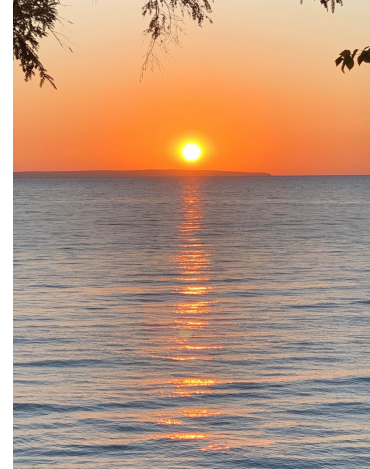


Monthly Wellness Initiative Message

"Compassion is the ability to understand how difficult it is for people to be the best of what they want to be at all times."

— Joan D. Chittister

Tired of being strong? You're not alone. Though mitigated by the beauty of summer and opportunities to be in nature and enjoy some outdoor living, the chaos and uncertainty of the world persists in ways which are thoroughly distressing. The world is hurting. We are hurting. Are you hurting too? It's not just one thing after another, the challenges overlap and it's exhausting to maintain a persistent sense of strength right now. It's difficult to be the best of what we want and it's not healthy to expect ourselves to be. There's a real problem with promoting strength and resilience over honoring our sadness and vulnerabilities. May I suggest it's time to let go of strength-building for now? It's far more likely to come back on board naturally when we allow ourselves to focus on our wellbeing than on getting through the day and relating to others with any additional, internal pressure to be strong or what we think of as our best self. It's not helpful. How about doing our best to be and feel safe, for others and ourselves? It's far more compassionate to rest our attention and efforts on a grounded sense of safety within ourselves as we pendulate between challenges and challenging feelings. While we can certainly build strength and resilience through hardship, we need to be careful not to idealize its merits. It is actually our sense of internal security that is most reliable and perhaps, most needed at this time. Strength is overemphasized and when left on autopilot, it can really drag us through unnecessary harm.



When I speak with care partners about their needs, they do not say they need other people's strength. They do not need or ask for another's perfection or even their knowledge. They do not want advice or even fixing. Isn't it interesting how we do not expect this from others though we often expect this of ourselves? What care partners say they desire most is the authentic presence and consistency of people they trust. It feels safe to be held in the container of another's presence, even when both are hurting. It's authentic and it feels welcoming and a true relief to be met by the consistency of a caring presence. To meet others and be met in this way, not trying to be strong, only present - *feels more secure*. It actually feels something like strength, but stronger. Perhaps we can all agree that presence and consistency are the balm in all thriving relationships. And to be clear, not the consistency to perform, or show up to rescue or deliver solutions or even say precisely the right things; it is the consistency to be willing to meet, to be met, to listen and respond with compassion. It's the essence of safety and it's important to be able to locate this in our lives.

After all this time, with the state of the world and pandemic, most of us do *not want* to be strong anymore. We want the space to be sad, because we need to be sad. We want the space to be tired, because we are tired. We want to be held, because we can't do all the holding on our own. And, it can be really hard at times to let go and lean toward the safety of another's presence and generate safety in ourselves. Telling ourselves we shouldn't be struggling and that we should be strong makes things exponentially harder. Now is a time for radical kindness and for the kind of self-reliance to know our limits and reach out for help when we need it. This requires presence too. It's harmful to try and push through pain. There will, of course, be days when we may need to push through. Days. Maybe weeks. When it begins to become a way of living however, always pushing through, it's time to notice and seek more support.

While care partnering, the only "best" you need to focus on is in the caring you need to honor your health and safety. The rest is good enough. This way, when you give, when you share, when you support, hear, connect and meet others with your presence, it's because *you can*, you have presence to offer. It's wholehearted and uncomplicated. It's likely to support any person in your care as well as you, because it's actually stronger, not trying to be stronger. And when you're struggling, may there be someone who

can offer their presence and compassion to help you return to yours.

I hope you will visit our resources page and consider attending one of our wellness programs this fall. We all need reminders to take care of ourselves. This is your invitation. No need to be strong.

In closing, I would also like to bring your attention to our next session of Mindfulness-based Dementia Care (MBDC) being offered this fall. Registration is now open at the link below. I hope to see you there.

[Register for MBDC](#)

—Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW
Wellness Initiative Managing Director



Announcements

Federal Funding Renewed for Five Years

We are thrilled to announce that we received five additional years of funding, equating to \$15.3 million, from the National Institutes of Health. This grant will further develop our collaborations across the state of Michigan with our partner institutions, Michigan State University and Wayne State University. Over the coming five years, we plan to take on many new projects, one of which being the integration of early career investigators into our Center through our new Leaders Initiative program. Read more about our plans on our website in the link below.



[Read More](#)

The Latest Edition of our Mind Matters Newsletter is Now Available

We are also pleased to share with you our latest edition of our Mind Matters newsletter. In this issue you'll find information on a new donor gift that we've received to support health disparities research in dementia, our registry that offers ongoing research opportunities for older adults who are interested, a new study collaboration with the University of Florida, Lewy Body Dementia Association and others to improve end-of-life care for persons living with Lewy body dementia, and finally, a new Wellness Initiative program, Living Grief, that seeks to support caregivers on their grief journey both while caring for, and after a loved one passes from dementia. Read on for more at the link below.



[Read More](#)

Upcoming Wellness Program Registration

Catching Your Breath

September 13, 10:00 - 11:30am

Catching Your Breath is a monthly wellbeing and mindfulness program for *family caregivers of adults living with a dementia*.

Have a Seat

Thursdays from 12:00 - 12:30pm

Have a Seat is a weekly guided meditation program. Would you like to receive weekly email reminders to join the program? Subscribe [here](#) to receive.

Register Here

Join by Zoom Here

Mitten Minds Support Group

September 21, 3:00 - 4:00pm

The Mitten Minds Support Group is a monthly support group for *individuals with mild cognitive impairment or early stage dementia*. The support group provides a space for individuals living with memory loss to meet and learn from others going through similar experiences.

Register Here

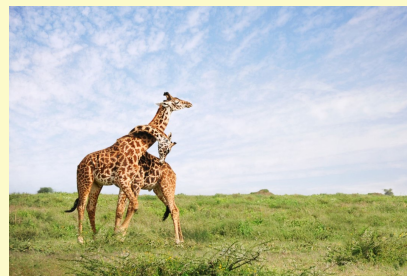
Mindfulness-based Dementia Care

October 12 - November 30, 9:30 - 11:30am

Mindfulness-based Dementia Care is an eight-week program designed for *family caregivers of adults living with dementia*. The program shares how the practice of mindfulness can provide support during the challenges and stresses of dementia care.

Register Here

Soothing word of the month



Famn

Swedish/noun: the space between to arms, e.g., "in my arms"

Upcoming Virtual Events



"The Latest Findings in Dementia Research"

September 23, 2:00 - 3:30pm

This event will be presented by Bruno Giordani, PhD, Associate Director of our Center and Board Member of the Alzheimer's Association - Michigan Chapter.

Register Here

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.

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)

This study aims to understand what changes might predict the end of life in people living with dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB). This information will help patients, caregivers, families, and health care professionals know what to expect in later stages of DLB. Study is enrolling individuals with at least moderate stage DLB and their main caregiver, and the caregiver must be able to answer questionnaires related to the DLB and caregiver experience. Study is conducted via Zoom or by phone. Contact Kelly Mattingly at mattinke@med.umich.edu or 734-223-9297 for more information.

[More Information](#)

[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.

[More Information](#)

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