this month about kindness.

Since there is only so much we can control, and given how it's been additionally uncomfortable to tolerate disappointments during the pandemic, we can at least work with how we manage our IBSC day-by-day. While the sneaky-snark running commentary behind the scenes may be trying to be helpful, productive or protective, it's definitely not kind. Left unchecked, the IBSC creates harm and can erode the wiser, kinder attention we can give ourselves. Consider your efforts and all the important ways you show up for others and yourself, moving through life, difficult circumstances and decisions every single day. Left unattended, we risk reading (and believing) a skewed version of our story, the one where the facts do not reflect the truth of our experience and wisdom.

Dr. Michelle Maidenburg, a clinical social worker and regular contributor to *Psychology Today*, wrote last week about the 15 Ways We Beat Ourselves Up. Here are five which stood out to me as they consistently arise in conversations with family caregivers and the frequent ways they treat themselves unfairly. Which of these resonates most with you?

1. *Perpetually second-guessing yourself*
2. *Perseverating over your perceived mistakes*
3. *Treating negative thoughts as facts*
4. *Dwelling on the past or future*
5. *Basing your mood on things you cannot control*

This is an opportunity to address your IBSC, recognizing where you might need a little more shoring up, additional warmth and kind reinforcements this month. February is a time where loving, or at least loving intentions are highlighted and encouraged. How's your investment in the most important relationship and love story of your life going - the one with yourself? Though Valentines' Day is commercialized, it's certainly not worth dismissing entirely. Perhaps just a re-frame is needed. Given our continued social distancing, the winter months and the additional strain, recommitting *to yourself* and considering the kind of loving care you may need is the best kind of Valentine. We can open this Valentine carefully by overseeing our inner critics with compassion and appreciation. Have heart. Give yourself a rest (and the committee, too).

Your heart muscle goes on working for as long as you live. It does not get tired, because there is a phase of rest built into every single heartbeat.

~Angeles Arrien

In gratitude,

—Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW



Upcoming Program Registration

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 welcome anytime.

Monday, February 8

10:00 - 11:30AM

Registration is required here by Friday, February 5. We will send the virtual call details to those registered.

Register for Catching Your Breath here

Mitten Minds Dementia Education Series

Registration is now open for our next session of the Mitten Minds Dementia Education Series. This program is a free virtual dementia education series **specifically for those with a recent diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment or in the early stages of a dementia.**

The program will take place weekly from March 9 – April 13 from 10:00AM - Noon. **Registration is required.**

Register for the Mitten Minds Dementia Education Series

Have a Seat

Have a Seat is a free weekly, online, guided meditation program. No registration is required, just use the link below to join the program on Thursdays at noon.

Thursdays from 12:00-12:30PM

If you would like to subscribe to receive weekly reminders for Have a Seat, click [here](#).

Click here to join Have a Seat

Mitten Minds Support Group for those living with MCI or early-stage dementia

The group will meet monthly on the third Tuesday of the month from 3:00-4:00pm, and newcomers are welcome at any time.

Tuesday, February 16

3:00 - 4:00PM

Registration is required for each session to receive the virtual log-in information.

For more information, or to register please visit the link below.

Register for Mitten Minds support group here

**Please pause here and take a few slow, intentional breaths.
If possible, close your eyes and allow this brief rest in the moment**

Soothing words of the month



Apnapan

Hindi, noun: Having a quality where you accept people, think of them as your own, take care of the ones you love, not for anything in return.

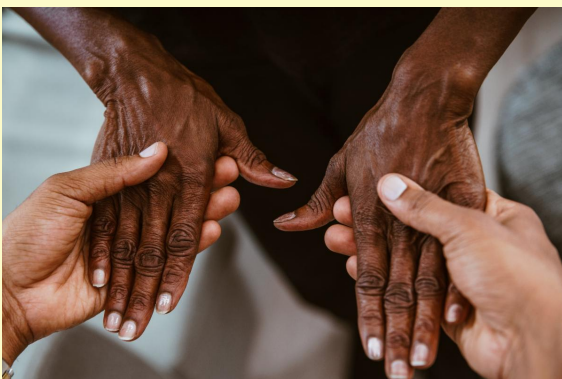
Wellness Initiative Managing Director, Laura Rice-Oeschger, Provides a Caregiver Check-In in Recent Michigan Medicine Blog Post



Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW, Managing Director of our Wellness Initiative and creator of our many wellness programs to support those caring for someone with memory loss, shares four ways to best support the caregiver in your life in a blog post written with Michigan Medicine. Take a look at the link below!

[Read the story here](#)

Upcoming Virtual Programs



Dementia, Health, and the Black Family Caregiver: Towards a Novel Intervention

Presented by Dr. Sheria Robinson-Lane of the University of Michigan School of Nursing

February 23, 2021
2:00 - 3:30PM

Registration is required [here](#).

Successful Aging Through Financial Empowerment (SAFE) **Presented by Latoya Hall of the Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology**

March 23, 2021
12:00 - 1:30PM

Registration is required [here](#).



New Research Studies Looking for Caregivers



Exploring the Use of Weighted Blankets as a Non-Pharmacologic Intervention for Home Dwelling Older Adults with Dementia

We are delighted to support Melissa Harris, a PhD student at the University of Michigan School of Nursing, in a new research study. Ms. Harris is seeking participants living with dementia, that live together with their family caregiver in the home setting, to complete a research study about the use of weighted

blankets.

Research shows that the use of weighted blankets can reduce anxiety and stress in older adults, however there isn't research specifically targeting older adults with dementia. Ms. Harris hopes to explore the use of weighted blankets in older adults living with dementia to see if they may be helpful in increasing the user's relaxation and decrease stress, which might in turn help reduce some of the challenging symptoms of dementia individuals experience.

For more information, please follow the link below to see the full study overview flyer, or contact Melissa Harris at mharrisl@umich.edu or 405-513-1271.

[More information here](#)



WeCareAdvisor: A Web-Based Tool to Improve Quality of Life for Military Veterans with Dementia and their Caregivers (WeCareAdvisor):

This study is seeking caregivers to test the WeCareAdvisor, a web-based tool that aims to help users learn more about and manage behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia like wandering, repeated questioning, anger, depression or apathy. This study is looking for participants who have access to a computer or mobile device with internet and are also the

primary in-home caregivers for a military Veteran who is living with dementia. **This study does not require any in-person visits; it will be completely virtual.** Contact Barbara Stanislawski at bstanis1@med.umich.edu or 734-232-0323.

[Learn more about caregiver research](#)

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