Arriving in March, we are fast approaching the one year mark of our collective fear and uncertainty. For so many, the personal story is punctuated by grief and loss, fatigue and melancholy. Someone I care about said in passing this weekend, “I’m not sure I’m emotionally prepared for March.” Another said, “I can’t believe we got through all of that … and also, there’s more. At least there will be flowers soon.” Like you, my family and friends have shared their emotional moments receiving the vaccine while others wait, clutching hope and the last threads of their patience. This is a threshold like no other. We are crossing it together and alone.

With March arriving on howling winds this week, like a harbinger of unpredictable changes, how would you describe your feelings as you cross this threshold? Imagine passing yourself - as you are now, one year ago - in those first two weeks of March 2020 going about your routine, remembering when you didn't know what was coming and what you were doing at that time. What might you say to yourself and what would you say to yourself now as an acknowledgement of all you have experienced and been through? Perhaps there are no words. Perhaps it is enough to imagine your own hand on your own shoulder, a gentle squeeze, a long look in eyes and a reassuring nod.

Earlier this week, while addressing the prospect of an uncertain future a caregiver shared, “I trust I will be...”
there to greet myself." She went on to share how hope - like spring arriving - may be the victor. In a year of losses, there are thankfully a few victorious gains for each of us which can hopefully thrive for hope’s sake: greater awareness of our wellbeing, an appreciation for our vulnerability, our connections and the hard won elements of resilience.

In his influential paper, clinical psychologist George Bonanno described a new framework for understanding stress and defined resilience as the ability of people who have experienced a highly life-threatening or traumatic event to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning. In fairness, lower the bar a little bit and this describes so many of us. It seems there is nothing more honest and helpful right now than the sheer willingness to be present to the truth of what has happened, to stay with our process of grieving and without a positive twist or need to fix or improve. When we do this, acknowledging and being with the discomfort rather than dismissing or reframing it too soon, our experience becomes essential to the kind of healing which can eventually lead to resilience and growth. This also fosters hope.

Researchers Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun coined the term “post-traumatic growth” to capture the significant psychological changes - or growth - experienced as a result of meeting the challenges inherent in highly stressful life circumstances. Here are the seven areas of growth they identified. See what resonates with you right now...

Greater appreciation of life
Greater appreciation and strengthening of close relationships
Increased compassion and altruism
The identification of new possibilities or a purpose in life
Greater awareness and utilization of personal strengths
Enhanced spiritual development
Creative growth

Absolutely no one would choose the past year, or any trauma, to acquire these changes, though it’s an important opportunity to recognize growth. Particularly when getting up everyday, dressing, eating and maybe, *maybe* doing a thing or two for ourselves or someone else is a huge achievement worthy or celebration. How did we live any other way? I hope you are giving yourself at least this much credit right now. The snowdrops are peeking through the soil today and I feel like falling to my knees to kiss each one. Because of the caregivers I have known these many years, I know it’s possible to carry grief and appreciative joy at the same time. This approaching season is our chance to live again, to see and appreciate our perennial nature and to meet ourselves as we are.

In gratitude,

—Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW

We need your help!
Join us on Giving Blue Day! March 10, 2021

Something I’m excited about for March?

This month, the Wellness Initiative has the pleasure to be spotlighted for awareness and fundraising on the university’s annual Giving Blue Day on March 10, 2021. We have expanded the Initiative heavily in the last year, not only to meet the needs of our caregivers in these unprecedented times, but also to grow new programs, virtually, for those living with memory loss.

If you love and appreciate the work we do through the
Wellness Initiative there are two simple ways you can contribute:

First, please take a moment to share how a program or a Wellness Initiative experience or connection has personally impacted you. This is an essential part of awareness and we would deeply appreciate even one sentence. It’s hard to convey the impact and reach of our programs with those who are not involved. Raising awareness and promoting education are values of our Center so your feedback is invaluable. Thank you for taking a moment to describe your personal experience, how you have been supported and anything else you’d like to say about participating in the Wellness Programs (Catching Your Breath, Have a Seat, Mindfulness Monthly, Living Grief, Mitten Minds...). Click the button below to submit a testimonial about your experience!

The second method to participate is through making a contribution. Any amount is helpful and our programs run on generosity. Thank you in advance! More information about Giving Blue Day and the link to donate are available in the button below.

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### 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, March 8**
10:00 - 11:30AM

Registration is required here by Friday, March 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, March 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

Friluftsli
(Norwegian) Boosting our mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing by being immersed in nature. Meaning “free air life” or “open air living.”

Upcoming Virtual Programs

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

March 23, 12:00 - 1:00PM

Latoya Hall of the Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology will present. Registration is required below.

Register here for the event

Issues in Aging Conference
April 19, 9:00AM - 3:40PM

The Wayne State Institute of Gerontology's Issues in Aging conference is one of the longest running, well-recognized professional conferences of its kind. The annual conference held every May since 1987 provides healthcare professionals with best practices and current research in the field in geriatrics and gerontology. The virtual event is held in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association - Michigan Chapter. We are a proud annual sponsor of this valuable event.

More information about the conference

New Research Studies Looking for Caregivers

**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 bstanisl@med.umich.edu or 734-232-0323.

**Self-Management, Health, and Resilience in Partners Study (SHARP):**

Investigating experiences among couples living with multiple chronic health conditions to learn more about ways to help both partners live well together. Study is now recruiting a subgroup of couples in which one partner has received a diagnosis of dementia or mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and has early symptoms of dementia, both partners have two or more chronic conditions, and at least one partner is aged 50 or older. Contact the study team at sharpstudy@umich.edu or 734-232-4565. This study can be completed entirely over the phone.

Learn more about caregiver research

SUPPORT THE CENTER

VISIT OUR WEBSITE