



MICHIGAN MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center

August 2021

Monthly Wellness Update



We also have to focus on ourselves, because at the end of the day we're human too.

So, we have to protect our mind and our body,
rather than just go out there and do what the world wants us to do.

~ Simone Biles

Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves
even when we risk disappointing others.

~ Brene Brown

Mental health is in the spotlight once again as a few high profile athletes have prioritized their wellbeing by removing themselves from competition and the public eye this Olympic season -- though not from the spotlight of public commentary. The strength they demonstrated in personal boundary-setting has generated much praise on social media (a particular win for women) and to no surprise, some unfortunate criticism. It's incredibly empowering to witness this level of courage enacted for self-care, to protect wellbeing over the demands and expectations of others (or a nation). These are courageous young women for challenging unhealthy standards of performance and elevating important discussions regarding empowerment and advocacy in mental health from their platforms. Being in the public eye and opening themselves to criticism, particularly in high stakes performative situations, we can appreciate how agonizing it may have been to back out after so much preparation and training. We can also respect the strength of character and acknowledge the presence of mind it took to pause and adjust course; to ultimately declare how it would not benefit their health to continue. Judgements commenced around what it meant to choose themselves, while boldly challenging and redefining what it means to show up and stand up for oneself. It was a stunning act of personal grace as it contains both a resonant *No* to risking further harm and a strong *Yes* for furthering self trust, acceptance and peace of mind.

While we may not be professional athletes, it's an excellent opportunity to reflect on our own personal boundaries as they relate to self-care and how the expectations of others influence our decisions, even unconsciously and out of habit. We can also acknowledge how susceptible we are to socially reinforced and unhealthy standards of performance. Additionally, we may recognize a pattern of suffering when pushed beyond our ability to cope and how we respond in turn. For most family care partners, this may strike a nerve. It's hard to hold boundaries and honor personal needs when simultaneously reinforcing oneself against a deluge of competing needs, including the expectations of what others think we should do.

Last month in a presentation titled "CALM Connections" for our Center's Speaker Series ([view a recording online here](#)), I shared three themes which can influence care partner wellbeing: Myths, Milestones and Moments. While there are innumerable societal and personal factors which impact wellbeing on a daily basis, these themes serve as helpful containers for entering a deeper conversation in maintaining self-care overtime. Sometimes self-care means disappointing others. That's hard and it's complicated, though it's far more complicated and hard to disappoint ourselves. It brings up all sorts of judgements, reactions and strong held, even unexamined, opinions about meeting expectations and demands, culturally and personally and defining what it truly means to be a "good" caregiver.

What myths about "good" caregiving interfere with your mental health and wellbeing?
What myths about being a "good" *anything* interfere with your mental health and wellbeing?

Persistently and gently investigating our responses can provide some clues to discomfort. As an example, standing up for ourselves from a stance of self trust and calm clarity vs. standing up to others' expectations defensively and from a sense of shame or guilt. The former is strengthened by insight and a resolve to take responsibility for our wellbeing. The latter can be a signal to look more closely at personal boundaries, where we may feel taken for granted and what may be calling for our attention and protection. Initially, it can feel threatening and destabilizing to trust ourselves if turning to others for permission and feedback has been the primary source of our self-care decisions or self-worth. Ultimately, it's ours to define and it makes all the difference when we say *No* and when we are the primary source of the permission we need to be well.

—Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW



Wellness 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 any time.

August 9, 10:00 - 11:30AM

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

Register

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](#).

Join Have a Seat

Mitten Minds Support Group

This support group is available specifically for individuals with mild cognitive impairment or early-stage dementia.

August 17, 3:00 - 4:00PM

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

Register

Family Caregivers – We Need Your Feedback, Please!

The Wellness Initiative and our Center's Outreach, Recruitment, and Engagement Core need feedback from all caregivers who have participated in Center wellness programs, support groups, and any other online education events in the past year. Your input will help us evaluate decisions regarding virtual offerings and the format of our programs offered this fall and in 2022. Please help us learn more about your experience so we can better understand opportunities for growth in this area.

Please take a moment to fill out this brief survey at the link below regarding your participation in Center-hosted programs. We greatly appreciate your input!

Take the survey

Soothing word of the month



Desenrascanço

Portuguese - a way of artfully disentangling oneself from a troublesome situation.

Upcoming Virtual Events & Programs

"Sleep profiles, roles and needs of care partners of persons living with cognitive decline: how do they fit together?"

August 26, 12:00 - 1:00PM

This event will be presented by Glenna Brewster Glasgow, PhD, RN, FNP-BC of the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing at Emory University.

Register

Fall Registration Now Open: Mitten Minds Dementia Education Series

This program is open specifically for persons with Mild Cognitive Impairment or a recent diagnosis of a dementia. The program offers six educational sessions, each led by one of our experts in dementia care and research. Registration is now open and required below.

Register

New Research Studies Looking for Caregivers

COVID-19 Coping and Resilience Care Partners Study (CARE)

This study investigates experiences among couples living with dementia during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic to learn more about ways to help both partners live well together. The study is looking for couples (married or living together) residing in Michigan in which one partner has received a diagnosis of dementia within about 5 years or has early symptoms of dementia. For more information, contact the study team at C19carepartners@umich.edu or 734-232-4565.

More information

The STYLE Caregiving During COVID Study (COVID STYLE):

Help us understand your dementia caregiving experience during the COVID-19 pandemic and how the pandemic and shelter-in-place policies impact caregivers' mental health and health services use. Study is recruiting primary caregivers for a friend or family member with a diagnosis of dementia. Contact Amanda Leggett and the COVID STYLE team at covidstyle@med.umich.edu or 734-623-9911. This study is entirely virtual (online survey and Zoom/phone) and takes approximately 2 hours.

More information

Identifying Factors Predicting Accurately End-of-Life in Dementia with Lewy Bodies and Promoting Quality End-of-Life Experiences (PACE-DLB)

We are excited to be a part of a new longitudinal research study in Lewy body dementia led by Dr. Melissa Armstrong, Director of the Mangurian Clinical-Research Headquarters for Lewy Body Dementia at the University of Florida. The *PACE-DLB* study aims to understand what changes might predict the end of life in people living with Lewy body dementia. This information will help patients, caregivers, families,

and health care professionals know what to expect in later stages of LBD. The U-M site for this study is led by Drs. Susan Maixner, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, and Henry Paulson, Lucille Groff Professor of Neurology and Director of the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. The study is looking to enroll individuals with at least moderate stage LBD and their main caregiver who must be able to answer questionnaires related to the LBD and caregiver experience. The study is conducted via Zoom or by phone. For more information, please contact Kelly Mattingly at mattinke@med.umich.edu or 734-223-9297.

[More information](#)

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.

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